

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change
Date	14 December 2022
Present	Councillors Widdowson
In attendance	Shaun Gibbons, Head of Carbon Reduction Ben Grabham, Head of Environmental Services Dave Meigh, Operations Manager Steve Wragg, Flood Risk Manager Marilyn Sanderson, Environment Agency

5. Declarations of Interest (13:30)

The Executive Member was 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 she might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

6. Minutes (13:30)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 5 October 2022 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

7. Public Participation (13:30)

It was reported that there had been three registrations to speak at the session under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Councillor Waters spoke on agenda item 4 - Annual Carbon Emissions Report 2021/22. He opposed York's net zero ambition and stated that the city's emission contributions are minute before questioning the gains from the expenditures so far. He then spoke on the City's £8 million fleet procurement programme and highlighted the issues of their mileage and range, and the lack of appropriate electric charging facilities in York.

Gwen Swinburn spoke on agenda item 6 - Weed Pilot 2022 and on general matters within the remit of the committee. She praised the positive changes regarding road sweeping and gully cleaning before stating that weeds had

reinvaded the residential areas of the city, namely in the Guildhall ward, where councillors opted out of the third weed treatment without consultation with residents. She then expressed frustration with the Council's fault reporting system and raised questions regarding the £8 million fleet procurement programme, the money spent and its lease costs.

Councillor K Taylor also spoke on agenda item 6 - Weed Pilot 2022 and spoke on the positives of recommendations C and D within the report before highlighting its shortcomings. He argued that the Council has not sufficiently engaged with other agencies, that the commitment to phase out pesticides is ineffective as it has no plan with timescales, and that the analysis of the weed contractor is inconsistent with the experience of residents. He concluded by asking for these problems to be tackled to ensure this carries onto the next administration.

8. Annual Carbon Emissions Report 2021/22 (13:41)

The Executive Member considered a report on York's carbon emissions from corporate activity in 2021/22, which monitored progress towards the City's 2030 net zero goal and identified areas of improvements. The Head of Carbon Reduction outlined the report and reported that:

- Total emissions experienced a small decrease between 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- Corporate emissions accounted for roughly 4% of city-wide greenhouse gas emissions and the Council's fleet and buildings accounted for most of the corporate emissions.
- Emissions associated with the fleet continued to reduce as a result of the electrification programme.
- Emissions from the space heating and hot water of buildings increased but are still lower than they were in 2019.

He also went on to explain that since 2019, the Council have produced decarbonisation plans for buildings, introduced carbon literacy training, adopted a policy to consider low carbon heating solutions, and continue to decarbonise the fleet and promote active travel. The Officer concluded by stating that further progress needs to be made in decarbonising the Car Club fleet, improving understanding of scope 3 emissions, and reviewing waste production in office buildings.

The Executive Member thanked the Officer for the work on this issue and the data within the report.

Resolved:

- i. That the City of York Council Corporate Emissions Report is approved and the Council's contribution to city-wide emissions is noted.

Reason: This report fulfils the commitment in the Council Plan to report on City of York Council's corporate emissions, using the standardised and transparent SCATTER methodology.

- ii. That the recommended actions listed in the report to reduce emissions is approved.

Reason: Progress towards City of York Council becoming net zero carbon by 2030.

9. York Emissions Inventory Report 2022 (13:44)

The Executive Member considered a report on York's Emissions Inventory for 2019, which will be used to monitor progress towards the City's 2030 net zero goal. The Head of Carbon Reduction outlined the report and reported that emissions in the city decreased by 2.6% from 2018 to 2019 and that emissions from all sectors reduced since 2018, with the exception being industrial based emissions. He also noted that emissions from buildings reduced more than any other sectors.

The Executive Member thanked the Officer for the work on this issue and noted the need for some further clarity on the numerical data. She then welcomed the decrease in emissions.

Resolved: That the York Emissions Inventory Report is approved.

Reason: This report fulfils the commitment in the Council Plan to report on city-wide carbon emissions and monitor progress towards the net zero ambition.

10. Weed Pilot 2022 – Feedback and Options (13:47)

The Executive Member considered a report that provided feedback on the weed pilot undertaken in 2022 before it proposed weed treatment options for 2023 and possible further work. The Head of Environmental Services outlined the report and noted that:

- 8 wards participated in the weed pilot in 2022 and they did not have the third spray in September/October. Some areas within wards were omitted from the trial.
- Spraying around highway obstacles was replaced with strimming.
- Reducing to two sprays did not have a detrimental effect on weed growth.
- Weed contractors have sprayed the highway network but there have been some issues with performance on defined areas. These issues have since been addressed.
- Officers have engaged with other agencies, including Pesticide Action Network, the Environment Agency, and other local authorities.

In response to questions from the Executive Member, Officers agreed to engage with wards in the new year, asking them for feedback and to report back where weed hotspots are so that Officers can then create a plan to deal with these before/during the first spray in 2023.

The Executive Member noted the report and requested for some further communication regarding the performance of contractors with an avenue to provide feedback before stating that councillors should consult with residents on whether to opt out of the second or third weed spray in 2023.

Resolved:

- i. That the contents of the report and the recommendations are noted.
- ii. That Officers will write to wards outlining the treatment of weeds in 2023, asking them for information on hotspots.
- iii. That the approach to the treatment of weeds in 2023 is agreed, including options:
 - b) To offer wards the opportunity to opt out of a third spray in 2023 (i.e., not receiving spray 3 in September/October).
 - c) To offer wards the opportunity to opt out of a second spray in 2023 (i.e., not receiving spray 2 in June/July).
 - d) To cease spraying by Public Realm teams around trees within the highway verge.

Reason: The Executive Member was asked to consider the report and decide on the preferred options set out in the report for weed treatment in 2023.

11. York 5 Year Flood Plan Update (13:57)

The Executive Member considered a report which contained an update on York's 5 Year Flood Plan following new funding being allocated to the Environment Agency to renew existing, and provide new, flood defences across the City. The Flood Risk Manager and Project Director, Environment Agency (EA) were in attendance to present the report and respond to questions.

Key points raised during the presentation of the report included:

- The Council continues to progress with the DEFRA funded Innovation Programme exploring natural flood risk management solutions in the Swale, Ure and Nidd catchment areas and how such solutions can be incentivised and supported. They have also started to work with catchment partners and the recruitment of catchment partner posts have progressed.
- The Council are developing proposals for a grant scheme for natural flood management measures for catchment partners.
- The works at Germany Beck were progressing well, the delivery of the design is almost complete with planning application submission is expected late 2022 and the construction phase for the project is expected to commence in late 2023 if all planning and other permissions are granted.
- Water quality and the performance of Yorkshire Water combined sewer overflows is monitored and the Council have formed close links with a University of York led 4-year long project looking at quality issues across the wider river catchments, which will help illustrate the current and future river quality issues in York.

Key updates from the EA included:

- The EA achieved their target of better protecting over 2000 properties in York.
- The control structure at the Foss Storage Area has been completed.
- The Property Flood Resilience project is progressing with installations in progress over the next two weeks.
- 4000 floodplain meadow plants were planted in Rawcliffe Meadows.
- The EA team is prepared for winter and flood measures have been successful so far.

The Flood Risk Manager concluded by raising the issue of flood forecast in York and its inconsistencies and explained that the Council are working on this with the EA.

The Executive Member commented that she was pleased that further work is going on with the forecasting and the general work completed by the EA. She also thanked the Council for its work and expressed disappointment with Yorkshire Water for not engaging with City of York Council.

Resolved:

- i. That the updated report and the evidence presented by the Environment Agency in the session is noted and that feedback is provided.
- ii. That the progress of actions from the motion in Annex 2 is considered and endorsed, including the need to continue to work with all partners and use any opportunity to develop further studies and projects to better improve river quality and the usage of our rivers. Further updates will be brought to the Executive Member on this item.

Reason: To support the delivery of flood resilience interventions in York and across the wider River Ouse catchment.

Cllr Widdowson, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 2.14 pm].