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Meeting	Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date	27 February 2024
Present	Councillors K Taylor (Chair), Pearson (Vice-Chair), B Burton, J Burton, Fenton, Healey, Steward, Whitcroft and Vassie (Substitute)
Apologies	Councillors Hook and Nelson and Merrett (substitute for Cllr Nelson)
In Attendance	Councillor Kent, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency [until 19:31]
Officers Present	Patrick Looker, Head of Service Finance James Gilchrist, Director of Environment, Transport and Planning Steve Wragg, Flood Risk Manager

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### **23. Declarations of Interest (17:32)**

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.

### **24. Minutes (17:32)**

Members considered the minutes of the committee's meeting held on 22 January 2024. Under item 22 (Work Plan) it was noted that the task and finish group proposals that it was agreed to bring back to the committee were those on Dial & Ride.

Resolved: To approve the minutes subject to the addition of 'on Dial & Ride' to the end of the second resolution under item 22.

### **25. Public Participation (17:34)**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

## **26. 2023/24 Finance and Performance Monitor 3 (17:34)**

Officers introduced a report outlining finance and performance information for quarter 3, covering the Place Directorate service areas. Although the Council faced a challenging financial situation overall, there was a forecast underspend of over £1m across these service areas due to strong income performance from parking and waste disposal and collection.

The committee discussed the finance and performance information relating to waste and recycling. It was noted that there was a forecast underspend of £1.2m across waste disposal and collection, due in part to lower residual waste tonnages across York and North Yorkshire resulting in greater capacity for Yorwaste to collect commercial waste and pay the Council for disposal at Allerton Park, although it could not be assumed that this would be ongoing. Around 1500 properties currently paid for a second green waste bin, bringing a revenue of around £65,000, and that green waste was processed into compost by Yorwaste. It was anticipated that around 90,000 properties would pay for green bins under the changes introduced in the recent budget and confirmed that a digital self-service solution was being looked at to manage the increased scale of payments, with a human interface for those unable to use the digital system.

Members enquired about parking services. It was confirmed that the post-pandemic recovery in car park revenue had been stronger than initially anticipated. The figures in the report pre-dated the increase in parking fees agreed in the recent Council budget, and while flooding events had caused closures at the Esplanade and St George's Field car parks, officers were confident that demand would remain high. The forecast assumed that the Castle car park would remain open, as any decision on its future would need to be taken by the Executive. It was noted that the Respark scheme, which was a small net income generator for the Council, would be considered by the committee at its April meeting.

The committee also discussed vacant shops in the city centre. It was noted that council-owned properties were generally full, and while there had been an increase in the number of vacant shops since late 2022, at 9.1% this was still below the national average of 13.8%. There were complexities around what the Council could do in relation to commercial landlords but Make it York was working hard to arrange usage of vacant units for temporary shops or exhibitions.

Members raised several questions about the presentation of the data in the report, including the direction of travel for the housing indicators, whether income earned by York residents outside York was included in gross value

added (GVA) data, the number of EV charging facilities, and national and regional benchmarking information for the key performance indicators. Officers agreed to circulate responses to these questions by email to committee members.

In relation to the general financial situation, it was confirmed that officers were confident a large number of the savings identified in the recent budget would be successfully delivered, although mitigations would be needed where this was not the case. Significant due diligence work was being done by officers across service areas to ensure savings would be deliverable.

Resolved:

- i. To note the finance and performance information.
- ii. To recommend that as far as possible national and regional benchmarks be included for comparison in future finance and performance indicators.

Reason: To ensure expenditure is kept within the approved budget.

## **27. York's Waterworks - a health check (18:13)**

Officers introduced a report providing an update on the cleanliness of York's water courses, becks and streams, and the state of drainage infrastructure. It was noted that while the Environment Agency had ultimate responsibility for water quality, a range of groups had a role to play, and that members were free to invite partner organisations to report to scrutiny.

The committee discussed clean-up after flooding events. It was noted that the clearance of silt, mud and debris from riverside paths was carried out in line with the Council's warping policy, which set out the order of priority for affected areas. Repeat flood peaks, difficult conditions and other calls on teams often made this work slow and challenging. A combination of sweepers and jettors were used by the same highways maintenance teams who carried out gritting, and officers were looking at increased coordination between Public Realm teams. It was noted that although there was always a residual risk from flooding, York was experienced in dealing with flooding events and knowledge gained had been shared with other local authorities.

Members enquired about runoff from upstream areas. It was noted that a very large river catchment in the North Yorkshire Council area drained into the Ouse, and that the Council was leading a DEFRA-funded catchment-scale project focused on targeted interventions and incentives for the

uptake of flood management measures, with a programme of works running to 2027. The Council was working with the University of York to investigate the scale of the impact of upstream agricultural runoff on water quality in the city's rivers. With reference to sewage in rivers, it was confirmed that under the government's storm overflow reduction plan, water companies would have to reduce all overflows to approved levels by 2050. Yorkshire Water were already investing in some sites in York to this end, and the Council was seeking to ensure they remained focused on this work.

The committee also discussed sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). It was noted that the implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 due later this year would see the Council become the SuDS Approving Body (SAB) for its area, and a new SAB process parallel to the planning process would need to be set up to appraise and adopt all new drainage systems serving more than a single property. This would be a significant responsibility but would bring considerable benefits, and although retrofitting SuDS was challenging, work was already being done to ensure SuDS were incorporated in all new developments.

Members also considered multiagency working. It was noted that several Members sat on Internal Drainage Boards, and that the intent to work collaboratively was very welcome. It was confirmed that the Friends of St Nicholas Fields were working with the Drainage Boards to inform maintenance work and enhance and maintain riverside environments, and that officers were advising the Friends of Rowntree Park on flood recovery.

Resolved:

- i. That the report and annexes be noted.
- ii. That the Chair, together with the Executive Members for Environment and Climate Emergency write to the relevant government minister, shadow minister, and all York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority mayoral candidates to urge that the new SuDS Approving Bodies be properly resourced, and that the mayoral candidates support the strategic objective of improving upstream flood prevention measures.
- iii. That officers pass on the committee's thanks to all staff involved in reactive flood-related work in recent months.

Reason: To deliver healthy rivers and an effective drainage system in our city and safeguard our communities from flood risk or environmental harm.

## **28. Task and Finish Group Review into Dial & Ride services (19:36)**

Members of the Task and Finish Review group into Dial & Ride community transport services provided the committee with an update on the progress made to date. Attention was drawn to the fact that this was the first review being carried out in line with the new interim process for Task and Finish Groups.

Members discussed the challenges facing the York Wheels charity, which had provided the Dial & Ride service until December 2023. Issues were highlighted around two buses the charity had purchased with a grant from the Council from a third-party supplier, which had since gone into administration. It was noted that York Wheels was seeking a resolution as soon as possible, and that legal advice was sought as to possible next steps relating to the original manufacturer. It was confirmed that the focus was on provision for the outlying villages within the City of York Council area where demand for community transport services was greatest.

It was noted that the timescale identified in the review proposal had changed, and that a final report was now due to be ready for consideration at the committee's April meeting.

Resolved:

- i. To note the progress made to date;
- ii. To consider the Task and Finish Group's final report at the April meeting of the committee.

Reason: To progress the review of Dial & Ride community transport services.

## **29. Work Plan (19:52)**

The committee considered its work plan for the current municipal year. It was noted that with the addition of the task and finish report on Dial & Ride, the agenda for the committee's April meeting was a heavy one, and it might be necessary to move the scheduled item on EV charging to a later meeting. Members discussed inviting the relevant Executive Members to give a review of the year's work, the implications of the Mayoral Combined Authority's economic brief for the committee's remit, and the possibility of a task and finish group to consult with residents on budget items.

Resolved:

- i. That the item on On-street EV charging scheduled for April be held over until a future meeting with date to be confirmed.
- ii. That scrutiny work planning and input from Executive Members be considered at the next meeting of Scrutiny Chairs, and that the other issues raised be held over until the committee's next informal work planning session.

Reason: To keep the committee's work plan updated.

Cllr K Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.31 pm and finished at 8.03 pm].