

Meeting	Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date	25 June 2024
Present	Councillors K Taylor (Chair), B Burton, J Burton, Fenton, Healey, Hook, Merrett (Substitute), Steward and Waller (Substitute)
Apologies	Councillors Pearson and Whitcroft
Executive Members in Attendance	Councillors Kilbane and Ravilious
Officers in Attendance	James Gilchrist - Director of Transport, Environment and Planning Claire Foale – Assistant Director of Policy and Strategy Sam Blyth - Strategic Manager Corporate Policy and City Partnerships

1. Declarations of Interest (17:30)

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.

Cllr Merrett noted that he had non-prejudicial interests relating to Minute 4. Yorkshire Water - Sewage Dumping / Performance / Improvement Plans as he was currently a member of the Yorkshire Forum for Water Companies independent group set up by OFWAT.

2. Minutes (17:31)

Resolved: The Committee agreed the minutes of the 21 May 2024 meetings be signed as a correct record with grammatical corrections.

3. Public Participation (17:32)

It was reported that there had been 3 registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, however, one speaker withdrew.

Harvey Dowdy spoke on behalf of the University of York and as a resident of Pumping Station Cottages. She raised concerns about the damage of sewage spills and highlighted that for both the University and residents there were serious challenges in communicating with Yorkshire Water. She asked for Yorkshire Water to provide a contact to raise problem with and a fast response to address issues.

Flick Williams commended the work undertaken by the Task and Finish group on Dial & Ride. She noted her disappointment that the Council had not offered legal support to York Wheels before the community transport service ended. She also raised concern with Uber being granted a license to operate in York, noting that areas with uber style transport would see a reduction in the number of accessible taxis.

4. Yorkshire Water - sewage dumping / performance / improvement plans (17:44)

The Committee were joined by Tim Myatt Head of Corporate Affairs and Victoria Hickey Head of River Health from Yorkshire Water.

The chair outlined that the Committee did not have any formal power for overseeing Yorkshire water, but had invited Yorkshire Water due to the large amount of public interest in water health and bills.

Tim Myatt introduced the report from Yorkshire Water to the Committee. He noted that they were heavily regulated by The Water Services Regulation Authority (OFWAT), The Environment Agency, and the Water Inspectorate. It was confirmed that Yorkshire Water agrees with Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) five year asset management periods. The current asset management period concludes April 2025 and current proposals from Yorkshire Water includes a £7.8 billion business plan for investment. Tim Myatt Also addressing concerns raised in public participation, confirmed that he would happily be a named contact for York University and residents of Pumping Station Cottages. Victoria Hickey spoke about the work of the River Health team at Yorkshire Water. She noted that the team worked with river trusts to deliver green opportunities and biodiversity.

The Committee enquired about their concerns with river health. Members highlighted data from Top of the Poops showing that the River Ouse saw the 7th most amount of time for overflows in the Country. Tim Myatt noted that different practices from different water companies meant that the data was not always reliable for a comparison, he explained this by noting that Yorkshire Water had half as many overflows than United Utilities. He stated that Yorkshire Water recognised that there was an issue with the amount of overflows into rivers and highlighted the investment plans Victoria Hickey had spoken about.

Flood risk was also discussed by the Committee. Members were informed of who held responsibility for flood response, storm overflows, and surface water. Yorkshire Water it was confirmed were responsible for the sewer network, as well as, some issues relating to surface water entering the network if that was to cause storm drain overflows. The Committee enquired whether separate sewer networks for surface water and sewage would be appropriate and Tim Myatt confirmed that separate systems would be welcome but that Yorkshire Water did not have the power to recommend this at a planning stage for developments.

Members suggested that greater levels of communication could be needed between Yorkshire Water and residents. Members welcomed Yorkshire Waters commitment to communicate with the public speaker about issues raised. It was discussed whether residents could be notified of discharges, Tim Myatt noted that Yorkshire Water had a live map that residents could follow and would enquire internally if this could be broadened to a notification system.

Investment at Yorkshire Water into the network was discussed with Members noting the increased level of proposed level of future investment outlined by Tim Myatt and Victoria Hickey. The Committee enquired about past levels of investment and whether this had been adequate for the maintenance and improvement of the network. Tim Myatt suggested that in previous years the directive to companies such as Yorkshire Water was the aim to keep water bills low rather than the main priority being on investment. He also noted that the impact of climate change could be massive on the network and plans for investment would need to try and plan for the effects of heavy rainfall and storms.

With Yorkshire Water seeking an increase in bills, Members enquired as to whether residents should expect to see bonuses and dividends paid out by the company. Tim Myatt explained that bonuses were connected to performance and that as they were regulated by OFWAT. He noted that it was the regulator that identified the level of profit that could go to the companies' shareholders. With bills expected to rise discussion was also

undertaken regarding support for those unable to afford higher bills. Tim Myatt noted that they currently work with housing associations and debt support groups and would investigate working with food banks on the Committee's suggestion. Members raised concern that the number of those receiving support appeared low, Tim Myatt explained that Yorkshire Water currently had 80,000 people receiving support and that the company was seeking to double this number.

Maintenance was discussed and the Committee were informed of how Yorkshire Water undertake proactive and reactive inspections and maintenance. It was confirmed that risk was used to assess where most inspections and where proactive maintenance was undertaken.

Resolved:

- i. Noted the information provided by Yorkshire Water and acknowledged the offer of Yorkshire Water attending another committee meeting at the committee's invitation.

Reason: To allow the Committee the opportunity to discuss with Yorkshire Water its performance in York.

5. York pipeline of proposals for Combined Authority (18:57)

Officers introduced the report which outlined a pipeline of proposed projects the Council intended to send to the new combined authority for potential funding. They confirmed that the pipeline had been developed considering the Council's 10 year strategy and ambitions, it was also confirmed that each scrutiny committee were being invited to consider the pipeline and make recommendations on the proposals.

Members enquired about the scope of the proposals and whether they needed to have a York or whole region impact. Officers outlined that funding would be expected to be granted for regional ambition. Officers highlighted Adult Skills Business Case as an example of a proposal to provide a centre in York that would attract individuals from across the region.

The Committee discussed the prospect of funding for transport projects, access to public transport, and improving blue badge access to key parts of the city centre. The Executive Member for Economy & Culture outlined that the combined authority had potential funding for transport projects that the Council should seek to access to deliver projects. He noted the £18 million in gain share from the creation of the combined authority so the Council

would need to prioritise its proposals to make the most of the funding available.

The Committee discussed potential projects that the Council could consider seeking funding for including the roll out of equalities access training, cycle storage, and bus travel. The Committee agreed from a transport perspective the need not only look at York as an individual place but break down transport barriers between York and the wider region.

Resolved:

- i. The Committee noted the pipeline of projects to be submitted to the combined authority.

Reason: To ensure the pipeline aligns with the 10-year strategies for York, the 2023-2027 Council Plan, and YNYCA Economic Framework, enable different perspectives from across the Council to be considered in the pipeline's development, and ensure that York has a strong, consolidated list of proposals through which to engage future funding opportunities emerging from the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.

6. Task and Finish Group - Dial and Ride (19:28)

Councillors Fenton, Burton, and Steward introduced their report to the Committee regarding their task and finish group on York's Dial & Ride service. They thanked all those that had engaged with them during their work and presented the group's recommendations to the Committee. They highlighted the impact particularly on disabled residents the ending of the previous dial & ride provision had had. They noted that community transport addressed not only a transport issue for some residents but also an adult social care challenge as the provision was able to deliver a degree of independence for residents.

The wider Committee welcomed the work of the task and finish group and agreed with the recommendations suggested by the Group. The Executive Member for Transport also thanked the task and finish group and stated that she recognised the need for the service. She stated that the Executive would seek funding from the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the combined authority, while seeing how it could be included within the Council's developing Movement and Place Plan.

Resolved to recommend to Executive that:

- i. The Council should as soon as possible take steps to ensure the provision of a Community Transport service for York residents which would fulfil the need that has been unmet since the cessation of the Dial & Ride service operated by York Wheels. This could be a service that is commissioned or run in-house;
- ii. The Council should ensure that funding is available – either from internal or external sources - to enable a Community Transport service to be provided. This should include (but not be limited to) looking in the round at all transport-related expenditure, such as revenue support for specific schemes, Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding and potential financial contributions from supermarkets which benefit from custom generated by Dial & Ride trips;
- iii. The Council should engage with neighbouring local authorities, the Combined Authority, other public bodies and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to identify opportunities for joint-working and potentially joint commissioning in the field of Community Transport;
- iv. In drawing up the specification for a new Community Transport service, The Council should consideration should be given to broadening the passenger eligibility criteria beyond the client groups previously served by Dial & Ride (older people and disabled people). Consideration should also be given to reviewing the destinations to be served by a reinstated service;
- v. In drawing up the specification for a new Community Transport service, the Council's adult social care team and 'Age Friendly York' team and advocacy groups for older and disabled people must be consulted to ensure that the service will meet identified needs and be entirely accessible;
- vi. In drawing up the contract for a new Community Transport service, The Council should ensure the needs of service users must be explicitly prioritised in the event of any service delivery issues or contract failure, and bureaucracy associated with the operation of the contract should be minimised wherever possible;
- vii. The Council should develop a strategy to effectively promote a reinstated Community Transport service among key potential client groups;
- viii. The Committee's Task and Finish Group be invited to engage with the Executive on developing proposals for a reinstated Community Transport Service and to bring proposals back to the wider committee for scrutiny at an appropriate date.

Reason: To seek the return of a Community Transport Service for York residents.

7. Work Plan (19:53)

The Committee considered its work plan for 2024/35.

Resolved:

- i. Noted the Committee work plan.

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

Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.54 pm].