
Meeting	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Date	7 July 2025
Present	Councillors Fenton (Chair), Merrett (Vice-Chair), Ayre, Coles, Wells, Widdowson and J Burton (Substitute)
Apologies	Councillors Baxter and Watson
In attendance	Cllr Kent, Executive Member, Environment and Climate Emergency Cllr Lomas, Executive Member, Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion
Officers Present	Claire Foale, Chief Strategy Officer Shaun Gibbons, Head of Carbon Reduction Guy Close, Democratic Services Manager

7. Apologies for Absence (5.33 pm)

Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Taylor, Watson and Baxter. Cllr J Burton substituted for Cllr Taylor.

8. Declarations of Interest (5.33 pm)

Members were asked to declare at this point in the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interests or other registrable interests that they might have in the business on the agenda, if they had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests.

None were declared.

9. Minutes (5.34 pm)

Resolved: That the minutes be approved as a correct record for the following meetings:

- Corporate Scrutiny held on 9 June 2025.
- Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee, 12 May 2025.
- Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee, 1 May 2025.

- Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee, 21 May 2025.
- Economy, Place, Access and Transport Committee, 25 March 2025, 29 April 2025 and 20 May 2025.

10. Public Participation (5.36 pm)

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Flick Williams, a resident, spoke in relation to the committee's remit and raised concerns regarding a statement made by the Director of City Development during the discussion of the Station Gateway item which was heard at the June meeting of the committee. She questioned whether changes made to improve accessibility to the scheme had cost the stated amount of £2-3m and went on to identify ways in which suggested improvements had removed cost rather than added to them. She noted that the York Disability Rights Forum had written to the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion to request a financial breakdown of the figures and they were awaiting a response.

The Executive Member confirmed that officers were preparing a response to the letter, and this would be shared with members in due course.

11. Harewood Whin Green Energy Park Update (5.40 pm)

The Chief Strategy Officer presented a report which provided an update to members on the outline business case to create a green energy park on the Harewood Whin site, noting the full business case would be funded by the net zero fund. The Head of Carbon Reduction outlined the process and explained that it followed the HM Treasury green book protocols.

Members asked a range of questions covering the rationale for decreasing the megawatt capacity, the extension to the business case from 25 to 30 years, direct take off, the relocation of the council fleet to Harewood Whin, the smart export guarantee scheme, return on investment compared to other green investment projects, changes to the scheme, the cost of delivering one megawatt, project management risk mitigations, initial feedback on ground conditions, CYC energy manager, project phasing risks and optimism bias.

Officers reported the following:

- One megawatt offered the least risk and the greatest return in the first phase; it was possible to expand on this in future phases. Although the financial return would be lower, there was a greater environmental benefit. The cost to deliver one megawatt was around £1m.
- Moving the entire council fleet to Harewood Whin would change routes and impact waste collection; Officers would seek to optimise routes.
- The timescale for the project was based on the current lifecycle of solar PV, which was assumed to be thirty years. The early years of the scheme would service debt repayment. The full business case would examine this in more detail.
- The smart export guarantee scheme (SEGS) was typically for a twelve-month period and then renewable. A power purchase agreement was typically for between five and twenty-five years with a lower price point. Should there be greater offtake on site, this could be actioned more quickly through SEGS.
- There was a strong strategic case to make use of the site although the returns were slightly lower than similar schemes not on an industrial site.
- There had been no early indication of problems with the ground conditions survey.
- The risks of project management would be mitigated through the use of internal contracts to ensure consistency for the lifetime of the project. A project board exists in the Corporate Governance framework. Climate Change and national capital programme board.
- An officer had taken on the responsibilities of energy management, additionally, a framework agreement was in place with Yorkshire Purchasing.
- There were positive indications from the Combined Authority that the project would fit with their funding streams. They provided strict deadlines which, if not met, would risk funding.
- A phased approach meant that the scheme was not committed to existing technology. The risks, both mitigated and unmitigated, would be clearly identified to the Executive. The full business case would identify those gaps, such as the volatility of energy pricing.
- Each phase could be delivered as a stand-alone project, the strongest financial case was in the early stages of the project; the greater environmental and social benefits were within the later stages. Phasing should reduce the risk although this would be further assessed in the full business case.
- Optimism bias was included in the green book guidance which was due to be reissued early 2026.

Resolved:

- i. That member's support for the scheme be noted.
- ii. To receive further updates through briefings and to return to the committee for pre-decision scrutiny.
- iii. A briefing for members on project management.

Reason:

To help shape the full business case work to follow.

12. Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy Scrutiny, Task and Finish Group (6.29 pm)

Members considered the formal proposal for a task and finish group to provide scrutiny of the budget setting process and the medium - term financial strategy.

The timeline, objectives and process were discussed, and it was

Resolved:

- i. that the aims and objectives be reviewed by the Chair and Vice-Chair and then circulated to the committee members.
- ii. The Chair and Vice-Chair would establish the membership of the group.

Reason: To enable the task and finish group to proceed with the review in line with scrutiny procedures.

13. Boundary Commission Electoral Review - Council Size, Task and Finish Group (6.52 pm)

Members considered the formal proposal for a task and finish group to provide scrutiny of the Boundary Commission Electoral Review – Council Size.

The timeline, objectives and process were discussed and the opportunities for resident engagement were considered. It was

Resolved:

- i. That the remit, aim and timeframe be approved.

- ii. The Chair and Vice-Chair to identify the membership of the group.

Reason: To enable the task and finish group to proceed with the review in line with scrutiny procedures.

14. Work Plan (7.01 pm)

Members considered the draft work plan for the committee and the overview scrutiny work plan for the scrutiny committees.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

Reason: To ensure an overview of the scrutiny work plan.

Cllr S Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.33 pm and finished at 7.07 pm].

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