

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change
Date	5 May 2021
Present	Councillor Widdowson

28. Declarations of Interest

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 discloseable pecuniary interest that she might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

29. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on Wednesday 7 April 2021 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

30. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been 1 registration to speak at the session under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Mr Robert Gordon spoke on the York Tree Canopy Expansion Target report, thanking the Executive Member and officers for their work on then item and detailing the positive environmental and health effects of increased canopy coverage. Mr Gordon also expressed concern that the current target of 13% was unambitious and suggested an alternative target of 15% which he believed achievable. The importance of preserving existing trees was also emphasised, especially those not a part of woodland areas.

In response, the Executive Member stated that the current target of 13% was not concrete, and where possible and practical the Council would seek to exceed said target.

31. York Tree Canopy Target

The Executive Member received a report which provided analysis of an appropriate tree canopy expansion target for York, which will contribute towards the city's net zero carbon ambition, biodiversity and air quality.

During discussion of the item, officers:

- Explained that the current tree canopy coverage stood at 10.76% and that in order to increase this figure to 13% by 2050, 10,000 new trees would need to be planted each year.
- Noted that the 50,000 trees planted by 2023 as part of York Community Woodland would aid in progress towards the target.
- Encouraged local individuals, communities and organisations to contribute towards the city's target by planting trees of their own

The Executive Member:

- Thanked officers for their report.
- Emphasised York's tree canopy expansion as part of the wider White Rose Forest Partnership and the role that increased canopy coverage will play in flood alleviation for York.

Resolved:

- (i) That a 13% target for tree canopy cover in York by 2050 be approved.

Reason: Increasing the tree canopy cover to 13% from the current level of 10.76% will produce carbon sequestration, biodiversity and health benefits. A target of 13% is achievable when balanced against the capacity for tree planting within the unique landscape and setting of York.

- (ii) That it is acknowledged that this target will form part of a wider ambition for the White Rose Forest across the region.

Reason: The regional ambition will be published in a report by WRF on 1 August 2021.

32. York 5 Year Flood Plan Update

The Executive Member considered a report which provided an update on the York Five Year Flood Plan and sought feedback on its content. Ben Hughes, Partnerships and Strategic Overview Manager – North Yorkshire of the Environment Agency joined officers in presenting the report.

During discussion of the item, officers:

- Highlighted the ongoing work at Germany Beck, which is one of the flood schemes within a wider Environment Agency led programme. Depending on the advice of engineers, construction may begin in Autumn 2021 or early 2022.
- Gave details on the Innovative Flood Resilience Programme, which has received 6 year's funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and is centred on developing natural flood management systems in the Swale, Ure and Nidd river catchment areas and seeks to co-ordinate upstream and downstream flood management.
- Referred to Annex 1's details on the ongoing flood defence projects across the city in Clementhorpe, Bishopthorpe, Lendal Bridge, St George's Field and elsewhere.
- Explained that Annex 2 breaks down £102 million total funding for York's flood defence and described the priority scoring system used to determine funding usage.
- Noted that a business case can be made to claim back the additional costs which have been caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in the last 12 months.

The Executive Member:

- Thanked officers for their report and work on improving York's flood defences.
- Expressed the need to emphasise partnership work in order to reach solutions as soon as possible.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the updated report and the evidence presented by the Environment Agency in the session be noted.

Reason: To enable the Executive Member to receive the York 5 Year Flood Plan Update and to have the opportunity to provide feedback on all content.

Cllr P Widdowson, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 3.04 pm and finished at 3.23 pm].