

**Climate Change Policy and Scrutiny Committee:** 15 October 2019

**Executive Member for Environment & Climate Change**

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As a new member for City of York Council with responsibility for Environment & Climate Change, I am delighted to be taking on this challenge. In order to play our part in mitigating climate change, we will need to work with each other across the Council and work closely with partners across the city, the North and worldwide.

Climate Change affects all areas of our lives; waste to transport, food to air quality, housing to water use, energy to open spaces. If we are to succeed, we need to work collaboratively, publicly and privately, so we can make the best decisions available to ensure we leave a planet fit for our grandchildren.

As I am new to the portfolio, I will provide a brief summary and update on a wide range of functions relating to the portfolio.

### **National position and Last year's outturn:**

Several significant actions have taken place on the national stage, which will have an impact on the work carried out within the portfolio:

In Theresa May's final few weeks, considerable changes were made to the Climate Change Act, enshrining in law a commitment for the UK to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We remain committed to reaching carbon neutrality in York by 2030.

The previous Secretary of State for Environment, Michael Gove, commissioned a pilot scheme to reduce food waste, which will run until the end of 2020 and will feed into the Government's Green paper on the subject.

With regard to funding, we are all aware that national funding has been dramatically reduced, and this has resulted in the Council having to find savings since 2008 of £110M. This is an £11M year on year reduction, which has an impact on the Council's services and decisions which can be taken.

### **Waste:**

On a local level, one of the most important services contained within the portfolio is the waste service. This service effects every household in the city every week, with approximately 4 million collections a year, made at a cost of £4.7 million. The current waste fleet is over 7 years old and is in need of renewal. This process is underway and the procurement tender will include standardisation of the fleet, alongside the introduction of new technology i.e. ultra low emission vehicles.

## **Disposal**

The Council approved the investment of £153M over 25 years at Allerton Waste Park, which is delivering good environmental outcomes, significantly reducing the levels of waste taken to landfill and increasing the percentage of waste being recycled, along with the assurance that all the material is recycled within the UK and Europe.

Over the coming years, we must ensure that these commercial and environmental benefits of Allerton Waste Park are fully exploited. This can be achieved by working with NYCC and Districts to identify and deliver improvements in sorting facilities, anaerobic digestion and combined heat & power, enabling us to divert the maximum amount possible from landfill.

## **Collection**

As discussed earlier, the waste fleet is at the end of its useful life and needs replacing. This gives us an opportunity to consider and review the collection regime and fuel types, especially with the Clean Air Zone coming into place on the 1st January 2020.

Following on from resident feedback, we are aware that the customer experience has room for improvement. Therefore, we are investing in IT systems to improve customer journey, from first contact to in-cab technology.

## **Public Realm**

Our vision is for an inclusive, prosperous and thriving City, which delivers the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. To ensure we listen and plan effectively, we have commissioned the new 'My City Centre' consultation which will report its findings in May 2020. This will give a strong basis to further develop any future plans.

## **New Budget Initiatives**

The new Administration has made it a priority to empower communities and invest in services which matter to our residents. In our recent budget amendments, we have invested additional resources in:

- £47K to tackle graffiti on private premises;
- £66K to create a Carbon Reduction and Sustainability Officer and capacity budget;
- £43K for new recycling, litter and dog waste bins;
- £33K to allow for further tree planting and better tree maintenance across the city - as part of the Council's new commitment to the Northern Forest;
- £65K to invest in a review of new sustainable vehicles, increase collection rates, and improve customer service;

- £57K to invest in the local street environment, including a new Blacksmith apprentice and cleaning or community projects.

### **Flood Protection**

York is renowned for its floods. The City always appears on the National news with a shot of the 'King's Arms' in the background. However occasionally, there are very serious consequences for our residents, businesses and visitors. In 2015, 453 properties and 174 businesses were flooded in York. This was a catastrophe for all involved and with the effects of Climate Change, we must ensure all that all actions are taken to mitigate the impacts of flooding in our city.

It is essential that moving forward, York capitalises on the Environment Agency's £45 million investment programme and as part of this, the Environment Agency must speed up the delivery of investment and ensure that all relevant projects are approved before 2021. As the new Executive Member, I will continue to liaise with the Environment Agency and ensure that funding is invested in the right areas and delivered in time to make a real difference to residents across the City.

### **Air Quality and Environmental Health**

As outlined earlier, the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) comes into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Initially, the area will cover the City centre and only apply to local buses. As part of this Administrations efforts to improve the proposals for York Central, we have also endorsed efforts to widen the Clean Air Zone to include the York Central footprint, once works have been completed. Over time the effectiveness of the CAZ will be reviewed, with the aim to extend the zone to more vehicles and a wider geography.

### **Bio Diversity and open spaces**

Supplementary Planning Guidance on Green & Blue infrastructure is being reviewed and revised in line with our recent Climate Change commitments. This work has been resourced and prioritised, so that we can re-examine our position in December 2019. Alongside the strategy & policies, we have also made firm commitments to the join the White Rose Forest, targeting the planting of half a million trees.

I am sure you will appreciate, it is early days but I am keen to ensure that we make the right strategic decisions to deliver on our Climate Change ambitions, as well as serve our residents in delivering on their priorities.

***Cllr Paula Widdowson***

20<sup>th</sup> August 2019



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