

Meeting	Executive
Date	19 March 2020
Present	Councillors Aspden (Chair), Ayre, D'Agorne, Smalley, Waller and Widdowson
Apologies	Councillors Craghill, Cuthbertson and Runciman  Councillor Myers (usually in attendance on behalf of the Labour Group)

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### **Opening Remarks of the Chair and the Acting Chief Executive**

The Chair announced that, due to the coronavirus / Covid-19 outbreak, this would be the last scheduled meeting of the Executive to take place in the current municipal year. He outlined the work taking place with partners to respond to the crisis in order to minimise the risks to residents, provide support to families and ensure the availability of up to date information. Work was also in progress to recruit and train volunteers, establish an emergency fund (details of which would be released next week), and to put in place a robust decision-making framework. The Chair went on to express his thanks to staff, residents and communities for their response to the crisis, and highlighted the following email addresses for residents to contact the council:

For residents wishing to volunteer: [Volunteering@york.gov.uk](mailto:Volunteering@york.gov.uk)

For assistance to vulnerable residents: [COVID\\_19@york.gov.uk](mailto:COVID_19@york.gov.uk)

The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that the council was doing all it could to prioritise resources in preparation for the unprecedented challenge that lay ahead. Many members of staff were now working from home but would continue as far as possible to deliver services in full. To that end, some staff would be re-deployed to areas requiring more capacity. The council was seeking to protect its supply chains as well as its service delivery, and assistance to businesses was being revised. Updated information would continue to be posted on the council's website as it became available.

### **103. Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests, that they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

### **104. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 13 February 2020 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **105. Public Participation**

It was reported that, due to the Coronavirus epidemic, members of the public who wished to speak under Public Participation had been asked to submit their comments in writing instead.

Written representations had been received from:

- a) Chris Sherrington, co-owner of The Fulford Arms and co-founder of York Music Venues Network, urging Members to support the recommendations in the report at Agenda Item 5 (Protecting Live Music Venues and Nightclubs) in the light of the work carried out by the Network and the current threats to live venues.
- b) The Labour Group, providing detailed comments in respect of all items of business on the agenda, and on aspects of the council's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

### **106. Forward Plan**

Members received and noted details of the items that were on the Forward Plan for the next two Executive meetings at the time the agenda was published.

### **107. Protecting Live Music Venues and Nightclubs**

Members considered a report of the Director of Economy & Place and the Director of Children, Education & Communities which responded to a motion approved by Council on 31

October 2019 calling on Executive to take a number of actions in respect of live music venues in the city.

Paragraphs 6 to 20 of the report discussed the eight issues identified in the Council motion, detailing work already carried out in response to these and further actions proposed. In summary, it recommended that the council work collaboratively with the recently established York Music Venues Network to:

- promote positive messages about the city's venues and (with MakeitYork) raise awareness of events and activities;
- involve the Network in development of the Cultural Strategy and include it in the new cultural forum;
- raise Network members' awareness of the planning system and legislation as it applied to venues.

It was also proposed that the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism write to the appropriate secretary of state on the issue of business rate relief for music venues.

The Executive Member thanked those officers and Members who had helped bring the proposals forward and, having taken into account the comments received under Public Participation, it was

Resolved: (i) That the importance of York's live music venues and nightclubs be recognised as an integral part of the city's cultural offer.

(ii) That the work of the York Music Venues Network be endorsed and that the Council be a member of the network through the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Communities.

(iii) That the actions set out in paragraphs 6 to 17 of the report be agreed.

Reason In order to respond appropriately to the issues identified in the Council motion.

## **108. Empty Property Report**

Members considered a report of the Assistant Director for Housing & Community Safety which provided a response to a motion approved by Council on 17 July 2019 regarding long-term empty properties in York.

The motion sought to increase the council tax premium charged to owners of empty properties to 300% and asked Executive to consider options to further reduce the numbers of such properties. The increase to the council tax had been approved by Executive on 29 August 2019 as part of the Performance Monitor report (Minute of that meeting refers).

In respect of the second part of the motion, it was stressed that the number of long term empty properties in York was low, as indicated in the appendices to the report. However, the following options were available, as detailed in paragraphs 17-23:

**Option 1** – continue with the current strategy and level of resources (one half time officer – 0.5 FTE).

**Option 2** – as Option 1, plus a review and a progress report after 6 months to the Executive Member for Housing & Community Safety.

**Option 3** – increase the resource by 0.5 FTE to provide additional capacity.

Option 2 was recommended, on the basis that officers believed current capacity was sufficient to continue to monitor the situation and support property owners but that it was essential to ensure the council did everything possible to bring viable empty properties back into use. This option was supported by the Executive Member, whose comments were reported at the meeting. Having also noted the comments of the Labour Group on this item, it was

Resolved: That Option 2 be approved, and that:

- (i) The current strategy and level of resource within the Housing Standards and Adaptations Team be continued.
- (ii) Healthy Homes interventions continue to be carried out, to focus on providing the necessary support to homeowners living in poor housing conditions and to bring back into use empty properties that are in moderate or good condition, with information about homes found to be no longer empty to be shared with Council Tax teams.

- (iii) A progress report and review be provided to the Executive Member for Housing & Community Safety after 6 months.

Reason: While the proportion of empty properties in the City of York is very low and a significant number of those reported as empty were found to be occupied, there is a need to ensure that the council does everything possible to bring viable empty properties back into use.

#### **109. Lowfield Green: Responding to Older Persons' Accommodation Needs**

Members considered a report of the Director of Health, Housing & Adult Social Care which set out proposals to make the plot on the Lowfield Green development site that had been earmarked for a Care Home available instead for the development of Extra Care accommodation.

It was reported that, of the two bidders that had expressed an interest in developing, constructing and operating a care home on the site, only one had been invited to tender and they had withdrawn from the procurement prior to the submission deadline. The procurement had therefore been terminated. Consultation had since been carried out with York residents on their priorities and preferences for accommodation in later life.

The following options were now available:

**Option A** – to undertake a procurement exercise to secure a developer and operator of extra care accommodation. This was the recommended option, as it was in line with the results of consultation with residents and supported by the Health & Adult Social Care Policy & Scrutiny Committee and by local community representatives.

**Option B** – to repeat the exercise to procure a care home developer and operator. Not recommended as it did not deliver independent living accommodation and was unlikely to generate viable bids.

**Option C** – to appropriate the plot into the Housing Revenue account and the council itself to develop extra care accommodation within the housing delivery programme. Not recommended as the council was already committed financially to the delivery of homes on the site.

The comments of the Executive Member for Health & Adult Social Care, endorsing the recommendations, were reported at the meeting. Having also noted the comments of the Labour Group on this item, it was

- Resolved:
- (i) That it be noted that the procurement of a developer and operator for a care home on the Lowfield Green site has been terminated.
  - (ii) That approval be given to procure a developer/operator to construct and operate an Extra Care Housing development on the Lowfield Green site (instead of a residential and nursing care home) and that authority to award a contract be delegated to the Corporate Director of Health, Housing & Adult Social Care.
  - (iii) That approval be given to dispose of the site of the proposed Extra Care development to its developer by way of a long lease (125 years), in return for payment of a premium/capital sum.
  - (iv) That an obligation be imposed within the lease to construct and Extra Care accommodation scheme on the land within a specified period and thereafter to operate that scheme for a specified minimum period.
  - (v) That a covenant be imposed within the lease that the land can only be used for extra care accommodation (and not for any other purpose or use) for a specified period.
  - (vi) That it be noted that these proposals reflect the views of residents about where and how they want to live in their later years, gathered through a consultation and engagement exercise.

Reason: To enable the development of independent living accommodation with care in response to what residents have said that they want and to work towards the Council Plan ambitions for residents' good health and wellbeing.

## 110. Climate Emergency Response

Members considered a report which provided an update on the council's work to reduce emissions at a city level following the declaration of a Climate Emergency by Full Council in March 2019.

The report set out actions taken in response to the requests made by Executive when they received their last update, in August 2019. These had included:

- Council approving in December 2019 a recommendation to re-state the city's commitment to the Covenant of Mayors;
- Investment of £384k in developing and co-ordinating a climate action plan, plus additional funding in the budget for work relating to carbon reduction across council work areas;
- Recruitment to a new Carbon Reduction team to co-ordinate work across the council and engage with the whole city;
- Plans for the Carbon Reduction team to consider participation in the UK Climate Emergency Cities network and engage with the Local Government Association Climate Emergency Task and Finish Group.
- Plans to bring further reports to Executive and Executive Members (including the next two items on this agenda), as listed in paragraph 5e.
- Preparation of a public facing and accessible update, attached as Annex A to the report, summarising work under way, areas of future work and actions for residents to consider to help deliver the zero carbon target for the city.

The Executive Member for Environment & Climate Change thanked officers for the work they had put in and, having noted the Labour Group's comments on this item, it was

Resolved: That the update be noted.

Reason: To confirm that Members have been informed of current progress in respect of carbon reduction activities.

## 111. Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

Members considered a report of the Director of Economy & Place which sought approval for a proposed Public Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Strategy (the Strategy) to set out the rationale for the number and location of charging points, the principles of tariff-setting, and the council's approach to providing charging for residents in streets without off-road parking.

The Strategy had been developed in accordance with the decisions of the Executive on 26 September 2019 in relation to an update report on provision of EV charger points at park & ride sites (Minute 42 of that meeting refers). Despite the completion of work to make 100% of charge points available by the end of 2019, a number of longer-term underlying issues remained. The Strategy aimed to address these by setting out how the council would provide a future-proofed, high quality charging network to meet the needs of residents, fleets, through traffic and commuters.

The Executive Member for Environment & Climate Change expressed full support for the proposals, describing them as detailed and comprehensive. Having also noted the comments of the Labour Group on this item, it was

Resolved: (i) That the EV Charging Strategy be approved for adoption.

Reason: The Strategy is necessary to provide direction on future investments into the public charging network, and with the predicted growth in plug-in vehicle sales it is important to formalise the council's approach ahead of investment decisions.

(ii) That the ambition in the Strategy for a minimum of 5% of bays in council-owned car parks will be charging bays by 2023 be endorsed, noting that, based on initial costing estimates, this is expected to cost around £0.8m and that delivery will be subject to successful external funding bids, this being in addition to agreed budgets for Hyperhubs at Monks Cross and Poppleton Bar (£2.2m) and renewal of the existing charging estate (£0.25m).



Reason: In order to assist with the acceleration of EV take-up and to ensure there is robust provision of EV charging points across the city and meet carbon reduction targets, 5% is consistent with current planning policy for developments.

(iii) That the approach to bay management based on the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee and set out in paragraphs 31-35 of the report be endorsed.

Reason: To provide a fair system for charging and parking, prevent bay blocking and allow efficient management of car parks and charging bays.

(iv) That a standard tariff of 20 p/kWh for Fast Chargers and 25 p/kWh for Rapid and Ultra Rapid chargers to agreed, to be reviewed on an annual basis as part of budget setting.

Reason: To ensure a fair tariff for all residents and a sustainable approach to the council-managed EV charging estate.

(v) That it be noted that officers will continue to explore options for on-street parking where viable.

Reason: To ensure there is equal opportunity for all potential users.

(vi) That it be noted that officers will explore options for EV taxi charging in the city centre.

Reason: To assist taxi drivers to utilise EV.

## **112. Future Fleet Management Policy**

Members considered a report of the Director of Economy & Place which informed them of the adoption of a Vehicle Management Policy designed to help minimise the size of the council's fleet, and set out options for the transition to a green fleet.

The Policy, attached as Annex 1 to the report, had been developed in response to a review undertaken by the Economy

& Place Policy Development Committee in 2018. Its focus was on reducing the requirement for vehicles in the first place by enabling under-used assets to be identified, reviewed and re-allocated. Another key part of addressing transport emissions lay in the council's policy for replacing its existing fleet. The following options available, as detailed in paragraphs 21-46 of the report:

**Option 1** – replace all vehicles under 3.5 tonnes with a fossil fuel vehicle. This was the most cost effective option but did not respond to the climate emergency declaration.

**Option 2** – replace the fleet of 3.5 tonne vehicles with electric vehicles immediately. This would be costly and may have an impact on service delivery due to current lack of infrastructure.

**Option 3** – adopt a phased approach, transitioning to an electric fleet over the next 4 years. This was the recommended option, as it would achieve the objectives of Option 2 while allowing time to plan and restructure services around an electric fleet.

The Executive Member for Transport welcomed the report and the contribution of all parties in bringing forward the proposals. Having also noted the comments of the Labour Group on this item, it was

Resolved: (i) That the adoption of the draft Vehicle Management Policy at Annex A to the report be noted.

Reason: The policy will formalise the current working practice and strengthen the work to minimise the size of the fleet actually required to deliver council services

(ii) That Option 3 be approved and the transition be commenced to an electric fleet for all vehicles under 3.5 tonnes as part of a four-year programme, by extending the operational life of some existing vehicles, with this to be incorporated into the Fleet Management Policy.

Reason: The transition to an electric fleet will reduce the environmental impact of the council's operations, and taking a phased approach to this will ensure service quality is maintained.

(iii) That officers be asked to continue to explore the options for vehicles over 3.5 tonnes to move away from fossil fuels.

Reason: The alternative fuel technology is evolving rapidly and will be able to support a wide range of tasks undertaken by the council's vehicles; the green technology for heavier vehicles is still emerging, but wherever viable the greenest possible option will be recommended.

(iv) That an allocation of £50k be requested from the One Planet Council capital budget to fund further development and design work to upgrade Hazel Court to operate an electric fleet.

Reason: Hazel Court Depot will be key in the delivery towards an electric fleet, and this upgrade needs to be progressed prior to the final business case.

### **113. Bus Services Update**

Members considered a report of the Director of Economy & Place which set out progress on a number of bus-related initiatives being taken forward by the council and sought Executive support for proposals to continue with, or make changes to, existing policies.

The report detailed the investments in, and improvements to, bus services in York since the policies were adopted in 2012. The focus now was on continuing to develop these services while managing their environmental impact. Much of this work was already under way and a more general 'York Public Transport' study, considering how to serve the new development proposed in the Draft Local Plan, was due to start soon.

Paragraphs 7 to 57 of the report set out options and recommendations in those areas where an Executive decision or endorsement was required in advance of the Local Transport Plan refresh; namely: York Clean Air Zone (CAZ), Tour Bus electric retro-fit conversions, Electrification of Bus Network Fund, Superbus Fund, supported services 3A and 12, and Better Deal for Bus Users supported services funding. In respect of the tour bus conversions, it was noted that the current

mix of electric and diesel buses could not be continued as this would not meet the requirements of the CAZ. In respect of services 3A and 12, the options were to cease providing the services, as they were not affordable within the current support budget, or to allocate funding from the devolved Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG).

The Executive Member for Transport thanked officers for their work and bus operators and drivers for maintaining essential services in the current circumstances. Having also noted the comments of the Labour Group on this item, it was

Resolved: (i) That it be noted that Clean Air Zone upgrade grant has been allocated to meet the requirements of York's Clean Air Zone and that operators are now procuring new buses or fitting existing buses with upgrade kits.

Reason: To support delivery of the Clean Air Zone programme, in line with Council Plan objectives.

(ii) That the current trial of retro-fitted electric tour buses be ended and discussions entered into with DEFRA to re-allocate the funding within the York bus network.

Reason: The trial of retro-fitted electric open top buses has fallen short of the operators' requirements and exploring the scope for re-use of the funds will allow a new approach to be identified which will best achieve air quality objectives in York.

(iii) That the council submit an Expression of Interest to the Department for Transport's Electric Bus Tour Fund on 30 April.

Reason: A successful bid would improve air quality in York by increasing the proportion of the bus network operated by electric buses.

(iv) That the council not submit an Expression of Interest to the Superbus Fund, but instead monitor Department for Transport (DfT) activity for future bidding opportunities to similar funds and develop projects in conjunction with the LTP refresh.

Reason: Enquiries with the DfT have confirmed that York is not eligible for Superbus funding; however, attracting funding for a similar project in the future would be an opportunity to improve York's bus network.

(v) That the council support ongoing provision of services 3A and 12 using monies from the council Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) allocation, and allow expenditure of BSOG in York on other supported bus services at the discretion of the Executive Member for Transport.

Reason: To allow continuation of a well-used service that would otherwise not be affordable within the council's supported bus services constraints, and to allow the council flexibility to subsidise other bus services as and when required to support Council Plan objectives.

(vi) That the council claim an £83.5k allocation from the DfT to support additional tendered bus services, noting the delegated decision about which routes to support that was taken by the Director of Economy & Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Transport and submitted to the DfT.

Reason: To increase the number and variety of bus services available to York residents in line with the objectives of the DfT administered fund.

Cllr K Aspden, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.33 pm and finished at 6.03 pm].