

Meeting	Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee
Date	10 August 2020
Present	Councillors Crawshaw (Chair), Fenton (Vice-Chair), S Barnes, Hollyer, Rowley, Musson, Pearson, Hook (substitute for Cllr Hunter) and Baker (substitute for Cllr D Taylor)
In Attendance	Amanda Hatton (Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities) Maxine Squire (Assistant Director of Education and Skills), Sophie Wales (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Neil Ferris (Corporate Director of Economy and Place), James Gilchrist (Assistant Director of Transport, Highways and Environment), Cllr D'Agorne (Executive Member for Transport), Cllr Waller (Executive Member for Economy & Strategic Planning), Pauline Stuchfield (Assistant Director of Customer and Digital Services), Janie Berry (Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer) and Dawn Steel (Head of Civic and Democratic Services)
Apologies	Councillors Hunter and D Taylor

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## 90. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interest or any discloseable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda.

Cllr Fenton declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 5, Update on the One Year Transport & Place Strategy in that his long term partner, the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning, was involved in developing the One Year Transport & Place Strategy.

## 91. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 6 July 2020, at 5:30pm, be approved and signed at a later date as a correct record subject to the following amendments in point 82, Public Participation:

- Mr Binder be changed to Mr Pinder
- Cllr Webb also raised concerns regarding Member involvement in the decision-making process and the participation of Members going forward.

## 92. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been three registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme and the Chair confirmed that Scrutiny Committees were bound by the Council's Constitution and that the Constitution precluded any questioning of public participants.

All three speakers spoke on agenda item 5, Update on the One Year Transport and Place Strategy.

Wendy Loveday, Chair of York Private Hire Association, commented on the Groves closure, stating that this area should not be classed as a rat run. She felt that the Council should ban all cars within the city walls with the exception of buses and York licensed public and private hire taxis'. She confirmed the taxi trade fully supported disabled access into and out of York city centre and she felt that the free taxi service laid on from Monkgate Car Park did not go far enough to address individual needs. She stated that taxis' should be able to drop a disabled person from door to door and each case had to be treated individually. She requested that access to city centre streets by taxi be reinstated.

Tania Parker, a disabled York resident, expressed her recent experience and difficulties faced when trying to access the city centre to attend an appointment when the road she required to be on was closed. Although she understood the necessity of cutting back on traffic in the city centre, she acknowledged there would be exceptions. She felt the Council had assumed all disabled people used wheelchairs or similar and she asked the

Council to consider how they could make access to the city centre for disabled users via private hire taxis easier.

Cllr Melly, Labour Groups spokesperson for transport, welcomed the Council's progress towards our carbon neutral commitment, encouraging active travel whilst also keeping pedestrianised areas safe. She addressed the changes made to accessing the city centre and although she hoped there would be some long term positive benefits from these changes, she felt some plans put in place had led to people who already had the least access to outdoor spaces and the city centre being further marginalised. She questioned why blue badge holders were not consulted and if the additional seating located on the foot streets was impacting on people with visual impairments or mobility difficulties.

### **93. UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

Members received a presentation on the development of children's and educational services moving forward from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities, the Assistant Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director of Education and Skills were in attendance to provide an update on:

- Increased referrals / sufficiency within City of York Council & partners
- Impact of new ways of working
- Preparing for Inspection
- Free School Meals delivery
- Plans for September / Lessons Learnt
- Covid Recovery Curriculum
- Supporting Blended Learning

The Corporate Director confirmed officers had been working with partners to develop an overarching approach and principles for recovery and had agreed 4 underpinning areas of focus:

- Provision for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.
- The wellbeing of children, young people and adults.
- Supporting children and young people's transitions to and back to education.
- Provision, curriculum, teaching and blended learning.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services highlighted the impact of Covid on children, young people and families and Members noted that across all parts of the service there had been rise and demand in all areas of social work. Officers were undertaking a review of all demands, and despite Covid, visits to children and families had increased.

Members noted that during the pandemic:

- There had been a 100% rise in early help referrals and a 17.5% rise in active targeted help support cases held by the Local Area Teams.
- The number of looked after children had risen by 40 to 282, a 28% increase from July 2019 and a 38% increase since July 2018.
- Referrals from schools had increased from 2.24% to 12.24% and police referrals equated to 29.25%.
- Recruitment of staff had continued and social work practice had developed.
- A learning log was maintained by staff and the key findings showed that the impact of Covid on some families and children was high and would be long lasting.
- Officers had bi weekly meetings with partners and training for staff and families had been delivered virtually.
- Staff wellbeing had been monitored and sickness levels had reduced.
- York was one of four local authorities involved in a recent research project study on child protection, social distancing and risks from Covid.
- 15 local authorities were examining arrangements that were introduced during the period of Covid to understand the impact and the legacy that it might mean for families and officers.
- Officers continued to prepare for inspection.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for her update and in answer to their questions she confirmed:

- An update on looked after children would be provided to the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee.
- On average caseloads within early help was around 22 per practitioner.
- An early help strategy was being finalised.

- Officers maintained close contact with the most vulnerable children.
- Foster Carer recruitment had continued and any expressions of interest were welcomed and responded to quickly.

The Assistant Director of Education and Skills was in attendance to provide an update on her service area, where it was noted that:

- The January census showed that 2699 children were eligible for free school meals and that schools across the city made use of the national voucher scheme.
- The Government had extended the national voucher scheme to cover the full school holiday period and the Holiday Hunger project also continued. The Trussell Trust York Foodbank had also offered additional support during the summer holiday period and schools had a discretion to extend free school meals to those that were in financial hardship.
- Headteachers were fully committed to a full opening of all schools from 7th September 2020.
- The Department for Education had published a revised guidance to support the full opening of schools and this was being used by headteachers in the city to update risk assessments and develop operational plans for September.
- Officers were working with schools to update their travel plans to encourage walking and cycling where possible.
- The Research School had developed training for schools on developing an effective catch up provision.
- Officers were gathering case studies of best practice from settings and schools to capture the learning from lockdown.
- Planning for blended learning remained a priority building on the learning about what works.

Members acknowledged the quality of partnership working and the immense time and effort schools had dedicated to ensuring all settings would be safe and welcoming. In answer to Members questions it was noted that:

- The community hubs also continued to provide food provisions over the summer holiday period.
- Each school had its own dedicated transport plan to ensure robust health and safety measures were in place.

- A back to school communication plan had been devised with messages on traveling to and from school being issued online and to all parents.
- Schools would work closely with any parents or pupils who were anxious about the return to school.

Members thanked all officers for their update and for the work they had achieved during the pandemic and it was recognised that the local authority was committed to ensuring children's wellbeing was a high priority in the recovery plan.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated on the development of children's and educational services moving forward from the Covid-19 pandemic

{An adjournment took place at 19:10 until 19:18}

**94. \*UPDATE ON THE ONE YEAR TRANSPORT & PLACE STRATEGY**

Members received a presentation on the One Year Transport & Place Strategy.

The Assistant Director of Transport, Highways and Environment, the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning, the Executive Member for Transport, the Assistant Director of Customer and Digital Services, the Corporate Director of Economy and Place and a representative from the York Disability Rights Forum were all in attendance.

The Assistant Director of Transport, Highways and Environment gave a brief update on the economic impact of Covid-19 that focused on:

- Speed of delivery
- Engagement with Business/Traders
- Blue Badge Access (including engagement & dialogue with users)

The Assistant Director confirmed that some of the decisions made by Government required officers to implement schemes rapidly and he explained the 5 key strands that supported public health and the economic recovery. Members noted the challenges faced and that officers worked with organisations

and traders to implement the changes required to support the opening of businesses in the safest way.

Given the speed of implementation, the Assistant Director acknowledged that the implementations used had not worked effectively for all areas of the city centre. The temporary rules implemented and the mitigations put in place were discussed and the temporary community impacts were highlighted, where officers had recognised the need for further engagement with stakeholders, particularly with blue badge holders, on all urgent measures going forward.

The Chair thanked officers for their update and the Committee noted the concerns raised by the York Disability Rights Forum regarding the blue badge parking changes in the city centre. Members were informed that the Forum understood that these were unprecedented times but that the way blue badge parking changes had been implemented and communicated had highlighted issues with the existing structures, policies and procedures. They emphasised the importance of consultation, of equality impact statements being completed to a high standard and how vital accurate, up to date, comprehensive and accessible information was to ensuring that York was a city that was welcoming and accessible to all.

The Executive Member for Transport confirmed that the Council would work with partners, organisations and residents to continue to find better solutions that worked for everyone and the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning stated that on the 22 September he would be considering the Covid Recovery Skills Strategy and Communication Plan at his Decision Session.

In response to further questions, Officers indicated:

- They would ensure the measurements put in place were as flexible as possible to cater for every type of need and they would continue to implement a system that worked for everyone.
- They wrote to every residential and commercial property within the city centre foot streets and there were some vehicle access exemptions based on the properties within the city centre.
- That public consultation would be required when installing any permanent measures and then the

decision would be determined at a public decision making session.

- They would enhance and improve the information offered to blue badge holders, particularly online and would consider the language used when sending out any correspondence.
- The use of public transport was slowly rising and further data could be shared with the Committee. Officers would consider working with bus operators to develop some local incentives to encourage residents to use public transport.

Following a discussion regarding the temporary measures put in place on Bishopthorpe Road the Executive Member for Transport confirmed that the scheme was implemented quickly and that any feedback received would be considered. The Chair agreed to discuss this particular intervention further with the Executive Member, officers and relevant Councillors.

Members and officers welcomed the comments from the public speakers and the York Disability Rights Forum and it was.

Resolved:

- (i) That as a minimum going forward, consideration be given to consulting the York Disability Rights Forum and the Older Citizens Advocacy York on any changes to foot streets and secondary shopping areas in the city;
- (ii) That the free taxi service from Monkgate Car Park be reviewed to ensure it was fit for purpose, in particular to make sure it was easily identifiable, welcoming and accessible to users.
- (iii) That any other equivalent mitigation for lost city centre parking be considered.
- (iv) That the Council's Communication Team meet with the York Disability Rights Forum to discuss the language used in relation to future communications.

Reason: To allow the Committee to consider and comment on the One Year Transport & Place Strategy



*\*Note: The Chair agreed to vary the order of business so that this item could be considered after agenda item 3 Public Participation.*

**95. CLOSING REMARKS**

At this point in the meeting, some Members raised concerns about holding meetings of this Committee (and others) during the day, due to work commitments for themselves and members of the public wishing to attend. The Chair advised that discussions were ongoing about the provision of scrutiny meetings moving forward, subject to resource availability. The Council's calendar of meetings would be reviewed in October, with a view to re-introducing more public scrutiny meetings at a more traditional hour.

Councillor Crawshaw, Chair  
[The meeting started at 5.43 pm and finished at 8.13 pm].