

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency
Date	29 April 2025
Present	Councillor Kent
Officers in attendance	James Gilchrist - Director of Environment, Transport and Planning Dave Meigh - Operations Manager - Public Realm Ian Hoult - Head of Environmental Services

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**23. Apologies for Absence (10:00am)**

No apologies for absence were received.

**24. Declarations of Interest (10:00am)**

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member was asked to declare if he had any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that they might have had in relation to the business on the agenda. None were declared.

**25. Minutes (10:01am)**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 18 March 2025 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

## **26. Public Participation (10:01am)**

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

Bill Hill spoke on item 4, Public Realm – Service Developments, on behalf of the Friends of York Walls (FOYW) and discussed the ramparts of the city walls, and how these could contribute to wildflower objectives and carbon targets. He stated that the plants which were being used by FOYW had been approved by an ecologist from City of York Council (CYC) and were native and non-evasive pollinator-friendly flowers.

Andrew Mortimer spoke on item 4, Public Realm – Service Developments, and discussed the provision of larger litter bins and the need for them in outer areas of the city, such as Hull Road Park, as well as the city centre. He also discussed the importance of maintaining short sightlines on verges adjacent road junctions to improve safety.

Councillor Waller spoke on item 4, Public Realm – Service Developments, and discussed the issue of vacancies within the Public Realm team, and the need for clarity within communications regarding what garden assistance residents could receive throughout the year. He also mentioned, and thanked, volunteers who actively engaged with improving wildflower areas.

The Executive Member confirmed that she had received a written representation by David Alexander in relation to item 4, Public Realm – Service Developments, of which had been published alongside the agenda.

## **27. Public Realm - Service Developments (10:14am)**

The Director of Environment, Transport and Planning, the Operations Manager - Public Realm, and the Head of Environmental Services presented the report and noted that it was an update on the report that was received by the Executive Member on 27 February 2024. It was reported that this report outlined plans similar to those seen in other cities across the UK.

It was noted that the report was done in response to two petitions that had been received by CYC and the Director of Environment, Transport and Planning, the Operations Manager - Public Realm, and the Head of Environmental Services noted that CYC had worked with various local groups, such as FOYW, on the themes discussed in the report. Local groups would be worked with to determine how green spaces would be improved, and to find common ground, it was understood that many areas would not look the same as they did historically, but that many improvements could be made for inclusivity and accessibility, such as the transformation of historic bowling green areas to informal kickabout areas for public use.

In response to issues raised within Public Participation, the Director of Environment, Transport and Planning, the Operations Manager - Public Realm, and the Head of Environmental Services noted that the practice of holding vacancies was no longer being done, but had happened in recent years as a budgetary measure; all posts were now filled as of the date of the decision session, and agency workers had been used to fill vacancies in the past. Officers also thanked volunteers who worked with CYC on themes within the report. The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that improvements for cutting verges in York were being investigated, and the Executive Member declared a commitment to the rollout of larger litter bins across wider areas of the city.

The Executive Member thanked the Public Realm and Waste teams for their work, and discussed the work of volunteers within the city, especially on work reducing the amount of glyphosate in their local areas.

The Executive Member concluded by stating that a plan on where grass cutting would and would not occur was necessary for promoting biodiversity of insects and plants, and that work on the Bar Walls had been influenced by the Tower of London in order to increase biodiversity (it was noted by the Executive Member, that at the time

the petitions mentioned in the report were active, this work had not been started, but was scheduled).

Resolved:

That the Executive Member:

- i. Considered the two petitions received by the Council and considered if the actions already undertaken and proposals contained within this report address the concerns raised.

Reason: To inform the future direction in the management of parks, open spaces and the Bar Walls to ensure they are managed appropriately and that the council can work with relevant groups to deliver these changes.

- ii. Noted the outcomes of the weed treatment programme in 2024 and approved the recommended approach for 2025, and future years, to continue with two applications, as set out in the report, and work with contractors to reduce the amount of glyphosate used in the treatment of weeds across the city.

Reason: To note the progress towards reducing the amount of glyphosate used in the treatment of weeds across the city delivering on the Council Plan.

- iii. Noted the content of the report and supported the changes proposed in the report in respect of the management of verges and open space in selected areas.

Reason: To build climate resilience and adaptation to climate change and improve the biodiversity of our green spaces by determining how these spaces will be managed in the future; recognising the importance of maintaining and looking after our city but that not all changes can be made immediately.

- iv. Noted the content of the report and supported the expansion of sustainable planting across the city.

Reason: Sustainable and pollinator friendly planting is the Councils adopted policy.

- v. Noted that a separate report would be brought forward on the Parks Investment Fund detailing how this new budget would be used for the effective management and maintenance of the park's assets. The fund would also be used to make improvements to parks and open space across the city but particularly to deliver the Council's ambition to have more Green Flag parks.

Reason: To inform the future direction in the management of parks, open spaces to ensure they are managed appropriately and that the council can work with relevant groups to deliver these changes.

Cllr Kent, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.36 am].