
| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Meeting | Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee |
| Date | 11 December 2023 |
| Present | Councillors Fenton (Chair), Merrett (Vice-Chair), Ayre, Baxter, J Burton, Healey, Kelly, D Myers, Rowley, Steels-Walshaw, K Taylor, Widdowson and Fisher (Substitute for Cllr Waller) |
| Apologies | Councillor Waller |
| In Attendance | Councillor Douglas, Leader of City of York Council |
| Officers Present | Debbie Mitchell, Chief Finance Officer Ian Cunningham, Head of Business Intelligence Claire Foale, Assistant Director Policy and Strategy Shaun Gibbons, Head of Carbon Reduction Sam Blyth, Corporate Policy and City Partnerships Bryn Roberts, Director of Governance & Monitoring Officer Dawn Steel, Head of Democratic and Scrutiny Services |
| External Attendee | Suzan Harrington, Interim Monitoring Officer of the Proposed York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority |

21. Declarations of Interest (5.32 pm)

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest, or other registerable interest, they might have in respect of business on the agenda, if they had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests.

None were declared.

22. Minutes (5.32 pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meetings held on 16 October (subject to a correction to the start time from 16:32 to 17:32) and 27 November 2023 (subject to an amendment at minute 18, to include mention of the written update provided by officers), be approved as a correct record.

23. Public Participation (5.35 pm)

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 7 (Mayoral Combined Authority Governance). She expressed concern over transparency in relation to the constitution of the Combined Authority.

24. 2023/24 Finance and Performance Monitor 2 (5.38 pm)

The Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Business Intelligence presented the Finance and Performance Monitor Quarter 2 report to Members. They noted that while there had been some small improvements in the forecast, serious financial concerns continued and work was being undertaken by officers to identify mitigations and other potential savings.

Officers responded to a range of questions from Members which covered how the financial situation had been communicated to York residents, service area financial reviews, the impact of the difficulties in recovering Housing Benefit overpayments resulting from the move to Universal Credit, the external public sector audit fee, how information from previous quarters was displayed in the report, vacancy management and overtime costs, and the comparative cost of different forms of communication with residents.

Officers confirmed that they did not expect the budget to be balanced before the Quarter 3 report, and that replacement of the paper Our City newsletter with the Gov Delivery e-newsletter had been part of the last Council Budget.

[Cllr Kelly arrived at 17:59].

Resolved:

- i. That the finance and performance information be noted.
- ii. That the Chair would invite expressions of interest to establish a task and finish group to examine the costs and benefits of Council communications, including resident consultations.

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

25. Net Zero Fund Update (6.13 pm)

The Assistant Director of Policy and Strategy and the Head of Carbon Reduction introduced the report, updating Members on applications to the £7m Net Zero Fund established as part of the Mayoral Combined Authority devolution deal for York and North Yorkshire. The Head of Carbon Reduction provided an overview of the process, drawing attention to the £3m of funding which had been allocated to City of York Council for 3 development projects and 4 delivery projects due to be delivered between January 2024 – March 2025.

Officers responded to a range of questions from members covering the potential for future project funding, officer capacity for project delivery, contingency planning for cost inflation, and challenges around National Grid connectivity. Officers noted the ambition for York and North Yorkshire to be the first carbon-negative region in the UK, and the Leader of the Council emphasised the importance of taking available opportunities to bring green investment into York and the wider region.

Resolved:

- i. That the report be noted;
- ii. That the committee monitor the progress of these and other Net Zero projects;
- iii. That the officers be congratulated for their work in this area.

Reason: To ensure that the committee's responsibility for monitoring progress on reducing carbon emissions continues to be fulfilled.

[18.34 – 18.38, the meeting adjourned for a comfort break]

26. York-North Yorkshire Devolution and the Mayoral Combined Authority (6.38 pm)

The Strategic Manager, Corporate Policy and City Partnerships introduced the report, providing an overview of the process that had been undertaken toward the establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) for York and North Yorkshire.

Officers responded to questions on Member engagement and the timing of the process. The Director of Governance clarified the Parliamentary timetable relating to the establishment of the MCA. The Interim Monitoring Officer of the Proposed York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority confirmed that the two constituent authorities would be the members of the MCA, and the Mayor the only elected member. The Assistant Director of Policy and Strategy and the Leader of City of York Council highlighted efforts to learn from best practice elsewhere.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure Committee and Member feedback is considered as part of the ongoing engagement process with the CA/MCA.

27. Mayoral Combined Authority Governance (6.38 pm)

The Interim Monitoring Officer of the Proposed York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority provided an update on the progress of the creation of the proposed MCA with reference to governance issues. She gave an overview of the governance structure of the Combined Authority, drawing attention to the decision-making process set out in the draft Order in Appendix A and the draft Constitution of the MCA, including the membership and functions of the Combined Authority, the constitution of its committees, and requirements for statutory officers.

The officer responded to a range of questions from Members which covered the openness and transparency of the process, differences between the agreed devolution scheme and the draft Order and draft Constitution, the issue of the political proportionality of Combined Authority committees, the remit of the proposed Transport Committee of the Combined Authority, arrangements for scrutiny of the Police, Fire and Crime function, potential council tax ramifications of the Mayoral budget, the engagement of North Yorkshire Council in the process, and the time

available for meaningful scrutiny of the proposed governance arrangements.

The officer confirmed that the draft Constitution was a live document and likely to be subject to further revisions. There was no scope to vary the Order but amendments to the Constitution could be put forward at the inaugural meeting of the Combined Authority if Members were minded to review an appropriate draft in January. She also confirmed that discussions were ongoing in relation to outstanding issues including the remit of the proposed Transport Committee and the incorporation of Police, Fire and Crime functions.

[Cllr Rowley left the meeting at 18:53; Cllr Baxter left the meeting at 19:32].

Resolved:

- i. That the proposals in relation to the proposed governance of the Combined Authority be noted;
- ii. That the Chair and Vice-Chair liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, and Democratic Services, to convene a joint meeting to consider an appropriate draft Combined Authority Constitution;
- iii. That the Leader of City of York Council be asked to raise the concerns highlighted by the committee at the Joint Devolution Committee meeting on 15 December 2023.

Reason: To ensure there is appropriate member oversight with regard to the governance issues in the creation of the Combined Authority.

28. Work Plan (8.03 pm)

Members considered the Scrutiny work plan for the four scrutiny committees.

Resolved:

- i. That the work plan be noted;
- ii. To add the item, public switch telephone network changes, to the Committee's January agenda.

Reason: To ensure an overview of the scrutiny work programme.

Cllr S Fenton, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.32 pm and finished at 8.04 pm].