
Meeting	Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date	25 February 2025
Present	Councillors K Taylor (Chair), B Burton, J Burton, Fenton, Healey (Vice-Chair), Hook, Whitcroft, Steward, Vassie and Merrett
In Attendance	Councillor Lomas – Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion
Officers Present	Claire Foale – Chief Strategy Officer

44. Apologies for Absence (17:33)

No apologies for absence were received.

45. Declarations of Interest (17:33)

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests they might have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

46. Minutes (17:33)

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 28 January 2025 be approved and then signed by the Chair as a correct record.

47. Public Participation (17:34)

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Gwen Swinburn spoke in relation to Agenda item 6 (Work Plan), calling for urgent scrutiny of the economic strategy, including its interaction with the Combined Authority. She also noted the significance of the Council's property assets and suggested that any disposal of these should be

scrutinised by Members, and that an annual property performance report should be considered.

48. The Gender Pay Gap in York (17:38)

The committee considered a report summarising key data published on the gender pay gap in York for City of York Council, other large employers in the city, and through pay data for men and women through the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

The Chief Strategy Officer provided an overview, and in response to members' questions it was noted that:

- There was a median gender pay gap of 12.5% across the city; the reasons behind the pay gap were complex and included unfair pay practices, cultural bias, the gendered nature of child and elder care in society, and the impact of part-time employment, of which two-thirds was done by women in York.
- Of 43 organisations based in York with 250 or more employees who were required to report annually on their gender pay gap, the Council was one of four with a negative gender pay gap, with women's average pay being higher than men's.
- Members questioned the usefulness of the available data, and it was noted that this was a relatively small sample, based on nationally published data; this was only for organisations based in York and so excluded several major employers in the city which were headquartered elsewhere; while UKSPF data focused on workforce rather than pay.
- It was suggested that collective engagement with large organisations which were not performing well on the gender pay gap would be a positive step, and confirmed that this could be considered as part of work around the upcoming York Human Rights City Network Indicator Report. The Executive Member noted that this would be a crucial piece of work and that there was best practice to share, including from the Council.
- Information on the impact of protected characteristics on the gender pay gap was not nationally collected but the Human Rights Indicator Report would seek to explore the intersectionality of the pay gap and broader reasons for pay disparity. The report could also inform work around pay determination, and conversations with city partners had already taken place around actions on anti-racist practices. It was also noted by one member that many people with disabilities started their own businesses.
- There were 9,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in York who form the backbone of the city's economy but were not

obliged to report gender pay data. Officers would look at options to work with small business networks in the city on this issue. It was noted that work was already done through the Good Business Charter to encourage payment of the real living wage.

- Several employers in the education sector had reported gender pay gaps above the city average; officers would seek further information in relation to the appointment and grading of headteachers, which it was noted would differ between maintained schools and academies.
- The University of York's recent report, 'A New Era for Female Entrepreneurship', was being used to inform work on the York Central site. The report was supported by the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.
- There was a twelvefold gap between the highest and lowest paid employees at the Council, although this was far smaller than in many other large organisations. Scrutiny Committee suggested that there would be value in incorporating breakdowns by directorate or department in future reports on the Council's gender pay gap, and noted that there were parts of the Council which were likely more challenging for female employees; and suggested that investigating any correlation between gender and length of service of Council employees could also provide valuable insight.
- Attention was drawn to the negative impact of zero hours contracts on earning potential and security, including in the retail and hospitality sectors. It was noted that trade unions helped hold employers to account over pay practices and that the government was working on abolishing zero hours contracts.

Resolved:

- i. To request that ways to improve collective engagement with large businesses across the city which were not currently performing well in relation to their gender pay gaps be considered, and explore what tools might be available to help.
- ii. To request increased engagement with small business networks in York to support employers to improve on their gender pay gap performance.
- iii. To recommend the Chief Strategy Officer feed back to Human Resources around the issues raised by the committee around Council gender pay data which could be fed into an upcoming report to the Staffing Matters and Urgency Committee.
- iv. To note work on the Human Rights Indicator Report included a specific focus on wages and the impact of pay on protected characteristics.

Reason: To support work to improve gender pay gap performance across the city.

49. Work Plan (18:29)

Members considered the committee's work plan for the remainder of the municipal year. Several issues were raised during the discussion including:

- An item on Assets of Community Value had been requested and would be considered at the earliest opportunity.
- It was suggested that an item on the Economy and Access impact of the work being done in relation to the Human Rights Indicator Report could be considered.
- Several members indicated their interest in scrutinising property issues and the disposal of assets, as raised under the Public Participation item; it was noted that an Asset Management Strategy report had been received last year and the chair and vice-chair would liaise with officers around an update on this. The need for any report to address specific issues, such as ways of making the most of existing assets and how far their use contributed to wider equality aims, was emphasised.
- It was noted that the range of bus issues listed on the work plan could form the basis of a future meeting, and that an update on the Combined Authority's direction of travel in relation to transport issues would be of value.
- It was suggested that proposed items on best practice around tourism levies and an update on EV charging could be brought forward.
- A report on council-owned businesses, to explore how local authorities could generate income streams and any opportunities for York to do better in this regard, was also suggested.

Resolved: That the chair and vice-chair liaise with officers to consider suitable items for the committee's upcoming meetings.

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

Cllr K Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.32 pm and finished at 6.44 pm].