

North Yorkshire County Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 9 January 2020 at 9.30 am at the Cairn Hotel, Ripon Road, Harrogate

Present:-

Members:-

County Councillor John Mann (in the Chair); County Councillors Philip Broadbank, Jim Clark, Richard Cooper, David Goode, Paul Haslam, Don Mackenzie, Cliff Trotter, Geoff Webber and Robert Windass

In Attendance:-

County Councillor Carl Les (Leader of the County Council) and County Council David Chance (Executive Member for Stronger Communities)

From TalkTalk plc: - Paul Crane (Head of Engagement and Rollout, FibreNation)

County Council Officers: - Gary Fielding (Corporate Director – Strategic Resources), Melisa Burnham (Area Highways Manager, Business and Environmental Services Directorate), Ruth Gladstone (Principal Democratic Services Officer), and Luke MacKintosh and Michael Cratchley (Business Support)

Five members of the public

Apologies for Absence:-

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors John Ennis, Michael Harrison and Zoe Metcalfe.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

57. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2019, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

58. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

59. County Council Budget 2020/21

Considered –

The presentation by the Corporate Director – Strategic Resources concerning the County Council's budget for 2020/21.

The presentation set out information regarding: - the County Council's current financial position; the impact of the 2020/21 local government settlement on the County Council's budget and its medium term financial strategy; options for the County Council when setting its Council Tax precept for 2020/21; Harrogate and Knaresborough specific issues; and the risks and issues facing the County Council.

It was noted that the County Council was undertaking an on-line consultation regarding its budget and comments were being sought by 20 January 2020. Subsequently the budget would be discussed at a meeting of the full County Council in February 2020.

The Corporate Director – Strategic Resources responded to Members' questions. During discussion, the Corporate Director – Strategic Resources undertook to take back the following concerns and comments expressed by Members:-

- Concern that the amount of accommodation for homeless young people might be reduced because having such accommodation affected such people for the rest of their lives.
- A comment of a Member that councils spent considerable amounts of money on children in difficult circumstances but did so without improving the life chances of such children. The Corporate Director – Strategic Resources responded that children and families who required intensive support from the County Council did cost significant amounts of money. He advised, however, that North Yorkshire County Council's Children's Services were rated as outstanding and a recent bench-marking exercise had shown that the County Council provided such services at lower costs than any other authority involved in that exercise. He added that he would, however, refer the Member's comment back to the Children and Young People's Directorate.

Resolved –

That the presentation, together with Members' concerns and comments which the Corporate Director – Strategic Resources has undertaken to take back, be noted.

60. TalkTalk FibreNation Rollout in Harrogate

Considered –

The presentation by Paul Crane (Head of Engagement and Rollout, FibreNation) concerning FibreNation's rollout of full fibre infrastructure in the Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon area. (It was noted that FibreNation was a wholly-owned subsidiary of TalkTalk plc.)

Paul Crane explained that a full fibre network was required because the existing copper network was designed for voice, email and web browsing services only. Subsequently there had been an increase in the range of devices now used in properties (eg video services, cameras, Social Care telecare services, contactless transactions) and such devices, together with the band-widths now required, was putting huge pressure on the existing copper network. It was also explained that the United Kingdom lagged behind many other countries in terms of full fibre connectivity. This had been recognised by the Government and industry regulators who had responded with additional funding and had opened-up the existing infrastructure so that companies, such as FibreNation, could access existing ducting and poles for the purpose of creating fibre networks.

In the Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon area, FibreNation had commenced construction work to create a new full fibre network for the 52,000 properties in that area. Between 50% and 60% of the new network would be provided by accessing the ducting and poles of the existing copper network. The remainder would involve some form of construction work, eg cutting swathes in the pavement or lifting paving stones, in order to lay the new fibre network. The programme of works was likely to take about 2½ years in order to achieve a balance between doing the work quickly and doing it with the least disruption possible. Communication was vitally important to FibreNation and their plans included delivering communications to all properties adjacent to construction locations and to others who could benefit from the new network once it was installed.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Access) highlighted that FibreNation's work was quite separate to the full fibre network which the County Council was providing to connect 341 public buildings throughout North Yorkshire. FibreNation's work was also separate to NYnet's Superfast Broadband project which aimed to provide connectivity, mainly using cabinets and copper wires, in those parts of the County where the private sector felt it was not worth their while in going.

Members expressed the following comments:-

- Members welcomed FibreNation's work, describing it as "all good news". They also commented that they were very pleased that FibreNation and NYnet would be making North Yorkshire one of the best IT and digitally connected Counties in the country.
- As Highway Authority, the County Council was always concerned about the quality of utility companies' reinstatement works and the integrity of its highways and footpaths. Members were reassured to hear that there had been regular communication between FibreNation and staff in the County Council's Area 6 Highways Office.

The Chairman thanked Paul Crane for his presentation.

Resolved –

That the situation be noted.

61. Public Questions or Statements

A statement was made by Mr John Branson (local resident). The statement and the response made by officers at the meeting are set out below.

Mr John Branson - Harrogate Congestion Study "Master Plan":-

I would like to endorse the statement made by the Harlow and Pannal Ash Residents' Association at the last meeting which said that: "we see no real evidence of a Master Plan, only development specific applications, with little to link them, and certainly no overall context.

It is now over two years since the Harrogate Relief Road Review was published. Since then there has been the Congestion Report and a public consultation, but the above comment seems to indicate that the message has not got through to the public that North Yorkshire County Council is serious in trying to solve the congestion within the study area.

The nearest we have to a Master Plan is appendix E in the Congestion Study (Ref 1.) It sets out a plan of action in the form of two packages and interventions,

each of which is discussed in detail in the Harrogate Relief Road and Congestion Studies.

There seems to be a great reluctance to associate any present work to these interventions. For example, in the Results of the Congestion Study Public Engagement (Ref 2 section 7) there is no mention of any of the interventions.

There have been a number of studies or “specific applications”. Even if they do not mention being part of the Congestion Study I see no reason why the minutes of these meetings cannot associate them with the relevant intervention.

For example: this meeting has a report on the Cycle Path Network Provision, which could have been presented as part of intervention F1 (Implementation of Cycling Infrastructure Plan.) It also has the Walking Infrastructure Plan which could have been presented as part of intervention G1 (Walking.)

Progress is being made on solving congestion. There is a summary in the background to the Results of the Congestion Study Public Engagement (Ref 2 section 2) which includes, for example, Bond End. This has been successful in improving traffic flow, but its success is not being promoted as part of the Congestion Study. In contrast, the web site Possible Next Steps (ref 3) reads as if you are starting the Congestion Study all over again!

Because each study appears to be happening in isolation there definitely seems to be a need for somebody to co-ordinate all the different independent studies and be in overall control of a plan. This has been suggested, according to the minutes of the last meeting, by one member of this committee and I hope it will be supported by all of you. Otherwise, the above statement “we see no real evidence of a Master Plan, only development specific applications, with little to link them, and certainly no overall context,” will continue to be true and will be so for the foreseeable future.

The response was made by Melisa Burnham (Area Highways Manager) on behalf of Andrew Bainbridge (Team Leader for Transport Planning, Business and Environmental Services Directorate). The response is set out below:-

Firstly, I believe the Harlow and Pannal Ash Residents' Association reference to a Master Plan relates to the approach being taken by Harrogate Borough Council to the mitigation of traffic from Local Plan developments in the west of Harrogate rather than to the County Council's approach to seeking solutions to congestion across the whole of Harrogate.

With regards to any suggestion of a congestion Master Plan, the County Council are indeed working to develop what, in effect, will be a Master Plan. In presenting the results of the Harrogate Congestion Study to this Committee in August last year, and based on the outcomes of the consultation, Officers suggested further developing a series of interrelated specific schemes at specific locations which together would form a package to address congestion across the two towns. This suggestion was agreed by the County Council's Executive on 15 October and work has now commenced on a 'Harrogate Transport Improvements Package' (HTIP) to develop these schemes with a view to seeking funding from Government or other sources to deliver them on the ground. This is, in no way, 'starting the Congestion Study all over again'. Rather it is developing the 'concepts' considered as part of the Congestion Study into specific schemes at specific locations.

With regards to the reports being considered today, these were specifically requested by this Area Constituency Committee and, whilst being relevant to

the Harrogate Transport Improvements Programme, are actually an update on the County Council's policy approach to cycling and on the ongoing development of a Walking Infrastructure Plan rather than being specific parts of HTIP.

Future meetings of this Committee will receive updates on the development of HTIP and ultimately make recommendations on which schemes to include in the final package for potential funding and delivery.

62. Cycle Path Network Provision

Considered –

The report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services which outlined the County Council's approach to cycle path network provision.

County Councillor Geoff Webber expressed concern about the availability of funding to maintain existing cycle paths. He suggested that maintaining existing cycling paths was more important than providing new ones. County Councillor Geoff Webber referred to an existing cycle path which flooded regularly and could not be used, at such times, by school pupils due to safety reasons. He advised that he had offered to use his Environmental Locality Budget for maintaining this cycle path. County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Highways) advised that he was unaware of the maintenance problem with this cycle path and asked County Councillor Geoff Webber to contact him outside the meeting so that County Councillor Don Mackenzie could take up the matter.

Resolved –

That the content of the report be noted.

63. Update on the Walking Infrastructure Plan for Harrogate and Knaresborough

Considered –

The report of the Corporate Director – Business and Environmental Services which provided an update on the work being undertaken to produce a walking infrastructure plan for Harrogate and Knaresborough.

Resolved –

That the content of the report be noted.

64. Committee Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Principal Democratic Services Officer which invited Members to consider, amend and add to the Committee's work programme.

The following updates were reported verbally:-

- One of the Committee's forthcoming meetings was likely to need to be re-organised to a Friday to suit the parliamentary commitments of Andrew Jones MP.

- Reports regarding Non Crime Data were being organised for all six of the Area Constituency Committees. However, a Non Crime Data report was unlikely to be available for this Committee's meeting to be held on 19 March 2020 and this topic therefore needed to be rescheduled for a later meeting.
- The update concerning implementation of the Pupil Referral Service reorganisation needed to be re-scheduled, from the Committee's 19 March 2020 meeting, to its meeting in June 2020 because there would be relatively little to report in March 2020 as much was in the Regional Schools Commissioner's hands.

The Chairman outlined the topics scheduled to be considered at each of the Committee's forthcoming meetings.

County Councillor Geoff Webber suggested that, if the cyber-crime presentation was going to meetings of all six Area Constituency Committees, it might instead go to a Members' Seminar in order to save officer resources. The Principal Democratic Services Officer undertook to look into that suggestion and, following consultation with the Chairman, to get back to County Councillor Geoff Webber with a response.

County Councillor Paul Haslam suggested the inclusion, in the Committee's Work Programme, of an analysis of the home to school bus service within the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency area, seeking the following information:-

- how many pupils used the home to school bus service?
- which schools were not provided for by the County Council?
- how many pupils were:- (i) using public transport, (ii) using the home to school bus service provided by the County Council, (iii) were walking to school, (iv) were cycling to school?
- of the pupils who were eligible to receive the home to school bus service, how many actually used that provision?

County Councillor Paul Haslam explained that his aim was to reduce traffic congestion and he would like to understand whether there was anything else which could be done with regard to transporting pupils to/from schools.

The Committee discussed whether it wished to seek the information suggested by County Councillor Paul Haslam. During discussion, Members highlighted the following:-

- All secondary schools in the Harrogate urban area were Academies. Academies made their own provision.
- The suggestion would require a huge amount of work by officers. Members questioned whether it would be worth using tax payers' money to ask officers to provide such information.
- The Committee should spend its time on things it was able to influence.

The Chairman undertook to give further consideration to the request, taking into account the various comments which had been made during the Committee's discussion, and to advise County Councillor Paul Haslam of the decision regarding whether his suggestion would be included on the Committee's Work Programme. The Chairman also undertook to copy all other Members of the Committee into the response sent to County Councillor Paul Haslam. In response to questions from County Councillor Geoff Webber, the Chairman confirmed that County Councillor Paul

Haslam's suggested topic would only be included in the Work Programme if the Area Constituency Committee agreed to that.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme be approved, subject to:-

- (a) One meeting of the Committee in 2020 being rearranged, if necessary, to a Friday to suit the parliamentary commitments of Andrew Jones MP.
- (b) The topic of Non-Crime Data being re-scheduled, from the meeting on 19 March 2020, to another meeting later in the year.
- (c) The update concerning implementation of the Pupil Referral Service being re-scheduled, from the meeting on 19 March 2020, to the Committee's meeting to be held in June 2020.
- (d) Research and consultation with the Chairman concerning whether to refer, to a Members' Seminar, the cyber-crime presentation currently scheduled for the Committee's meeting on 19 March 2020.

The meeting concluded at 11.20am.

RAG