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North Yorkshire Council

Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 30 January 2025 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor David Staveley in the Chair plus Councillors Melanie Davis, Philip Barrett, Derek Bastiman, John Cattanach, Hannah Gostlow, David Ireton, George Jabbour (substitute), David Jeffels, Steve Mason, Subash Sharma, Phil Trumper, Steve Watson, Robert Windass and David Noland.

In attendance: Councillors Greg White and Paul Haslam (virtual)

Officers present (virtual): Karl Battersby, Rachael Balmer, Harry Briggs, Joe Penny

Officers present (in-person): Will Baines, Shaun Berry, Aimi Brookes, Hugh Clear Hill, Peter Jeffreys and Louise Neale

Apologies: Councillors Tom Jones and Andrew Williams (substitute Councillor George Jabbour).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

18 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Jones and Andrew Williams (substitute Councillor George Jabbour).

19 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2024

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed as a correct record.

20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

21 Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements received.

22 12 Month Review of Motion on Water Quality for improvements in health, wildlife, biodiversity and economy

The Committee considered a report of Hugh Clear Hill, Principal Environmental Policy Officer with a review of progress on the water quality motion since it was approved by Full Council in November 2023.

As part of the officer presentation, it was noted that:

- Since the six-month review point back in July 2024, a substantial number of new policy initiatives, emerging legislation, inquiries and reports relating to the water sector have been introduced following the General Election. It was noted that general awareness of water issues remains very high at both a local and national level.
- The North Yorkshire River Catchments Forum had held its second meeting, which took place just before Christmas. A clear action plan is in development, to pinpoint where value can be added by partners and to avoid overlap with other initiatives. It was highlighted that the Forum forms part of a lot of partnership activity taking place across the piece, with recent national commitments made around support for the river catchment partnerships to be welcomed. Early preparations for a 'North Yorkshire Rivers Summit' later in the year are taking place, to bring together stakeholders, including Elected Members, in a similar style to the bathing water summits held in Scarborough regarding water quality in the South Bay.
- The link into the new Local Plan for North Yorkshire and planning policy was also discussed, with the 'Issues and Options' consultation coming up later this year. The recent consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework has now put a greater emphasis on sustainable drainage systems and recognised all forms of flooding, such as ground water and surface water flooding, which should help to strengthen measures to improve water quality as part of planning applications coming forward. Regular discussions continue with statutory water providers and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be reviewed shortly.

It was agreed to continue to monitor progress in this important area, with a review of the water quality motion to be programmed into the committee work programme for a further twelve months' time. In the meantime, there was a commitment from officers to share with committee members the future agendas for forthcoming meetings of the North Yorkshire River Catchments Forum and renewed calls by the committee to invite the water companies that operate within North Yorkshire to appear at a future committee meeting. This was to be picked up under the Work Programme item.

Resolved – That the update on the progress made following the agreement of the Motion be noted.

That future agendas of the North Yorkshire River Catchments Forum be shared with members of the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

23 Review of Household Recycling and Waste Collection Guidance

Following consideration of the policy at the last committee meeting, officers presented the proposed guidance on household recycling and waste collections.

Although much of the new guidance had already been harmonised across the county, there remained areas such as bin sizes, missed collection protocol, proof of assisted collection requirement and treatment of excess refuse waste where there are currently differences in the approach taken among the former legacy district and borough areas.

In considering the new guidance, committee members raised the following points:

- The importance of working with property owners and residents where bin storage practices are inadequate and unacceptable, as once a routine is established it is difficult to break. It was noted in response that the use of education and enforcement

was key in areas where bins were permanently left out on the street.

- It was felt that enforcing a smaller refuse bin size of 180 litres as standard would ultimately encourage more recycling. It was also emphasised that new wheelie bins would not be introduced until the current bins had reached the end of their usable life.
- Members then discussed the impact of the delayed food waste collections for North Yorkshire, which it is expected will drive down the amount of residual waste to be collected. It was commented in response that there was no government requirement to collect food waste until 2043, due to the Council's contract with Allerton Waste Recovery Park. Members also discussed the costings of offsetting the burning of waste.
- Members were generally in agreement that 180 litre refuse bins should be introduced as the standard for households up to 4 people, and that a larger or additional bin could be requested for larger households.
- Following a suggestion of providing a more bespoke service for households on the size of the wheelie bins they receive, officers raised concerns around the practicalities of swapping bin sizes, and the administrative challenges about tracking which type of bin would be left when residents move house. It was agreed that there was an operational advantage of having one bin size.
- In response to a comment from a Member in the Selby locality, it was confirmed that the new bins that had been procured were a minimum of 4mm in thickness, so stronger than the bins currently used in the Selby locality.
- The use of education to inform households around what should be placed in a residual bin was also noted.
- Committee members felt that it was important that the assisted collections process was not too restrictive and onerous, to ensure that vulnerable residents were not deterred from requesting one.
- Officers were also asked to review the presence of mini-recycling centres / bring sites, as in the past a number had been provided as an alternative to kerbside recycling services for properties with limited external storage space. It was noted that recycling centres would be looked at on their own merits individually, with no decisions made until the effects of new household collection policy can be seen, as it should reduce the amount of recycled waste.

Resolved – That the feedback received from TEEE O&S Committee be fed into the Executive report in March.

24 Notice of Motion on Adoption of an Active Travel Strategy

The Committee considered an update on Active Travel documents in North Yorkshire and how to respond to the Notice of Motion on the adoption of an active travel strategy that had been submitted to Full Council.

As the proposer of the motion, Councillor Hannah Gostlow provided an overview of her reasons for proposing the motion.

- She noted the officer report and that it highlighted the positive work undertaken and ongoing to improve active travel provision, but felt a strong, clear statement of active

travel vision and values was still required. She felt that active travel can help with overall place making and does not just sit within Highways, but across areas such as the local economy, health, wellbeing and environment.

Councillor Gostlow listed examples within her Knaresborough East division of:

- the recent green investment in the fleet of new electric buses for Harrogate and Knaresborough, but that they will struggle to change the culture and a shift to sustainable transport when the congestion on the roads makes journey times unreliable.
 - The lack of new cycling infrastructure in Knaresborough, with money spent on designs but ultimately not following through to implementation.
 - Unsafe walking and cycling routes for residents in areas that connect bus stops, the local bus station, the local train station, but without the policies and priorities to prevent vehicles speeding and changing the traffic light sequencing as required.
- In submitting the motion, Councillor Gostlow felt a dedicated Active Travel Strategy was required in the near future, rather than waiting for it to be incorporated into the new York and North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan. She argued that a dedicated strategy would ensure a sustained focus and accountability for walking and cycling improvements, rather than having them as secondary considerations. Delaying until the Local Transport Plan would be seen as postponing crucial work on infrastructure, accessibility and safety improvements, at a time when active travel is needed to address public health, congestion and climate change goals.
 - It was also argued that local authorities that are forward thinking and proactive on active travel get more funding, and waiting for the York and North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan may put the council at a disadvantage for future national funding opportunities. A well-designed strategy was felt would also strengthen bids for funding such as Section 106 agreements and regional investments.
 - Whilst the North York Moors National Park and Yorkshire Dales National Park are developing active travel plans is to be welcomed, Councillor Gostlow noted that she felt their focus is on tourism and visitor access, not the every day travel needs for North Yorkshire residents. Local communities would benefit from well planned active travel infrastructure integrating with, but not depending on, other initiatives.
 - Without a standalone strategy, clear targets, measurable outcomes and a clear timeline for active travel improvements, Councillor Gostlow felt that active travel schemes may be diluted when factored in as part of a broader new York and North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan. Creating a separate strategy for North Yorkshire would contain specific goals, a monitoring process, to ensure active travel is seen as a future priority rather than as an afterthought.

In response, the officer spoke about the work already underway to develop and adopt Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for each principal town in North Yorkshire. These plans, along with the work of the National Parks, will give a strategic view of the future active travel infrastructure required.

It was felt that the proposal in the motion to create a standalone Active Travel Strategy for North Yorkshire would not help to speed up the overall process, as it would be carried out alongside the development of a cohesive York and North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan. It was also argued that a standalone policy would act as a duplication of the work which will take place as part of the wider Local Transport Plan.

It was also noted by the officer that new guidance on Local Transport Plans and also an Integrated National Transport Strategy has not been released yet, and is expected to be published later this year. As both documents are likely to include guidance and information around Active Travel and the monitoring and evaluation of active travel schemes, it would seem sensible to wait for this information to be available before writing new strategies.

Committee Members held differing views on the motion text which included:

- A suggestion of a working group was put forward to explore some of the more achievable aspects of the motion text to help inform the development of the wider Local Transport Plan. Given the cost of fuel, car tax, insurance and the maintenance of vehicles, investing in active travel would improve the health and the wellbeing of residents and help to support the local economy.
- With the ongoing process of developing and adopting Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and the new Local Transport Plan, it is felt that it was not the right time to also be working on a separate Active Travel Strategy for North Yorkshire.
- A separate Active Travel Strategy would allow a focus to be put on North Yorkshire, rather than the wider region, where it may become diluted. The differences in the geography and demographics of York and North Yorkshire mean that active travel provision may not be fully addressed in a regional Local Transport Plan document.
- There is a role for the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny committee to hold the Combined Authority to account around the inclusion of active travel in developing a Local Transport Plan for York and North Yorkshire. Work to create and scrutinise a separate policy document for North Yorkshire at the same time would work against this.

In the debate and discussions that followed, the proposal to form an Active Travel Working Group of the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee was put forward. In proposing this, it was felt that the working group would focus on how the vision, values and priorities for active travel integrate within the Council Plan document, but also more widely how it can feed into the development of the emerging new York and North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan. This was approved.

Following the committee decision to set up a working group, the officer report recommendations were approved to go back to Full Council

Therefore:

Full Council is asked to consider the recommendations of the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee to:

- i) Note the update on Active Travel documents in North Yorkshire
- ii) recommend back to Full Council at its meeting on 26 February 2025 that an Active Travel Strategy is pursued as part of the York and North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan in collaboration with York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority and City of York Council.

Separately, to these recommendations back to Full Council, the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to:

- iii) Set up a working group on Active Travel. The terms of reference are to be drawn up, but it is set to focus on how the vision and values for Active Travel integrate within the Council Plan document and also to engage and contribute to the wider development of the new York and North Yorkshire Local Transport Plan.

25 Notice of Motion on Support for Climate and Nature Bill

The committee considered the report presented on the Notice of Motion seeking Full Council support for the Climate and Nature Bill. Following the Climate and Nature Bill standing adjourned in the House of Commons at its second reading stage on 24 January 2025, it was conceded by all present, that it was now unlikely to become law when it is scheduled to return to Parliament in July.

In introducing the rationale for originally submitting the motion, Councillor Steve Mason felt there was still a need for robust protection for climate and nature matters in particular, as had been set out in the Climate and Nature Bill, along with clear targets and support to mitigate issues such as pollution.

The committee reached a view that given the current status of the Climate and Nature Bill in Parliament, that under the circumstances the motion should be withdrawn by the proposer at Full Council on 26 February 2025. Furthermore, it was put forward and agreed by the committee to recommend that the council write to Government to call for the principles set out in the Climate and Nature Bill and existing environmental protections to be respected, while ensuring they are not undermined by new policies that may come forward.

Resolved –

- i) To recommend back to Full Council that the Notice of Motion on the Climate and Nature Bill be withdrawn.
- ii) To recommend that given the current circumstances of the Climate and Nature Bill in Parliament, that the council write to Government to call for the principles set out in the Bill and existing environmental protections be respected, while ensuring they are not undermined by new policies that may come forward.

26 Progress on Issues Raised

The Progress on Issues Raised report was noted.

27 Work Programme

The Committee considered the work programme presented for consideration.

Members made the following comments:

- Any update report from National Highways should come after the Spending Review by Government in June 2025.
- An understanding of business confidence in North Yorkshire and prospects for the future.
- The attendance of the water companies operating within North Yorkshire and include an invitation to the water regulator Ofwat as part of the meeting arrangements (as discussed under item 5)

Resolved -

That the work programme, taking into account the comments made, be noted.

28 Any other items

There were no other items of business.

The meeting concluded at 1.40 pm.

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