

North Yorkshire County Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 14 June 2018 at 9.30 am at the Cairn Hotel, Ripon Road, Harrogate

Present:-

Members:-

County Councillors Philip Broadbank, Jim Clark, Richard Cooper, Michael Harrison, Paul Haslam, Don Mackenzie, John Mann, Zoe Metcalfe, Geoff Webber and Robert Windass.

In Attendance:-

Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Alice Gill (Business Support) and Ruth Gladstone (Democratic Services).

Fourteen members of the public.

Apologies for Absence:-

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors John Ennis, Cliff Trotter and Nicola Wilson, and County Councillor David Chance (Executive Member).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved –

That County Councillor John Mann be appointed Chairman of the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee until the first meeting of the Area Constituency Committee to be held following the County Council elections in 2021.

County Councillor John Mann in the Chair

2. Minutes of the Meeting of the County Area Committee for the Harrogate District held on 15 March 2018

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the last meeting of this former Area Committee be noted.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Resolved –

That County Councillor Zoe Metcalfe be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee until the first meeting of the Area Constituency Committee to be held following the County Council elections in 2021.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Public Questions or Statements

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

6. Area Constituency Committees - A Suggested Way Forward

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) which provided an update on the role of the new Area Constituency Committees (ACCs) and outlined suggestions for a standard agenda; co-option of members; management of regular updates; and links with NYCC Overview and Scrutiny.

Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager) introduced the report and highlighted the guide to ACCs which was appended to the report. He advised that there were a number of issues which it would be helpful to resolve at this early stage to help free-up the ACC's agendas to concentrate on a small number of substantive items for review and scrutiny during the year. Daniel Harry suggested that, based on four committee meetings a year, the ACC would have, on average, between 10 and 12 hours' business time per annum in which to work. With regard to:-

- Co-option:-
 - Daniel Harry asked Members to consider whether co-option was appropriate. He suggested that co-option was usually most effective when a committee had a tight focus on a specific area of work or theme and co-opted members were specialists who could bring their technical knowledge to bear on a regular basis in discussion. He suggested, however, that the ACC was not a specialist committee but one that looked at an area in the round, picking up a range of issues that would vary throughout the year. As such, it would be difficult to find someone with specific specialist knowledge that he/she could apply throughout the course of all the year's meetings. Daniel Harry suggested, therefore, that Members should consider not co-opting any additional members onto the Committee.
 - During discussion, Members expressed a preference for not co-opting and instead inviting people with specialist knowledge to attend meetings as and when necessary. (The ACC's decision is recorded at part (a) of the following Resolution.)
- Regular Updates from the Police, Fire and other organisations:-
 - Daniel Harry highlighted that the former Area Committees received regular updates from the Police and Fire Service which previously had often been highly localised and used up a lot of time on the agenda. He proposed that, instead of these being formal agenda updates, they could be published quarterly and provided as part of the meeting papers for noting but not for formal discussion. He clarified that the intention was to invite officers from the Police or Fire Service to attend when

notified of questions, in advance, from ACC Members or members of the public. Daniel Harry also suggested that, once a year, there could be a session on place or safety which would focus on bigger issues within the area.

- During discussion, Members expressed support for the suggestion put forward by Daniel Harry. They also highlighted that the quarterly reports would need to be published well in advance of the meeting in order for such reports to be read and advance notice of questions to be given. Members cautioned against setting a deadline for the receipt of questions which was too early in order not to stymie the ACC. Members agreed that quarterly reports should be supplied “as early as is practical”. (The ACC’s decision is set out at part (b) of the following Resolution.)

- Highways:-
 - Daniel Harry highlighted that, at meetings of the former Area Committees, many Highway issues were highly localised and had used up a lot of time on the agenda. He advised that the new ACCs needed to focus on strategic issues. However, if Members wished, a 30 minute informal drop-in session could be organised, to be held immediately after each ACC meeting had finished, at which the Area Highways Officer could take questions on very local, day-to-day Highways issues.

 - During discussion, Members emphasised the importance of continuing the opportunity for members of the public to be able to raise issues and concerns regarding Highways during the item “Public Questions or Statements” during formal meetings of the ACC.

 - Some Members commented that they could not recognise the need to have an informal drop-in session after each ACC meeting on the grounds that other opportunities existed for Members to raise day-to-day issues and concerns with representatives of the Area Highways Office.

 - It was suggested by some Members, but not supported by the majority, that part of one meeting a year of the ACC should be allocated for providing opportunity for asking specific Highways questions or raising concerns. This suggestion was not supported on the grounds that it would not make good use of ACC meeting time and in order that the ACC would not be side-tracked by very local issues.

 - The majority of Members felt that, for a trial period, there should be an informal drop-in session for very local, day-to-day Highways issues and concerns, open to anyone, to be held after the ACC’s meeting. The outcome of the trial should be considered after the next two meetings. Consequently Highways officers shall not be expected to attend every ACC meeting. (The ACC’s decision is set out at part (c) of the following Resolution.)

- Standard and timed agenda:-
 - Daniel Harry asked whether agendas for meetings of the ACC should be based on the standard agenda which was set out on page 29 of the papers for this meeting, incorporating a suggested time when discussion of each of the various items of business might commence during the meeting. He highlighted that this was not intended either to

stifle debate at the meeting or to limit the ACC. However, it was recognised that some meetings of the former Area Committees had been very long.

- During debate, Members expressed support for the suggestion and commented that they would welcome the clarity regarding timings which consequently would be provided in advance of meetings. (The ACC's decision is set out at part (d) of the following Resolution.)
- Links with Overview and Scrutiny:-
 - Daniel Harry advised that the County Council's overview and scrutiny would develop a closer working relationship with the ACCs, enabling the in-depth topics considered by the ACCs to feed into scrutiny reviews, thereby providing a local input. It was also expected that ACCs would identify local issues that might be worthy of consideration at overarching scrutiny level. Examples of such working were set out on pages 28 and 29 of the papers for this meeting.
 - During discussion, the Chairman emphasised that it was important that the work of the ACCs added to, rather than duplicated, the work of the overview and scrutiny committees. This would be achieved by identifying issues of local concern. Subsequently those concerns would be discussed by the officers who supported the ACCs and the relevant lead scrutiny officer and the role which the ACC could play would be worked out.
 - Members highlighted that the task of linking between ACCs and overview and scrutiny, and vice versa, was complicated by the different and varying operational boundaries of other partners, in particular health organisations. Members commented that they would prefer local health issues to be considered by the relevant County Council ACC(s).
- Other Comments/Suggestions:-
 - County Councillor Richard Cooper highlighted that he worked for the local Member of Parliament and, at future meetings, depending on the issue under consideration, he might need to declare an interest and consider whether he had a prejudicial interest.
 - County Councillor Richard Cooper asked for further detail to be circulated to Members concerning the statement, on page 24 of the papers for this meeting, which said "It is the Leader's wish, in time, to devolve more responsibility and decision making powers to the ACCs, but this will be done incrementally, once they demonstrate that they are ready". County Councillor Richard Cooper also asked how it would be judged that ACCs had demonstrated that they were ready to take on more responsibility. The Chairman undertook to organise for the information requested by County Councillor Richard Cooper to be circulated to ACC Members.
 - County Councillor Paul Haslam expressed the view that the purpose of the ACCs needed to be defined more clearly than as documented on page 23 of the papers for this meeting. He expressed concern, in particular, about the use of the words "critical friend" in describing ACCs' purpose. He suggested that the phrase "consultees in major decisions" should be included in ACCs' purpose. Daniel Harry responded that the arrangements set out in the Guide, which was appended to the report

and documented ACCs' purpose, were a starting point; it was for an ACC to develop via a Work Programme and have a clear sense, when tackling an issue at a meeting, of where the ACC was going with it and how it wished to influence change; that any response of an ACC had weight to it, regardless of whether "consultee" was included in the wording of ACCs' purpose; and that there was already a route for ACCs to escalate issues, namely, by referring the ACC's recommendation to the relevant Executive Member. Other Members expressed the view that the purpose of ACCs, as currently set out, was acceptable until such time as there was a change in the responsibilities delegated to ACCs. They emphasised that the six ACCs did not, and could not, have a policy-making role. The Chairman commented that Members looked forward to the possibility of more powers being devolved to ACCs in the future.

- County Councillor Michael Harrison advised that his Electoral Division (Lower Nidderdale and Bishop Monkton) was divided between two ACCs and that he intended to attend meetings of this ACC on only an ad-hoc basis subject to the content of the agenda because the larger part of his Division lay within the area covered by the Skipton and Ripon ACC.
- County Councillor Michael Harrison suggested that, in future, if a member of the public gave notice of a question or statement in advance of a meeting, a full response should be given during the meeting rather than after the meeting. The Chairman commented that that was a good point which he would bear in mind.
- County Councillor Paul Haslam suggested that the agenda sheet for a meeting needed to include as much detail as possible in order to that members of the public could make an informed decision about whether they wished to attend that meeting. Daniel Harry advised that that was the intention in respect of meetings at which the ACC would be undertaking review and scrutiny of local issues. However, this first meeting was focussed on setting-up the ACC's working arrangements.

Resolved -

- (a) That no additional Members be co-opted onto the Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC and instead people with specialist knowledge be invited to attend meetings of this ACC as and when necessary.
- (b) That regular updates from the Police and Fire Services be requested and published quarterly and as early as is practical and be provided as part of the papers for meetings of the Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC for noting but not for formal discussion. The Police and Fire Services attend Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC meetings when notified, in advance, of questions from ACC Members or members of the public.
- (c) That an annual session on 'place' be organised, the subject matter to be determined by an analysis of Police, Fire, Highways, Community Safety and Public Health data.
- (d) That, as a trial, a 30 minute informal drop-in session, for very local, day-to-day Highways issues and concerns, open to anyone, be held after each of the next two meetings of the Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC and that the outcome of this trial be considered after those next two meetings of this ACC.

Consequently Highways officers shall not be expected to attend every meeting of the Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC.

- (e) That agendas for meetings of this ACC be based on the standard agenda which is set out on page 29 of the papers for this meeting, incorporating a suggested time when discussion of each of the various items of business might commence during the meeting.
- (f) That the links with Overview and Scrutiny be noted.
- (g) That the Chairman arrange for the information regarding the possible future devolution of decision making powers to ACCs, as requested by County Councillor Richard Cooper, to be circulated to ACC Members.

7. Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee Area Profile

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) which provided an overview of some of the key issues in the area covered by the Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC.

Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager) introduced the area profile for Harrogate and Knaresborough. He noted that the profile was a very detailed document which aimed to assist the ACC in identifying areas of interest for inclusion in its Work Programme. Daniel Harry highlighted that, whilst the Harrogate and Knaresborough area compared favourably against the regional and national situations in many regards, it was acknowledged that a favourable situation in some regards could simultaneously mask hidden issues within that same geographic area. He also highlighted that the Harrogate and Knaresborough area included a significant rural area in which jobs and deprivation could be issues.

The Chairman highlighted the key issues identified within the area profile, which were as follows:-

- An ageing population with a greater proportion over 65 years of age and a smaller proportion under 15 years of age. There are also significantly more women than men (page 36 of the document pack for this meeting)
- Low levels of incapacity benefits being claimed (page 42)
- Low levels of people claiming out of work benefits (page 43)
- Low levels of deprivation but a question as to whether some deprivation may be hidden? (page 47)
- Low levels of social and council housing (page 55)
- Poor affordability of housing (page 56)
- Low levels of crime but ASB in line with England average (page 64)
- Higher levels of hospital admission for heart disease (page 69)
- Higher levels of binge drinking (page 71)
- Higher levels of people with Level 4+ qualifications (page 73)
- Higher numbers of people in managerial and professional occupations (page 80)
- Strong sense of community and community engagement (page 87)
- Air pollution and sulphur dioxide concentrations (page 90)
- Higher levels of Big Lottery funding secured locally (page 91)
- Overall good school performance

Members commented that the area profile was very helpful and thorough.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie advised that he was surprised that the total population for Harrogate and Knaresborough area was stated as 88,250 when the total population for the Richmond (York) area was given as 111,300. He commented that this was an indication of how few younger people lived in the Harrogate and Knaresborough area. Daniel Harry advised that he would check whether the Harrogate and Knaresborough figure was correct and re-circulate any necessary information.

Daniel Harry clarified that, if this ACC identified an issue which it wished to investigate, that issue could be included in the ACC's Work Programme and officers could have early conversations, including with other organisations where necessary to identify the best way to proceed.

The Chairman asked ACC Members that, if they had any comments on the information in the area profile, they should email himself and the Vice-Chairman.

Resolved -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That Daniel Harry check whether the figure stated, of 88,250, is correct for the total population for Harrogate and Knaresborough Parliamentary Constituency Area and, if necessary, re-circulate any necessary information.
- (c) That any comments which ACC Members have regarding the information in the area profile be emailed to the ACC Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

8. Work Programme

Note: During consideration of this item of business, County Councillor Geoff Webber declared an interest as a Trustee of the Harrogate Community Land Trust.

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) which provided a draft Work Programme for the ACC to consider, develop and adopt.

Daniel Harry introduced the report stating that it was preferable for a committee to have a clearly defined Work Programme for the forthcoming 12 to 18 months to outline what it would be doing. He asked Members to consider what items, including any from the area profile or from the former Area Committee, would be relevant for the new ACC to consider as part of its Work Programme. He added that Work Programmes were very fluid documents and that various sources of information would typically be looked at when the ACC was carrying out review and scrutiny, eg performance data; inspection reports; national policy changes including government Green Papers; national and local consultations; the County Council's Executive's Forward Plan; and local issues in the media.

Daniel Harry suggested that the ACC might wish to gather a list of issues so that work could be undertaken to identify how those issues might best be dealt with, eg via the relevant Executive Member. He highlighted that an issue did not always need to come before a meeting of the ACC to achieve resolution. He highlighted that the aspiration was for each ACC's Work Programme to comprise local issues, which had strategic implications, and which the ACC was able to influence. He suggested that the ACC should ask itself "what is the purpose of bringing ... (issue) before an ACC meeting?". He advised that, if the issue was one for the ACC's information purposes only, it was strongly suggested that such information should be circulated by email.

Members discussed several suggestions from Members about issues which might be included in the ACC's Work Programme and agreed to the inclusion of those issues recorded in part (a) of the Resolution which appears below. In making that decision, Members acknowledged the need to avoid putting too many issues on the Work Programme and therefore some Members withdrew their suggestions.

With regard to traffic congestion in Harrogate and Knaresborough, the Chairman reported that, subject to the appropriate Committee and Executive approvals, consultation was likely to be carried out in January/February 2019. The Chairman suggested that the Harrogate and Knaresborough traffic congestion study should be included in the ACC's Work Programme, for consideration as a major piece of ACC work at the ACC's meeting to be held during November 2018. County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Access, including Highways) expressed support for the Chairman's suggestion and reported that he would ask the officers who were leading this traffic congestion study to provide, in addition, a one paged update report, for information only, for the ACC's next meeting. County Councillor Don Mackenzie also advised that a decision to consult on options for congestion relief would be made by the County Council's Executive. He further advised that the Engagement Group, whose membership included environmental groups, bus companies and businesses, had met during the previous week and the Minutes of that meeting would be made public very soon. More Engagement Group meetings would be held.

Members discussed their preferences regarding the date of the week, the time of day, and venues for meetings of the ACC. The ACC made the decision which is recorded at part (b) of the following Resolution.

Resolved –

- (a) That the following four issues be included in the Work Programme:-
- Traffic congestion in Harrogate and Knaresborough - for consideration at the ACC's meeting to be held during November 2018 as a major piece of ACC work.
 - Residential parking zones, including information about parking in the Saints area of Harrogate.
 - Air Quality Action Plan for Harrogate Borough Council.
 - Housing - How to provide a way forward so that publicly owned land, which could be used for house building, is developed for housing and house builders can be encouraged to actually start building those homes.
- (b) That it be noted that County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Access, including Highways) will ask the officers who are leading the Harrogate and Knaresborough traffic congestion study to provide a one paged update report, for information only, for the ACC's next meeting.
- (c) That meetings of Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC be held on Thursdays at 9.30am at Harrogate Civic Centre if available, subject to one meeting per year being held at Knaresborough at a venue which provides all necessary facilities, subject to availability.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am.

RAG/JR