

Report of the Executive Member for Environment

The objective has been to make the council more sustainable, and responsive to residents' priorities. Executive Decision sessions will now detail performance data which had previously either not been reported, or in some instances had stopped being collected. A focus has been put on improving the ease with which the public can report street level complaints, and this is ongoing.

1. Street cleaning and litter bins

Improvements to the kerbside cleaning regime have been made through Executive Member Decision Sessions to ensure a more thorough clean to remove detritus. This will improve the appearance of the city's streets and remove a source of weed growth. Wards are being consulted on increased numbers of litter bins, and dual purpose litter and dog bins.

2. Flood Defence

The Boxing Day Floods have resulted in a large number of council teams being involved in the response and recovery operations. The Flood Risk team has been working with residents and agencies to assist with the recovery and development of plans for the future. The council has been working with the Environment Agency, Inland Drainage Boards, Yorkshire Water and other agencies to assess damage to flood defences, and respond to requests from residents and businesses. The team will be providing information to the Independent Flood Inquiry which is being set up by the council.

A major project for the city will be the upgrading of the Foss Barrier to take account of the assessments of the capacity required for future demands on that defence system. As the funding for this work is coming direct from government there is not the requirement for a proportion of that to come from external (in practice largely local government) sources. However, the upgrade of the city centre defences which are planned for 2022/23 would currently require an element of the costs (currently estimated at £25 million but anticipated to be higher) to be met by 'external support'.

The council is working with the Environment Agency on improvements to the warning systems which are issued by the agency, and a review is being undertaken on ensuring that residents and businesses understand the action that needs to be taken in response to the situation.

Nationally, there is considerable interest in 'slowing the flow' in upland sources of rivers to produce a benefit to urban areas downstream. This

is being pursued by the Local Enterprise Partnership's for Leeds City Region and York, North Yorkshire & East Riding. The work with the former is being taken up via the Green Economy Panel, and the latter is working with the North Yorkshire Flood Risk Partnership (NYFRP). I will be able to report further on the work coming from these bodies as there are a number of organisations working on this front, but the outcomes need to be measurable in order to have a clear impact on the work which is required in the city.

I have taken up concerns via the Local Government Association about the operation of the Bellwin Funding as some aspects of the flood recovery (such as provision of skips for the immediate aftermath of the flood and which the council had to pay for) are not covered.

3. Flood Resilience and advice on insurance

A newsletter is being delivered or posted to residents whose homes have been confirmed as being internally flooded. The newsletter advises residents about a range of matters. In particular it encourages them to apply for the Flood Resilience Grant and tells them about our new caseworker. The caseworker is employed by Yorkshire Housing, but will be working both with the council and the Two Ridings Community Foundation to help residents access all the funding available to them. To date we have received 39 applications, 15 have been approved the others are incomplete and require further information which we are helping residents to gather. Businesses will be receiving a communication from Make it York on the support which is available for them.

For many residents the issue of insurance will be an important concern going forward and I have attended briefings on the operation of 'Flood Re' - a national scheme to ensure that households (built before 2009) have access to reasonably priced insurance. More details are available via www.floodre.co.uk. I would encourage councillors to familiarise themselves with this scheme as it will affect houses at risk of river or surface water flooding (with the decisions being made by the insurance industry).

4. Community Centres

Across the city the council's community centres played their part in the volunteer response to the flooding. This demonstrates that our support to volunteer community management committees was the right decision to make. The committees should have received the outcome of an

energy audit to help improve their operation and to help with reducing their environmental impact.

5. Gulley Cleaning and Surface Water Drainage

Gulley Cleaning is a key aspect of responding to surface water drainage issues and a new approach has been approved to provide a more proactive service to residents. In addition to the gulleys cleaned on the winter maintenance gritting routes being cleared out on an annual basis, a further 1,200 have been identified by officers as being in areas where Environment Agency maps indicate that locations may be at risk from surface water drainage or run off. Therefore, these will be added to the annual clean up. An active list of locations where there are ongoing investigations has been established and members are encouraged to review these for their own wards as on occasions there are deep seated problems which can need investigation and work with Yorkshire Water, the Drainage Board, or other organisations before drainage systems are properly functioning.

6. Air Quality

There has been significant progress in this area with the city having been selected as one of eight exemplar cities nationally, having been awarded 'Go Ultra Low' city status by the Office of Low Emission Vehicles for the uptake of ultra low emission vehicles.

The council has been awarded £816,000, following a successful bidding process that will fund an ultra low emission programme including a city wide network of rapid charging hubs. These will provide state-of-the-art, ultra fast, reliable and convenient rapid charging for key vehicle groups such as taxis, private motorists and business users.

7. One Planet York

To ensure Sustainability is a thread which runs through all the work that the council does a report is currently being presented to Executive for 'One Planet York'. This sets the objectives for all departments and staff to look at how they can contribute to the improved use of resources, reduction of carbon emissions, and improved quality of life to improve the sustainability of the city.

8. Green Jobs Task Force

An Initial meeting on 23rd February helped to get the process going and to set out the terms of reference and objectives. This will link with the two local LEPs to promote the opportunities for 'green jobs' in the area.

The Leeds City Region Green Economy Panel (which I have recently joined) links in closely with these objectives with the plans for Green Infrastructure and the Energy Accelerator programme (for which York is significantly represented in the list of potential schemes for renewable energy) and for which an application is being made to the European Investment Bank.

9. Improving recycling

Work is ongoing to improve recycling across the city with the additional green bin collections having taken place towards the end of 2015 to extend the period of collections for the garden waste.

During March/April we will develop a costed action plan to promote recycling which will be presented to the Executive Member during May. The agreed action plan will then be implemented from May 2016 to March 2017.

This work will include identifying areas/locations with low recycling rates including:

- Flats - Residents of flats often have difficulties managing their waste because no individual has ownership of the shared waste containers and this leads to problems such as messy bin stores, dumped rubbish, contaminated recycling bins, and overflowing rubbish bins.
- Areas of Student Accommodation - For students living in private rented accommodation this is often their first experience of being responsible for refuse and recycling and we need to ensure that they have sufficient information to manage their waste responsibly.

We will explore opportunities to work with other council teams and external organisations to help maximise the potential from this project. This will include CYC Estate Managers, Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEOs), Environment & Community Officers (ECO's), relevant student and landlord organisations and local community groups etc.

As the aim of this project is to increase recycling we will establish baseline data to measure any success against. The data collection methods will be a combination of methods which use existing data on tonnages and gather new data which is appropriate to the work. These will include:

- Data from our collection rounds – we can look at existing data on tonnages collected for refuse/recycling from areas

- Visual checks – as we cannot weigh individual communal bins we may instead do a visual estimate of how full communal bins are and whether there is evidence of contamination in the recycling bins
- Visual checks on the presentation of recycling e.g. presence of contaminants, mixed materials containers, boxes put in the wrong location
- Participation monitoring/set out rate measurement
- Resident surveys to establish barriers to recycling.

Activities

The project will tailor activities to the chosen areas based on the local resident's needs which will include;

- Maintenance and re-labelling of bins at flats
- Improved signage for communal bin stores clearly identifying who should/should not be using them
- Provision of storage bags for individual flats
- Provision of free recycling boxes, lids and nets
- Promotion of the One Planet York App – residents can sign up for alerts about collection days and find out what can be recycled
- Improved communications and tailored local waste service information
- Activities to encourage reuse
- Activities to encourage composting.

We will make the following items available at ward meetings, community meetings, and community facilities (libraries, community centres etc) from May.

- Recycling boxes
- Lids
- Nets
- Useful information leaflets
- Face to face advice.

We will promote the environmental message with schools (litter, recycling, and local clean ups) in a way which would extend the number of people who could deliver the presentation. We will, in conjunction with the Environment & Community Officers (ECO's) and the Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEO's) visit schools in targeted

areas to raise awareness on all aspects of our environmental works, this will not only share the workloads but ensure joined-up services.

Better vehicle fleet

New vehicles are needed for the collection of recycled materials presented by residents living in the city centre as the age of the existing vehicles mean that they are sometimes out of commission and the recycling is coming for later separation by Yorwaste.

This has created the impression that the recycling which is segregated at kerbside by residents is being landfilled. This is not the case as it does get separated at a facility near Scarborough and avoids the environmental costs, and Landfill Tax charges to the council. However, the cost of the process of separation leads to higher costs for the council than if the recycled materials had been presented in a segregated way to Yorwaste.

We have been consulting with our frontline staff on their views on replacement vehicles as part of our overall review of our waste service provision. We have now commenced trials using various types of vehicles to ensure they are fit for purpose. We will engage with the public on this selection to make sure that we obtain the right vehicles and that there is a general understanding of the objectives of the council to improve recycling rates.

Once we have identified the type of vehicle we wish to purchase, we will have to select an appropriate purchasing framework that would access suitable manufacturers, go through a mini tender to obtain prices, and compare the responses. Once the responses had been evaluated and the contract awarded, orders could then be placed. Taking into account vehicle specification, manufacturers' timescales and available build slots this will take between 10 and 12 months until final delivery.

Cllr Andrew Waller