

North Yorkshire County Council

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 12 July 2021 remotely using MS Teams, commencing at 10.00 am.

This meeting was live broadcast on the North Yorkshire County Council YouTube site and a recording is available using the following link - <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/live-meetings>

Present:

County Councillor Stanley Lumley in the Chair.

County Councillors Paul Haslam, David Jeffels, Andy Paraskos, Clive Pearson and Roberta Swiers.

NYCC Officers attending: Deborah Hugill, Senior Strategy and Performance Officer (CSD), David Kirkpatrick, Team Leader Traffic Engineering (BES), Louise Anne Neale, Team Leader Transport Planning (BES) and Jonathan Spencer, Principal Scrutiny Officer (CSD).

County Councillors David Goode, Robert Heseltine, Don MacKay and Caroline Patmore had sent their apologies for absence.

County Councillors Karl Arthur and John McCartney were not in attendance.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

125. Chairman's Announcement

The committee's Chairman, County Councillor Stanley Lumley, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded the committee that the meeting was being held informally and that any formal decisions would need to be taken in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer using his emergency powers. He read out the following statement so that the status of the meeting was clear to all involved and viewing:

You will have seen the statement on the Agenda front sheet about current decision-making arrangements within the Council, following the expiry of the legislation permitting remote committee meetings. I just want to remind everyone, for absolute clarity, that this is an informal meeting of the Committee Members. Any formal decisions required will be taken by the Chief Executive Officer under his emergency delegated decision-making powers after taking into account any of the views of the relevant Committee Members and all relevant information. This approach has been agreed by full Council and will be reviewed at its July 2021 meeting.

126. Minutes

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

127. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

128. Public Questions or Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

129. Climate Change impact assessment – progress to date

Considered –

The written report of the Chief Executive to update the committee on the introduction of climate change impact assessment into the decision-making processes of North Yorkshire County Council.

Deborah Hugill presented the report.

Deborah Hugill explained that climate change impacts in respect of the county council primarily focused on property and transport in view of those being where the largest emissions were that could be directly controlled at this stage. She also referred in the report to the carbon reduction programme, Beyond Carbon, which was now being established as part of the Beyond 2020 change management structure. There was also a one off £1 million fund for pump priming and development of business cases within the current budget as well.

The climate change impact assessment tool was introduced to not just look at the major aspects of work that the county council was doing, but also to take into account the impact that every decision that it made had upon making potential changes to the climate in the future. The impact tool was based upon one used by Devon County Council. This was chosen because it was felt to be useable whilst being sufficiently detailed.

Deborah Hugill referred to the impact assessment tool at Appendix 1 and the guidance at Appendix 2. She explained that there was no intention that the impact assessment tool would replace more detailed statutory environmental assessments.

Whilst there was no legal requirement at the moment, the county council had examined what other councils were doing and most were in a similar position; all were trying to get a handle on how their decisions were making an impact and tweaking those decisions to ensure that we could mitigate any impact as much as possible. The tool was implemented last year as a pilot and then rolled out across the Council from August.

The county council's democratic services department had incorporated the requirement into their report template so that staff producing reports were prompted to use it.

Deborah Hugill explained that she was getting copies of many of the completed reports to scrutinise. Overall the use of the template was most widespread within Business and Environmental Services Directorate as staff found it easier to see the impact of physical infrastructure rather than services related to people, even though there were impacts. Climate change assessments were also expected to be undertaken in relation to the

Beyond 2020 programme management projects and workstreams. The County Council was also working with the LEP, North Yorkshire district councils and the City of York Council to develop a carbon literacy training program, with the intention of it rolling out to the different local authorities in the autumn.

The intention of the training was to help more people to understand the issues because all staff were contributing towards climate change and so needed to take responsibility for all the services that the county council delivered.

Deborah Hugill concluded by noting that the climate change impact assessment tool was a new concept for many staff, despite the fact that many people were very much more clued up on climate change and environmental issues than previously, but it was a new exercise for people to have to fill in and so it would take a while to embed, as did the equality impact assessment process.

Members made the following comments:

- The Chairman noted that there were hurdles to surpass in relation to take-up but in his view the impact on climate change needed to be part of any decision that the council took. This should be a mandatory consideration as it would be for financial impact or equality and diversity. He noted though that the council was moving in the right direction backed up with the training listed in the report. The training should perhaps be mandatory but clearly more discussion was required before a decision was made about that.
- County Councillor David Jeffels asked if schools could play a greater role in this agenda, particularly in relation to primary schools, noting that it was usually easier to influence behavioural change amongst primary school aged children. Deborah Hugill replied that there was a service through the county council's traded service to work with schools to engage them to reduce their carbon footprint. She referred to the 'Powerdown Pete' initiative backed up by a website and resources. Grants were also being used to improve the fabric of school buildings to reduce their carbon emissions.
- County Councillor Paul Haslam said he was pleased that the council now had a climate change impact assessment tool but had some concerns. The training in the use of the climate impact assessment tool should be mandatory for all staff. In relation to the budget of £1 million towards the environment, this year the council needed to be using a portion of that money to accelerate the programme. A sense of urgency was needed and if this had been Covid-19, actions would have been done immediately, even though a lot more people were going to die earlier as a result of climate change. He also queried why the council was putting its own carbon literacy course together when there were already good examples available. He concluded by noting that cultural change would take time but felt that the council had not engaged with the agenda quickly enough and so there was perhaps a need to look back at what lessons were learned so that the process could be sped up. He said that he was concerned that staff had not got to grips with the exercise. He noted that some of the responses had been done in a tick box fashion and staff were not always sure which box to tick. He had examples which he would be happy to pass on to Deborah Hugill. He noted that there was a need for reports to be inspected. He said the climate impact assessment tool needed to be part of the decarbonisation strategy, and was not sure from reading the report if this was the case. Deborah Hugill replied that she agreed in relation to utilising the budget to move forward as quickly as possible. Pump priming funding was important in order to be able to lever in additional resources. In relation to the training, she replied that

she had not been involved in the carbon literacy training package being put together so did not know the rationale for the decision to go with a specific training course as opposed to adopting one in existence. It would however provide the opportunity for the county council to be able to brand it with what it was doing, which would be useful for staff to know. She said that she agreed about the lessons learned from embedding equality and diversity, and sharing best practice was important as all local authorities were aiming for the same objective. She said she shared the concern about the potential for the form to be only seen as a tick box exercise and that could be because people did not understand fully the issues but would be happy to have a conversation with County Councillor Paul Haslam about individual reports where he had concerns. She noted that there was potential for this to be a topic at a senior management seminar and would take that back to see if this could be actioned.

Resolved –

That the Committee notes the progress in implementing climate change impact assessments and that the suggestions for further improvement of the process outlined above are taken into account.

130. Implementation of Active Travel schemes in the county

Considered –

The written report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services Chief Executive to update the committee of the delivery of active travel schemes across North Yorkshire.

Louise Anne Neale presented the report.

Louise Anne Neale noted that in relation to walking and cycling the national policy background had changed quite considerably. The focus from the Department for Transport was moving very much more towards providing active travel infrastructure, and this began in 2017 when the DfT launched its cycling and walking investment strategy. Within that strategy was set out the need for local cycling and walking infrastructure plans.

She went on to set out subsequent key policy announcements and the subsequent impact of the covid-19 pandemic generating new funding streams including the emergency Active Travel Fund and Active Travel Fund 2, which the County Council put in bids for and received funding for some of the projects put forward. Active Travel Fund 3 had been announced recently. The County Council was in a good position in applying to this and future funding streams because it now had detailed plans already worked up to a level of detail that most councils did not have. Further funding was expected from the Department of Transport.

2030 was a key milestone date as that was when there was scheduled to be a ban on the sale of petrol and diesel-powered vehicles. It was expected that funding would be available to local authorities to provide other modes of transport, as well as helping people to move to electric vehicles. The active travel agenda was likely to remain a priority and probably even more so than when the most recent local transport plan was written back in 2016.

The County Council would be reviewing its local transport plan as well to ensure that it

was up-to-date, setting out its aspirations for providing for walking and cycling and linking into the changing policy environment.

Members made the following comments:

- County Councillor David Jeffels referred to the significant increase in the number of cyclists on the road and related concerns about cyclist putting themselves at risk because of the volume of traffic. He asked if there were means to extract more funding from house builders to provide safe routes for cyclists. It would be useful if there was a survey of schemes that could be introduced beyond those already funded to date. He asked Louise Anne-Neale whether she thought that North Yorkshire County Council should put more pressure on developers at the present time to do this. Louise Anne Neale replied in the affirmative. She said that there was a need to start looking at all of the ways that the council can fund these schemes, and one of those will definitely be through working with developers to firstly make sure that their developments include active travel infrastructure. Linked to this would be to establish where the council can work with developers to tap into funding to deliver offsite infrastructure as well. She was currently working with colleagues in the development management team so that they are aware of the importance of active travel schemes being part of development plans. Further to consultation last year 300 schemes had been suggested. A lot of funding would be required to deliver those which the council did not have so there was a need to tap into other funding sources including from developers.
- Cllr. Paul Haslam said that not only should developers be providing funding for active travel but within their plans North Yorkshire County Council should be making sure that the infrastructure and the streets in new developments promoted active travel such as the inclusion of footpaths and cycleways, including connecting local schools. However in order to make sure people took up active travel modes of transport it was more than just about providing cash; it also required behavioral change. Active travel policy also needed to be part of the county council's decarbonisation policy. This was because in order to have an impact upon carbon emissions, what was required was a shift in the type of transport that people used, such as people moving away from driving to walking or cycling or using public transport. If cycle paths were introduced but few people used them, there would be no impact on reducing carbon emissions. He pointed out that whilst there were in the region of 17,000 schoolchildren in Harrogate and Knaresborough, only 4% cycled to school and yet from surveys undertaken 50% of all school aged children would like to cycle to school. If there was an increase to 50% and over of all school-aged children not travelling to school by car, this would have a dramatic impact in relation to creating a cleaner environment. There should be an aspiration for the council to set a target figure for reducing car journeys in the county including targets for individual projects. This would also help lever in funding by generating more public interest for projects if the council said for example this project could reduce x number of car journeys. Another issue was choosing the right routes for active travel within a locality and linking up schemes to get a higher impact and better value for money. He gave an example of a scheme in Knaresborough along the A59, which in his view would have been better routed away from the A59 and on to another road; this would have been safer and more likely to have had greater use. He said that when he spoke to parents of pupils at the local schools, their priority was to choose the safest route to school, which was not necessarily the quickest route to school. Louise Anne Neale replied that there was absolutely a need to make sure developers were delivering on their commitments and she referred to the relevant guidance that developers should be using. This guidance was not simply about infrastructure that we as the local highway authority put in place but was also for developers. She agreed with the other comments that County Councillor Paul Haslam had made about encouraging cultural change and was an aspect that Department for Transport was asking

councils to include within their bids for Active Travel Fund three.

- County Councillor Paul Haslam said there was a need to not just set out expectations to developers but also to inspect what the works carried out because without that presence some developers would not carry out the works.
- County Councillor Roberta Swiers voiced concerns that whilst several housing schemes were scheduled in close proximity to each other within her division, the funding did not seem to be there for active travel routes to connect the villages affected. What this meant was that the roads would be getting busier with road vehicles, which would put off people cycling or walking. She said also that whilst at the planning stage developers would 'talk the talk', there was a need for them to be required to designate funding, for example to a separate pot of funding to ensure the schemes went ahead. Louise Anne Neale mentioned that developers could be required as a part of a condition of the planning consent to put funding forward and this was an aspect that planning development management colleagues within the county council were increasingly working with developers to introduce.
- The Chairman noticed that there was a public appetite for active travel schemes and this was backed by government. Over the coming years, more government funding would be available including through devolved funding to local areas. He asked if there was a list of programme works ready to put forward in anticipation of funding initiatives that came forward in the future. Louise Anne Neale said that the local insight, local cycling and walking infrastructure plans were the council's set of plans and included in them were designs with economic appraisals, so the council had all the information that was typically needed to put in a bid. Limiting factors for the council would be the amount of funding that would be available to bid for, competition from other local authorities and the window of opportunity to spend the funding. The Chairman asked if the county council joined up with Sustrans when putting forward cycleways. Louise Anne Neale confirmed that this was the case and the council also provided comments on schemes put forward by Sustrans that the county council was not able to fund directly.
- County Councillor Clive Pearson referred to a project within his division and asked for an update on when it would commence. Louise Anne Neale explained that in respect of the scheme, North Yorkshire County Council was working with consultants WSP to do the detailed designs for the scheme and it was included as part of round two of the Active Travel Fund. The scheme would need to be delivered before the end of March 2022. In relation to another scheme that County Councillor Clive Pearson referred to, Louise Anne Neale explained that it was not included in the funding proposals being submitted to government at present but if it met the criteria for future funding opportunities it could be put forward.
- County Councillor Andy Paraskos referred to a scheme in a parish within his division that was part way through but there was a shortfall in funding to complete the scheme. He asked what options were available to lever in this additional funding such as a public works loan. Louise Anne Neale explained that she was not able to provide capital funding for the scheme but agreed to have a discussion with County Councillor Andy Parakos about other possibilities following the meeting.
- The Chairman concluded the discussion by noting that active travel was an emotive subject especially when linked to climate change impacts and was increasingly popular as highlighted by the phenomenal explosion in cycling. Active travel was expected to grow especially for leisure purpose and that was why it was important to work with organisations such as Sustrans to get a comprehensive picture of cycling in the county.

Resolved –

That the Committee notes the delivery of active travel schemes across North Yorkshire.

131 Review of 20 mph Speed Limit Policy

Considered –

The written report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services to provide an update the committee with an update on the preparation of a revised 20mph Speed Limit policy.

David Kirkpatrick presented the report.

David Kirkpatrick explained that work was in progress now and referred to the report detailing the progress against each of the recommendations put forward by the committee arising from its review. Since the review had been undertaken, the landscape had changed due to the covid-19 pandemic and as a result active travel had come to the fore and that might possibly increase the support for 20 mph initiatives.

Since the review was completed some of the recommendations in the committee's report had been discharged and built into the policy or finalising elements of the same.

David Kirkpatrick said that one of the key things he would like to put forward is for the inclusion of 20mph zones in the policy; the committees' recommendations had centred only on 20mph speed limits. It was intended for the new policy to bring the delivery of 20mph speed limits and 20mph speed zones under a single document. The assessment criteria was much the same for both of them.

He went on to note that the policy would not be an extensive document.

Members made the following comments:

- The Chairman said he had received several enquiries from members of the public and schools since the committee's recommendations had been approved about the process for applying for 20mph speed limits. This also included schools that had tried but failed previously to get 20mph speed limits outside the school. They were questioning how to go about the process of applying to have a 20mph scheme introduced, and what had changed materially as a result of the committee's recommendations. They wanted advice on what their chances would be on being successful in getting a 20mph scheme outside their school. However, there did not appear to be a single point of contact within North Yorkshire County Council for advice and guidance to help local communities be guided through the process. A single point of contact in the council was required. He referred to school within his division that had been trying for several years to have a 20mph speed limit outside the school and had recently had another application rejected but with no clear understanding as to why it had been rejected. He understood that there needed to be a technical element in decision-making about whether an area qualified based upon historical accident data. However, decision-making should not just be about the numbers; it should also be about local perception and local need. The latter seemed to have failed to have been taken forward at this stage and he was concerned about. Whilst it was a challenge to square the circle of accident history data versus public perception, the committee in its report had felt strongly that local need should have more weight than it had previously; the statistical evidence should not be the sole factor in decision-making. David Kirkpatrick agreed about the points

- around communication and single point of contact. He was responsible from a central point of view in putting together a policy for the Area Highways teams to deliver but those contacts would be included in the documents and there would be a generic email address. There would be a clear means of contact for people to discuss their ideas with an appropriate member of staff. He acknowledged that engineers' could sometimes be focused on just assessing the technical statistical detail rather than other aspects. This was understandable given their background and training and it was important to use the statistics as the basis for investment but there were some subtleties to be considered in relation to public concerns about speeding. He referred to the Safer Roads Fund monies that the county council had received over the last two to three years. This had a focus on funding projects relating to changing perceived risk, rather than the actual risk that the council had already invested in to tackle; so there was an understanding there about the importance of perception from a policy and funding point of view. Added to this the growth of active travel was another policy driver. Cycle ways would have an impact on how traffic moved on the road because they supported a lower speed limit.
- County Councillor Andy Paraskos said that the criteria for 20mph schemes seemed to be stringent to meet. There was a parish within his division that had been willing to pay for a scheme to be introduced in one of its villages so that North Yorkshire County Council did not have to fund it. However the cost that the parish council was quoted was in the region of £100,000, which it could not afford. There were no options to introduce a cycle lane because it was a linear village with the main road running through. Speed surveys had shown that there was an issue with speeding through the village. He said that three years' worth of accident data was not long enough in order to base decisions on eligibility for a scheme, especially as the lockdowns arising from the covid-19 pandemic had led to a reduction in road traffic and so would skew the data. He suggested five years' worth of accident data made greater sense. David Kirkpatrick replied that funding was an aspect that needed to be considered seriously. He noted there were two arguments to that and it should never be a case that because a parish could potentially afford the implementation of a scheme that it should be introduced, and vice versa. Any additional funding though that could be levered in to support funding from the county council would be welcome given the constraints on its budget. In relation to the cost of £100,000 quoted for the scheme, he said that he suspected that was because it could be that additional traffic calming measures would need to be put in place to reduce the speed of vehicles and so that the speed limit would be self-enforcing. Speed signs limit would for that location not physically reduce the speed of vehicles. This would be the case with other locations. The county council would be looking to set aside a capital budget for 20mph schemes but would also need to look at other funding mechanisms to use. In relation to the three year time frame for recording accident statistics, that was a national standard because statistically three years provided the optimum length of time and of the reflection of the level of risk and how that that section of the network or junction was performing at that time. The county council did extended searches to five years and even sometimes 10 years to get that longer-term trend. He acknowledged that traffic flows had been skewed over the last 18 months because of the pandemic and the council was building that into its analysis. He agreed it would be entirely appropriate to take a slightly longer term in light of this but going forward once past the pandemic period from a policy point of view it would be right to keep with the three years period of analysis.
 - County Councillor Paul Haslam mentioned that many people had contacted him about 20mph speed limits. He said that he would like to see a timeline on when all the various recommendations put forward by the committee would be introduced. In relation to statistics he said that about 1700 people died nationally on the roads last year as a result of accidents. However, another 10,000 people died from premature deaths as a result of the emissions from vehicles. He said that one of the factors that was often missed was that 20mph speed limits helped people feel safer. This

then provided a social return on the capital invested as it encouraged people to use active transport in less time than it took for cycle paths to be able to be introduced, and for there to be a reduction in carbon emissions. David Kirkpatrick said that there was not an explicit date listed against each of the committee's recommendation but he could provide more information after the meeting to provide greater assurance in terms of timescales for delivery. He acknowledged the points raised by County Councillor Paul Haslam about the national statistics. He said that a core element of the traffic engineering teamwork was about safety making the entire highway network as safe and as accessible as possible for multiple different users. He acknowledged that in relation to active travel it was a 'chicken and egg' situation in terms of which do you encourage first – that is to explicitly encourage active modes of travel or put in traffic calming measures such as 20mph speed zones first. The issue was that expenditure was finite but officers did need to consider in greater detail as to how to promote the active travel agenda. The DfT guidance on setting local speed limits would continue to be used and in that document it referred to the need to understand community needs, etc. However, with the new policy it would also be about making sure that community needs would be applied through a policy process.

- The Chairman said that whilst he noted about getting the right balance and the importance of the technical side of things, there was a need for greater weight to be placed upon local needs than was currently the case. David Kirkpatrick said that he agreed with that. Local need could not be measured quite as well as it could be in relation to technical data and it would inevitably be the case that schemes would be agreed in some areas and not others. It would be important to ensure the reasons for decisions would be captured clearly.
- The Chairman asked for a list to be produced of the number of schools that currently had 20mph speed limits, noting that this was an aspect that the committee had requested previously when undertaking its review. He said it was important for Members to have this list when discussing 20mph speed limits with their local communities and to know the reasons why they had been introduced. David Kirkpatrick said that he agreed and acknowledged that there were gaps in the information that was available to the public. Within the highways engineering team staff were having detailed conversations about how decisions were recorded and how those decisions would be monitored in future. He noted that North Yorkshire was a large county with a lot of schools. Records of the decisions taken were currently quite fragmented between the Area Highways offices. The record of the decisions needed to be more structured and produced in a more useful way for staff to be able to use. The Chairman noted that there was a strong case for having a top-down approach to decision-making to ensure a consistent approach across the county in relation to decisions taken about which areas warranted 20mph speed limits.
- County Councillor Andy Paraskos mentioned about the benefits of having 20mph speed limits in relation to slowing down the average speed within an area. Typically, if drivers saw a 30mph speed limit they would travel through that area at speeds up to 40mph. If a 20mph speed limit was in place they would reduce their speed to down perhaps as far as 30mph. The Chairman noted that the task group had discussed this. However it was far easier to address speeding in an urban environment by introducing lower speed limits than it was in the county's mostly rural environment. Cost was also another factor.
- The Chairman concluded by emphasising again the importance of consistent and transparent decision-making in relation to 20mph schemes. He mentioned that in his division parishes had been trying for a long time without success to get 20mph schemes in their area. They had been hopeful that there would be change after the County Council's Executive had agreed to accept the committee's recommendations. There was no evidence though of this happening on the ground in terms of local need being taken into account. Instead, there continued to be a reliance only on

historical statistical data. David Kirkpatrick said that these concerns were understood. Over the past 12 months enquiries about 20mph schemes had grown and he referred back to the fact that there had been a changing mindset because of the covid-19 situation as more people wanted the ability to travel in different ways. He said that he wished to assure the committee that the implementation of the new policy was a priority and the committee would be consulted in a timely fashion on the finalised draft version of the 20mph speed limit policy. He would also follow-up to today's presentation by providing timescales for the policy to be introduced.

Resolved –

- a) That the Committee notes the progress to date.
- b) That the Committee is consulted on the finalised draft version of the 20mph speed limit policy.

132. Work Programme

The report of the Principal Scrutiny Officer asking the Committee to confirm, amend or add to the areas of the work listed in the Work Programme schedule (Appendix 1 to the report).

Jonathan Spencer introduced the report.

Jonathan Spencer reported that there were in effect two committee meetings left to discuss some of the more in depth subjects before the county council election in May 2022. The April 2022 meeting would be in the pre-election period and so only non-contentious items would be able to be presented to that meeting. The committee needed to establish what it wanted to prioritise therefore for discussion at the October 2021 and January 2022 committee meetings. He suggested also that the mid cycle briefing meetings in September, December and February could be transferred into full committee meetings if required. The committee needed to be satisfied prior to the county council elections that the work it had been leading on had been completed or at least was being addressed, including its recent task group reviews. He noted that there was still a report outstanding on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the committee's single use plastics review. Another significant area of work to explore was in relation to the relevant recommendations of the North Yorkshire Rural Commission regarding transport, the economy and the environment. The Chair of the North Yorkshire Rural Commission had been due to attend today's meeting but had had to reschedule to a future meeting because today's committee had been ahead of the official press launch of the report.

Resolved -

- a) That the work programme be noted.
- b) That the North Yorkshire Rural Commission report and a report on North Yorkshire County Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy be brought to the October committee meeting.
- c) That the Chairman and Jonathan Spencer meet on the rise of the committee meeting to update the work programme.

The meeting concluded at 11.55 am.