

## North Yorkshire County Council

### Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020, commencing at 1pm – held remotely via Skype.

#### **Present:-**

Members: County Councillors Angus Thompson (Chairman), David Blades, Caroline Dickinson, Helen Grant, Bryn Griffiths, David Hugill, Carl Les, Heather Moorhouse, Yvonne Peacock, Karin Sedgwick, John Weighell OBE, Annabel Wilkinson, and co-opted member Malcolm Warne.

Other Cllrs Present: County Councillor David Chance

NYCC Officers: Jayne Charlton (Highways & Transportation Acting Area Manager); Joy Willis (Principal Advisor for School Improvement); Pam Johnson (Transport & Development Control Officer); David Edwardes (ICT Officer); Patrick Duffy & Melanie Carr (Democratic Services Officers)

External Attendees: Scott Robinson (Technical Director, Taylor Wimpey)

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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#### **84. Chairman's Welcome**

As the Chair was absent from the start of the meeting due to technical difficulties, the Vice Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. She also welcomed Scott Robinson – a representative from Taylor Wimpey, attending in regard to agenda item 6 – North Northallerton Infrastructure and Development Project.

#### **85. Minutes**

##### **Resolved -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2019, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **86. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to note.

#### **87. Public Questions and Statements**

The Vice-Chair confirmed there had been two registrations to speak at the meeting, the first a statement put forward by Mrs Janet Povey, in regard to the lack of safe cycle and foot paths between Gilling and Richmond, as detailed below:

'I'd like to put forward the views of the residents of Gilling West and surrounding areas, regarding the lack of a safe cycle and foot path between Gilling and Richmond.

It is unsafe to walk or cycle this route. Children who attend Richmond schools are provided with free school transport, because it is deemed too dangerous, even though two miles is a distance which is usually considered walkable.

In recent years the volume of road users has increased on this road, in part due to the 30 or so businesses along the route.

The issue is that the road has blind bends, and dangerous stretches, where there is no escape route for cyclists or pedestrians, due to the narrowness of the road and lack of a verge.

People risk overtaking cyclists or pedestrians where there is no visibility, and no room to overtake.

This is of huge concern locally. Our petition gathered hundreds of signatures in just a few days, and now stands at 760 signatures, mainly from local people, or people with links to the area. We have support from our Parish Council, and from Rishi Sunak.

There isn't an alternative practical or viable direct route. The designated footpath is not a safe or inclusive path. It isn't suitable for cyclists, pushchairs or the disabled, as it requires folk to navigate ploughed fields, styles, farmland, livestock and a golf course. It is also unlit and unmarked in places so is rendered useless in the darker winter months.

What we need is a direct route which follows the road, but is sympathetic to the beautiful area in which we live. This has been achieved locally when you look at the cycle path next to Longwood Bank in Richmond. It is a pleasure to use, and is hardly visible from the road. It is well used by walkers and cyclists and is accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

It is an ideal time to consider this project as there are funds being made available from central government for this specific purpose.

There is a public willingness to embrace sustainable transport, and encourage cycling and walking, providing an alternative to car use, and reducing pollution and congestion.

There is also an opportunity to improve the physical, mental, and economic well-being of our community, providing accessible exercise, whilst at the same time offering a direct route to jobs in the area, for people who don't own a car.

I would urge you not just to consider cycle paths in areas where they would be easy and cheap to construct, but to think about the more challenging, but more dangerous routes, which members of the public (me included) have been asking you to address for many years.'

In addition to her statement, Mrs Povey provided the following documentation:

- A petition, including comments and signatures
- A list of businesses on the route (Mainly at Aske and Olliver)
- Photos of pinch points
- Photos of holes in the walls and hedges caused by accidents
- Photos of vehicles on the wrong side of the road, avoiding pedestrians
- Photos of cyclists sharing the road
- Comments from community face book page

At this point in the meeting the Chair, County Councillor Angus Thompson joined the meeting.

Members went on to discuss the issue raised and gave their support to the petition, acknowledging that appropriate funding would need to be sourced. Concern was raised that the focus of such government funding was often for urban road schemes rather than small rural road schemes, and it was suggested that the County Council should have a ready list of such schemes in order to be able to move fast once grant funding became available.

Jayne Charlton, Highways & Transportation Acting Area Manager accepted the petition in line with the County Council's petition scheme, and confirmed colleagues in Transport Planning would provide a detailed response at the next meeting of the Area Constituency Committee on 25 November 2020.

The second public statement, presented by Mrs Ruth Annison was in regard to North Yorkshire County Council's policy of not funding Sunday bus services, as detailed below:

'Since 1975, I have been (and still am) a resident, council tax payer, business owner and employer in Upper Wensleydale, Richmondshire. Through being an employer, I became interested in public transport (staff need to be able to get to work if they do not have the use of a car); potential customers must be able to access local facilities; day or staying visitors without cars need to be able to travel into, out of and within Richmondshire and North Yorkshire.

Unfortunately, for some years, North Yorkshire has had a policy of not funding Sunday bus services. This is not the moment to discuss the policy, and I know that my request comes at a time when councillors have many profound issues to consider because of the pandemic. However, just as a jigsaw is made up of many individual pieces, without one of which the picture cannot be completed, so a single bus route that runs entirely within North Yorkshire, connecting four market towns (Northallerton, Bedale, Leyburn and Hawes), is a critical part of the lives of many residents - and a surprising number of our visitors.

The DalesBus 856 makes 3 return journeys between Northallerton and Hawes every Sunday through the year, carrying an average of 80 passengers each day. These passengers board and alight at the bus stops in towns and villages along the route. I know from experience as a passenger on this route what a wide variety of reasons they have for making their journeys - Joining trains at Northallerton station (whether students returning to college or visitors after a week-end in the dales); shopping (there are limited opportunities if you work full-time); getting to church services or Sunday employment; visiting patients at the Friarage; lunch out with friends and family; going for walks or visiting attractions - and motorists whose cars are being repaired or serviced! On a single run, passengers' reasons for travel are very varied but I have met all of these (and more). They also include a proportion of passengers on concessionary passes, from whom fares cannot be recovered, making the financial situation for the operator harder.

In the particular case of the year-round DalesBus 856, its costs are covered until Christmas, 2020. At £250/day costs, and 13 weeks until the new financial year in 2021, would your committee be able to find a way of helping to contribute a proportion of the costs to maintain the year-round service until next Easter?'

In response, a statement provided by Ian Fielding, NYCC's Assistant Director for Passenger Transport was read out at the meeting, as follows:

'The County Council recognises that the Dales Bus 856 Sunday service between Northallerton and Hawes provides a popular and convenient additional public transport option to residents and visitors to the Yorkshire Dales and other rural communities on its route. The Dales and Bowland Public Interest Company are to be congratulated for their work in providing this, and other similar services.

Public transport operates commercially in urban areas where the demand provides services seven days per week, but in rural areas, the demand is often insufficient to be attractive to commercial operators, and other solutions are needed. When the market fails, the County Council has a power to subsidise public transport and North Yorkshire County Council spends over £1.5m p.a. of Council funds providing local bus services to areas of North Yorkshire that would otherwise not have any service. Last year, approximately 1.3million people benefited by travelling on services provided by North Yorkshire County Council. As a Sunday service, the 856 is not one of those supported by the Council although the Council does subsidise services along the routes between Northallerton and Hawes, including nearby villages throughout the rest of the week as well as on Saturdays.

It is acknowledged that Sunday services provide benefits, but the Council is obliged to prioritise the limited funding within the Council towards areas of greatest need. The Council's approach to subsidising public transport is to provide residents with access to essential services such as shops, markets and healthcare facilities. To redirect funding towards Sunday and leisure bus services would mean that others, often the elderly and the more vulnerable, would be denied the vital transport they need for living, and is therefore not something that can be justified.

However, Dales Bus Sunday services currently receive some funding from elected Members' locality budgets and this remains as an opportunity for Council support, where Members feel it appropriate, for this and other such services that otherwise may fall outside the normal policy framework.'

Members considered the information provided, and County Councillor Caroline Dickinson put forward a proposal on behalf of herself and County Councillors David Blades, Annabel Wilkinson, Helen Sedgwick, Yvonne Peacock and John Weighell, that they would be willing to support the request for funding to the end of the financial year, by allocating a one off payment of £500 each from their individual locality budgets.

County Councillor Helen Grant confirmed she too would have been willing to contribute but had no locality budget left for this financial year.

County Councillor David Hugill drew attention to the under-utilised rail transport that was also available in the area, and suggested that the small section between Leeming Bar and Northallerton needed opening to provide another way of accessing the Dales from Northallerton.

County Councillor Carl Les confirmed that the funding proposal put forward by Committee members was a good way of using the locality budget funding made available to councillors, and it was noted that one of the devolution asks within the County Council's submission was for further subsidies to enable further support for public transport.

The Chair thanked both members of the public for their contributions to the meeting.

## **88. Highways Issues**

Members received a verbal update from Jayne Charlton on five highways issues raised at recent informal Area Constituency Committee meetings:

- Cycle route provision - It was confirmed that the County Council had recently been invited to bid for emergency active travel grant funding for the delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure. The money would be spread over two tranches – supporting the installation of temporary projects associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and supporting the creation of permanent projects with a short lead in time.

It was noted that the process for accessing the funding was yet unknown, but suitable schemes would be put forward in due course. Also, that a local cycling and walking infrastructure plan for Catterick Garrison was programmed to be produced in 2021/22.

- Provision of dropped kerbs in Stokesley – It was confirmed that a number of engineering difficulties had been identified around the west end area of Stokesley, that would make the proposed dropped kerbs difficult to achieve, but all methods were being explored for a positive outcome. Schemes with detailed costings had not yet been worked up, so a further update would be provided at a future meeting.
- Additional spur road off the A6136 at Catterick Garrison – It was confirmed that NYCC's strategic transport model had considered the road capacity at a strategic level to understand the implications of future development on the highway network, and had identified that there was not a need for the additional spur at the proposed location. However, it had identified a number of junctions where capacity would be neared in future years because of development. Additional scenario testing had identified that mitigation at those specific points on the network would enable those junctions to accommodate that increased volume of traffic. County Councillors Helen Grant and Carl Les raised concerns about those findings confirming it did not reflect what local people were experiencing.
- Provision of signage to prevent HGVs from taking a shortcut along a route in Bedale – It was confirmed that the weight limit had now been introduced and solar powered and mains powered signs had been provided.
- Road closure by utility companies in the Great Ayton area – A particular issue with BT carrying out works in that area had been noted. It was confirmed that the street works team quickly dealt with the issue, as BT had the necessary permits to carry out that work, but did not have permission to close the road. It was also noted the road would need to be officially closed again in order for BT to complete those works, and it was agreed that Councillors would be kept updated on closure dates going forward.

Members noted there were often instances where utility companies closed roads without notification and by the time it was reported, the work was often completed and the road re-opened. Also, that the associated fixed penalty notices did not appear to be a deterrent.

The Chair thanked the officer for the detailed update and it was

**Resolved** – That the update be noted.

## **89. North Northallerton Infrastructure and Development Project Update**

Members considered the written update provided by Taylor Wimpey and County Councillor David Hugill raised a number of issues i.e. HGVs driving past the civic centre and hitting a dead end and the lack of appropriate signage, and flooding on the 684 close to the roundabout.

Scott Robinson, Technical Director from Taylor Wimpey acknowledged the flooding issue and its impact on the area, and confirmed work was ongoing with NYCC engineers to identify a resolution to the drainage problem. He agreed to provide an update in due course.

Pam Johnson - Transport & Development Control Officer confirmed that new signage was to be installed at the Stone Cross roundabout as part of the ongoing improvement works. It was also agreed that some temporary signage could be installed to prevent HGVs going up Brompton Road.

County Councillor Caroline Dickinson suggested the issue of HGVs on street parking along Brompton road also needed addressing, and County Councillor Carl Les suggested the item remain on the Committee's work programme to ensure the work progressed as well as it might do.

Finally, County Councillor David Hugill raised the issue of speed limits across the North Northallerton area, particularly from the roundabout to the new bridge, and it was confirmed that the speed limit on the new link road from Darlington Road through to Stokesley Road had been designed for a 30mph speed limit.

The Chair thanked Scott Robinson and officers for their attendance, and it was

**Resolved** - That the report be noted

#### **90. Update on Community Support Officers' response in Constituency Area**

County Councillor David Chance provided a brief update on the ongoing Community Support work across the Richmond area, which included:

- The six Community Support Organisations (CSOs) had received 288 contacts in the last week or so, with a total of 550 people helped;
- There had been a shift back to increased activity;
- That the CSOs were commissioned until March 2021
- A slight drop in volunteers county-wide

In response to a query from County Councillor Yvonne Peacock it was confirmed that NYCC financial support for the Hubs was guaranteed through to March 2021, and that alongside that funding NYCC had also allocated 24 DEFRA grants of £10k.

Members acknowledged the excellent work of the Hubs and the Stronger Communities Team, and County Councillor Carl Les drew attention to the Head of Stronger Communities having received an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

**Resolved** - That the update be noted.

#### **91. Return to Schools**

Members received a verbal update on absence figures in schools from Joy Willis, Principal Advisor for School Improvement. Members noted:

- All North Yorkshire schools opened at the beginning of term;
- Levels of school attendance across the Richmond area was at 92% (North Yorkshire average for all schools including Academies - 88%);
- Head teachers and staff were reporting COVID concerns quickly, with regular advice and updates from Public Health England;
- There had been only one school closure due to COVID;

In response to a request from County Councillor Helen Grant, Joy Willis agreed to provide some specific information on Catterick Garrison School outside of the meeting.

County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson queried what was in place to support school staff with their COVID concerns, and it was confirmed that the usual staff Healthcare services were available together with the appropriate mechanisms to direct staff to them. It was also confirmed that school staff had access to Public Health England advice around getting tested and self-isolating.

**Resolved** – That the update be noted.

## **92. Items Raised by Members**

County Councillor Heather Moorhouse raised the issue of Ambulance services in the Great Ayton area. She confirmed it took approximately eight minutes to travel by blue light from the area into James Cook Hospital. However it had been reported that in the last 8 weeks instead of an ambulance being sent, an air ambulance had instead been used. Anecdotally it was reported that this was due to a shortage of ambulance drivers.

County Councillor Bryn Griffiths also a recent increase in the use of air ambulances in his division, and County Councillor David Blades suggested it might be an issue of capacity.

County Councillor Caroline Dickinson confirmed that the Chair of the Scrutiny of Health Committee was due to meet with an operational lead from the Yorkshire Ambulance Service, and that the issues being raised by Members would be discussed.

## **93. Work Programme**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) providing a Work Programme for Members to consider, develop and adapt.

Information regarding the current Scrutiny Work Programme was also provided for Members to consider in terms of developing the Committee's Work Programme overall.

It was noted that a number of issues for inclusion in the Work Programme had been identified at this meeting and the Work Programme would be updated in accordance with those wishes.

County Councillor Heather Moorhouse questioned whether a discussion on Devolution might be appropriate for the next meeting. Whilst it was likely that the Devolution submission would already have been sent by the time of the next ACC meeting, County Councillor Carl Les agreed a progress update could be provided.

**Resolved -**

That the Work Programme be updated to reflect the following additional items for the next meeting:

- Petition Response re a safe cycle and foot path between Gilling and Richmond
- Devolution Update
- North Northallerton Written Progress Update (officer attendance may not be required)
- Update on Northallerton College Decant

## **94. Next Meeting**

**Resolved -**

That the next meeting of the Area Constituency Committee would take place on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 10am – to be held remotely via Microsoft TEAMS.

The meeting concluded at 2:30pm.  
MLC