

Meeting	Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date	22 October 2024
Present	Councillors K Taylor (Chair), B Burton, J Burton, Fenton, Healey (Vice-Chair), Hook, Whitcroft, Steward, Merrett and Knight
Officers in attendance	James Gilchrist - Director of Environment, Transport and Planning Patrick Looker - Head of Service Finance Helene Vergereau - Head of Highway Access and Development
Executive Members in attendance	Councillors Ravilious and Kilbane
Apologies	Councillor Vassie

16. Apologies for Absence (17:31)

It was confirmed that Cllr Vassie had given his apologies and Cllr Knight joined as a substitute.

17. Declarations of Interest (17:31)

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 interest that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. None were declared.

18. Minutes (17:32)

Resolved: The Committee agreed the minutes of the 24 September 2024 meetings be signed as a correct record, with resolved iii to minute 14 be amended to:

‘That the Committee recommended that officers include the current public right of way rail crossing location in Copmanthorpe within the Local Cycling and Walking

Infrastructure Plan.’

19. Public Participation (17:34)

It was reported that there had been 2 registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council’s Public Participation Scheme.

Flick Williams spoke about the temporary removal of blue badge holder access to the city centre during the Christmas Market and asked how this was not a breach of people’s human rights. She stated that the Council needed to embed the social model of disability.

Georgina Duffill raised concerns about the danger posed by potholes to cyclists in the east side of the city and asked what the Council would do about fixing roads. She also asked what could be done about an increase in low flying air traffic and the noise pollution it causes.

20. 2024/25 Finance and Performance Monitor 1 (17:44)

The Committee considered the finance and performance monitor 1 report. Members enquired about the Council’s performance on road maintenance and why figures York had 25% of roads in need of maintenance work compared to an average of 6% across the country. Officers confirmed that they would review the statistics on road maintenance to review York’s performance against other local authorities. Officers confirmed that the Council receives Department for Transport funding for road maintenance and that the Council provides more than double the amount received in funding for maintenance work. It was noted that the Council follows good practice model in the Highways Asset Plan. Officers also confirmed that they would review data available for what impact there had been on cycling.

Members enquired about shop vacancies and asked why it was that there appeared to be a higher number of vacancies in the city centre compared to York more widely. Officers confirmed that they would enquire with the Council’s properties team regarding vacancies in the city centre, but noted that, statistics did show that York was performing better than the regional average for shop vacancies. The Committee also requested greater detail on the figures in the report regarding the gender pay gap. Officers confirmed they would review the data and provide further details.

Officers highlighted that the take up number for garden waste subscriptions in the report had been an estimate and that the scheme was performing

better than had been estimated in the report. Members enquired as to whether changes to Council policy around missed waste collection would affect the data collection. Officers confirmed that they would review and come back to the Committee on whether there would need to be changes to how they measured missed waste collections following changes to the policy.

Resolved:

- i. To request that officers explore and feedback to the Committee on why City of York Council has the percentage of nonprincipal roads in York where maintenance should be considered at 25% in 2023-24 when the national average was 6% and regional average was 3%;
- ii. To request that officers explore and feedback to the Committee where there is a higher number of shop vacancies in the city centre, compared to outside of York city centre;
- iii. To request that officers explore and feedback on whether the Council's new policy in relation to bin collections has affected data on the reporting of missed bin collections;
- iv. To request that officers provide greater detail on gender pay gap figures;
- v. To request that officers feedback to the Committee regarding what data the Council has in relation to road maintenance levels and any impact on cyclists;

Reason: To ensure the Committee continue to scrutinise the Council's finance and performance in relation to the Committee's remit.

21. City centre access: reviewing the implementation (18:04)

The Director of Environment, Transport and Planning introduced the report on city centre access. He outlined that the Council had reinstated blue badge access in January 2024, after a public consultation. He confirmed that the Council had facilitated access through staffed barriers while HVM bollards were being installed. Members enquired about how access through the bollards would function. The Director confirmed that there had not been a decision made on future operating systems and that the Council would be working with blue badge holders and the York Access Forum on how access could operate.

The Committee enquired as to how the Anti-terror Traffic Regulation Order would operate in relation to the HVM bollards. Officers confirmed that Anti-terror Traffic Regulation Order would be an order which would allow the

police if deemed required to close access to the city centre on a short-term basis.

Access to the city centre for blue badge holders during the period the Christmas market was in operation was raised by Members as access was to be restricted. The Director outlined that organisation for the Christmas market was done a year in advance and therefore when blue badge access was reinstated it was agreed that during this year's market, blue badge access would be restricted. He noted that the Council had discussed with the Police regarding reducing foot street hours during the Christmas market, however, the Police were not supportive of a reduction in foot street hours to provide more access for blue badge holders.

Members enquired about the risk profile regarding the Christmas market considering the Council's decision to reinstate access in January 2024. The Director highlighted that there was an increase on footfall numbers during the period compared to even the busiest days during periods such as the summer holidays. He also noted that the increased foot fall was only one factor to consider, and that concern was also raised regarding the profile of Christmas markets and the threat terror incidents had posed at high profile events. The Committee enquired about whether they could review the advice provided by Police and it was confirmed this would be shared confidentially with Committee members pending approval to share the advice by the Council's Monitoring Officer.

The Committee discussed how the Christmas market could operate in future years and the prospect of spreading out the market across the city centre. The Executive Member for Transport outlined her support for exploring options for how the market could operate and that the Council would work with Make it York and the Police regarding this.

Resolved:

- i. That the Committee requested that they have shared with them the advice from the Safety Advisory Group regarding the Christmas Market;
- ii. To recommend that the Executive explore all possible options to ensure blue badge access to the city centre during the period of the Christmas market, including the layout of future Christmas Markets.

Reason: To support access for blue badge holders to the city centre while maintaining safety for all those accessing the city.

22. Broadband management of installation process and its impact on communities (18:56)

Officers introduced the report on the installation of broadband. Officers noted that the Council's main role in the installation process was in relation to road works. They confirmed that about one third of the Council's road work permits were for works undertaken by telecom companies. It was confirmed that the Council was not in charge of broadband rollout and where rollout took place was a commercial decision for the telecom companies.

The Committee enquired about the inspecting of broadband installation works. Officers confirmed that between 60 and 70% of sites were inspected by the Council with a focus on live sites to ensure safety and accessibility. Members enquired about the Council's powers relating to inspections and whether biodiversity could be included as a criteria for inspections. Officers confirmed that if companies remained within national guidelines there was limits to enforcement but that they could raise issues around biodiversity.

Members enquired as to whether there were powers held by the Council to prevent installation in places where the Council had just completed road works. Officers noted that in limited situations they could use powers under Section 58, however, this also would come with the issue that if work was prevented it would potentially stop an area getting access to super-fast broadband. Members enquired as to how they could remain updated on works being undertaken across the city and officers highlighted that Members and residents could keep up to date by going to <https://www.york.gov.uk/roadworks>.

Resolved:

- i. Noted the report.

Reason: To remain updated on the installation process and its impact on communities of broadband.

23. Work Plan (19:26)

The Chair informed the Committee that the Executive had asked whether the Neighbourhood Caretakers item which had been scheduled for the Committee's November meeting be postponed until 28 January 2025. Therefore, the Committee discussed what items could be considered at the November meeting of the Committee.

Resolved:

- i. To delegate to the chair and vice chair the reorganisation where needed of Work Plan items;
- ii. To invite the mayor of the combined authority to the Committees December meeting to discuss Economic Development.

Reason: To ensure the Committee maintains a program of work.

Cllr Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.37 pm].