

North Yorkshire County Council

Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2018 commencing at 10.00 am at Middleham Key Centre, Park Lane, Middleham.

Present:-

Members:-

County Councillors David Blades, Caroline Dickinson, Helen Grant, David Hugill, Carl Les, Heather Moorhouse, Karin Sedgwick, Angus Thompson, John Weighell OBE and Annabel Wilkinson.

In attendance County Councillor David Chance, Executive Member for Stronger Communities

Officers:-

Daniel Harry and Patrick Duffy (Democratic Services), Sally Lacy (Business Support)

There were 4 members of the public present.

An apology for absence was received from County Councillor Bryn Griffiths

1. Appointment of Chairman

On being nominated and seconded, it was

Resolved -

That County Councillor Heather Moorhouse be elected Chairman of the Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee to serve until the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2019.

County Councillor Moorhouse in the Chair

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

2. Chariman's announcements

County Councillor Moorhouse expressed her thanks to the Committee for the confidence they had placed in her in electing her as Chairman. She saw this as a new start and a great opportunity for the Committee to help shape policy.

3 Minutes of the former Hambleton and Richmondshire Area Committees

(a) Hambleton Area Committee

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Hambleton Area Committee held on 5 March 2018, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(b) Richmondshire Area Committee

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Richmondshire Area Committee held on 28 March 2018, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved -

That County Councillor Angus Thompson be elected Vice Chairman of the Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee to serve until the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2019.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

6. Public Questions or Statements

It was noted that no requests had been provided by members of the public to ask questions or make statements at the meeting, prior to the closing date for registration. However, the Chairman stated that she would allow members of the public to raise matters under the appropriate Agenda Item, should they indicate at that time.

7. Any business relating to the former Hambleton and Richmondshire Area Committees that needs to be addressed at this meeting

With regard to the former Richmondshire Area Committee, County Councillor Thompson provided an update on Vehicle Activated Signs (also known as Matrix Boards) – a matter that he had raised at previous meetings.

A questionnaire had been sent to Parish/Town Councils which, among other things, asked if they would be interested in purchasing their own Matrix Boards. Some 58% of Parish/Town Councils had indicated that they would be interested. For this to happen, there would need to be a change in the rules governing the Matrix Boards.

The Working Party established by the Transport, Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee, had agreed, in principle, to the Policy being changed to enable Parish/Town Councils to purchase their own Vehicle Activated Signs. This would, however, require the approval of the Transport, Economy and Environment Committee and the Executive.

NOTED.

8. Area Constituency Committees - A Suggested Way Forward

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services). Appended to the report was a Guide which outlined how the new Committee could work.

Daniel Harry, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Leader, took Members through this report, which included a number of key issues that he was seeking their views on. Looking at each of these in turn . . .

Co-option

He felt that the co-option of people onto a Committee could be helpful if the individual(s) had specialist knowledge and where there was a thematic approach to the consideration of business. The risk, however, was that, where these factors were not present, there was a very limited role for the co-optee. His suggestion, therefore, was that the Committee should not co-opt, but invite people with particular knowledge in an area under consideration to attend specific meetings.

The consensus among the Committee was not to co-opt and the following points were made:-

- Not co-opting was the right thing to do until the Committee finds its feet.
- The Committee now covered a wide and diverse area. It was too early to co-opt.
- Perhaps the local MP could be invited to join the Committee?
- Should the local MP or other people invited attend, it was important for them to know what was expected of them beforehand, so that they were not wrong-footed. How the interaction with the public was handled would be key.
- If the local MP was to be co-opted, it would be helpful if he was able to attend every meeting, for consistency.
- Having voting Co-opted Members would not be a good idea but, if people want to speak on a matter where they have a particular interest or knowledge that is fine. That is how we should approach this, because a Committee of 13 is large enough.

Members noted that there was a difference between co-opting people onto the Committee and people who are invited to speak on particular issues. For instance, it was anticipated that County Councillor Sedgwick, the Older People's Champion (and a Member of this Committee) would be invited to each of the Area Constituency Committees to update them on her work.

Regular updates

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Manager asked Members to consider whether they felt it necessary to have these updates at each meeting – particularly when they were often routine in nature.

He considered that these updates took up a lot of time and that, notwithstanding the fact that the updates provided useful information, there was sometimes a feeling of "So what?" in that there was no decision for the Committee to take. The thrust of the Committee's work should, ideally, be in taking action to progress issues, rather than noting information.

Furthermore, he was mindful that with four, three hour meetings each year, there was quite limited time and the Committee needed to make the most of that time.

He suggested that these updates could be managed in alternative ways, such as through an annual session on "place", or community safety.

The Committee felt that updates from the Police, Fire and Rescue Service and Stronger Communities should be received to note on an annual basis.

Highways

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Manager referred to highways issues often being localised. Whilst not underestimating their importance to local Members, there were other routes that could be utilised.

If there was a groundswell concerning any particular issue, this could, of course, still be considered by the Committee.

In terms of particular issues being considered at Committee, a Member asked what the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Manager saw as the threshold for this? In response, he felt there was no clear threshold. Discussions would be held between the Chairman and Vice Chairman and supporting officers on a case by case basis.

The general feeling of the Committee was that there should be an opportunity for highways issues to be considered, but not necessarily within the formal Committee environment.

Members made the following points in particular:-

- The Committee should have a strategic overview, rather than considering local issues that could be considered via other mechanisms.
- Care should be taken to avoid the Committee becoming a Councillor enclave, as the public would want to express their views on local highways issues. The Member concerned also commented that, whilst she accepted other avenues were available, sometimes people become exasperated and, therefore, needed to air their concerns at a public meeting such as this.
- To set rigid rules at this early stage would be a mistake – there were grey areas, naturally. If the Area Highways Manager was invited to attend once or twice a year that could work well.
- On the occasions where the Area Highways Manager was expected to attend, it was crucial that they came prepared. If they were not aware of the likely matters to be raised then people could not expect to get answers, as functions were delegated and the Area Highways Manager could not possibly know the latest on every issue. Accordingly, it was too early to agree that the Area Highways Manager be asked to attend “Drop in” sessions or the like. To be fair, this needed to be discussed with the Business and Environmental Services Directorate to ascertain their thoughts.
- The Chairman suggested that the relevant Executive Member could also be invited when particular highways issues were being discussed.

The Chairman asked if any of the public in the audience had any views on this. A member of the public felt it was important to continue to consider highways issues at each meeting, or there was a danger the new Committee would lose its local touch.

Standard and Timed Agenda

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Manager asked Members to consider adopting a standard and timed Agenda, on the basis that this would ensure a

consistent approach to dealing with local issues and concerns, whilst also enabling time to be reserved for a focussed review or scrutiny of an issue identified in the Work Programme.

Links with Overview and Scrutiny

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Manager asked the Committee to consider how the co-ordination of county level scrutiny and local in-depth reviews might benefit one another and, in addition, provide the Committee with an escalation route.

The appended Guide gave two examples as to how it was envisaged this might work.

The Committee would be able to feed into the scrutiny process the views of local people on a range of issues, such as the risk to Community Hospitals.

A Member felt that there could be a risk of duplication. How could this be avoided? In response, the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Manager said that there would be regular conversations between the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee; their scrutiny counterparts and officers, to discuss the most appropriate way to handle emerging issues.

The Leader of the Council and the Chairman thanked the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Manager for the excellent work he had done in developing these proposals for consideration by Members.

Resolved -

- a) That Malcom Warne, Head of Communications for Rishi Sunak, MP for Richmond (Yorks), be asked if he would be prepared to be a Co-opted Member of this Committee.
- b) Notwithstanding the above, as a general rule, the Committee will not look to Co-opt Members.
- c) That updates from organisations such as the Police; the Fire and Rescue Service and the Stronger communities Team be made annually as part of a place-based session – essentially, these will be for information, but Members will have the opportunity to discuss any particular aspect further at the meeting should they consider this necessary.
- d) That the Area Highways Manager be invited to attend the Committee once or twice each year, the exact format to be determined but this could include a session on local concerns about highways prior to the meeting, subject to discussion with the Business and Environmental Services Directorate.
- e) That a standard Agenda, to include indicative timings, be adopted along the following lines:-

Item	Timing
Minutes of the last meeting	5 minutes
Declarations of interest	
Apologies	
Chairman's announcements	10 minutes
Public questions or statements	30 minutes
Topic for scrutiny or focussed review	90 minutes
Work programme review	15 minutes
Other business which the Chairman agrees should be	

considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances	
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- f) That consideration as to how the co-ordination of county level scrutiny and local in-depth reviews may benefit one another and also provide the Committee with an escalation route, be discussed on a case by case basis by the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of this Committee; Overview and Scrutiny Committee and appropriate officers.

9. Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee - Area Profile

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) providing an overview of some of the key issues in the area covered by the Area Constituency Committee.

The report was introduced by the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Leader, who advised that the area profile has been produced to enable Members to better understand the area covered by the new Committee. It also enabled Members to identify issues that may be worth further consideration by the Committee.

When compared to the Yorkshire and Humber average and the England average, he had identified the following:-

- An ageing population, with a greater proportion over 65 years of age and a smaller proportion under 15 years of age
- Low levels of incapacity benefits being claimed
- Low levels of people claiming out of work benefits
- Low levels of deprivation, but a question as to whether some deprivation may be hidden?
- Higher numbers of second homes ownership
- Low levels of social and council housing
- Higher numbers of vacant dwellings
- Higher number of people resident in defence establishments
- Low levels of crime, but anti-social behaviour in line with the England average
- Longer distance travelled to key services
- Low broadband speeds
- Strong sense of community and community engagement
- Low levels of Big Lottery funding secured locally
- Secondary schools – lower numbers of Ofsted rated 'good or outstanding schools' (education).

This Item linked into and overlapped with the Work Programme at Minute No. 10, below.

Members felt that the document was very useful, but that it should be put into a more manageable form and shared with the local MP.

Resolved -

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That the Area Profile be put into a more manageable format and shared with Rishi Sunak, MP.

10. Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee Draft Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) providing a draft Work Programme for the Area Constituency Committee to consider, develop and adopt.

The Leader of the Council suggested topics that the Committee might wish to consider at its next meeting:-

- The funding of Adult Social Care/The Green Paper on Adult Social Care
- The expansion of Catterick Garrison

Members agreed with these suggestions and made the following points:-

- With regard to Catterick Garrison, the impact of such a large confluence of people who were not local to the area needed to be considered. The Garrison Commander, Joe Jordan, should be invited to attend for this discussion.
- A potential future item for consideration could be the inconsiderate parking of some motorists. It would be interesting to hear the local MP's views about this.
- The discussion with the MP should not be adversarial. Equally, it would be hoped that he would not seek to make party political points. It might be helpful to ask him for his "top 10 issues" currently.
- Consideration should be given as to how the discussion with the local MP is publicised.

Resolved -

- a) That the main topics for the next meeting of the Committee on Wednesday 29th August comprise:-
 - The funding of Adult Social Care/The Green Paper on Adult Social Care
 - The expansion of Catterick Garrison
 - Inconsiderate parking by some motorists
- b) That it be noted the Work Programme will develop and evolve and be considered at each meeting of this Committee.

11 Next Meeting

Resolved -

That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Wednesday 29 August 2018 at County Hall, Northallerton, commencing at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting concluded at 11.23 a.m.

PD