

## North Yorkshire County Council

### Selby and Ainsty Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Selby and Ainsty Area Constituency Committee held virtually via Skype on 25 September 2020 at 10 am.

**Present:-**

**Members:-**

County Councillors Richard Musgrave (Chairman), Stephanie Duckett, Cliff Lunn, John McCartney, Don Mackay, Andy Paraskos and Cliff Trotter.

**Invited Executive Members:-**

County Councillors David Chance and Carl Les.

**Officers:-**

Dave Caulfield (Selby DC), Adrian Clarke (Principal Education Adviser – CYPS), Sharon Fox (Area Highways), Steve Loach (Democratic Services), James Malcom (Area Highways Manager), Joel Sanders (Better Together Programme Manager) and Janet Waggott (Chief Executive Selby DC).

Apologies were received from County Councillors Karl Arthur, Mike Jordan, Andrew Lee and Chris Pearson

---

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

---

**66. Chairman's Introduction**

The Vice-Chairman indicated that the Chairman was unable to attend today's meeting, therefore, he would be chairing. He welcomed Members to the meeting and outlined the process regarding filming, recording or photographing the meeting.

**67. Minutes**

**Resolved -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2019, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**68. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at this stage of the meeting.

**69. Public Questions or Statements**

There were no public questions or statements.

## 70. Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

The Leader of the Council, County Councillor Carl Les, provided a verbal update on proposals for devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in the area. The following issues were outlined:-

- ◆ The Leader noted that the devolution and LGR proposals required unanimous agreement from the County Council and the District Councils, under the current process, for this to move forward, however, until the White paper is published a small number of District Councils are unwilling to put the matter before their Members. This situation could cause unnecessary delay, therefore, consideration was being given to moving to a majority decision on this.
- ◆ The County Council has been actively engaging with Parish Councils in terms of LGR, with “double devolution”, extending further powers to a very local level, being a key part of the White paper. A third workshop with Parish Councils would be taking place shortly.
- ◆ The proposal for LGR continues to be developed, but currently the letter inviting this to take place, from the Government, has yet to be issued. There has been dialogue with the Minister in relation to this. A Member suggested that LGR had been put back as it was considered too costly, however, the Leader emphasised that a change to the system of Local Government in the area would generate substantial savings, going forward, and stated that this position had been made clear to the Minister.
- ◆ In the event of a successful unitary bid the County Council elections would be put back to 2022, otherwise they would take place as planned in 2021.
- ◆ In terms of “double devolution” the Leader emphasised that it was for Town and Parish Councils to decide whether they wanted to take on additional responsibilities, nothing would be forced on them, and they could retain the status quo if they wished. He suggested that any local councils wishing to consider taking on additional powers should consider Bedale Town Council and the benefits that had been brought to the town, through the Town Council expanding their role. A Member suggested that the smaller Parish Councils would have difficulty in enhancing their current role, but the Leader reiterated that there was no compulsion to do this, and the smaller Councils could carry on as of now if they wished.
- ◆ A Member emphasised that local Parish Councils had a wide range of capability and capacity and whilst some may be able to easily take on additional duties, others who may wish to do so would require additional assistance, and wondered if that would be provided. The Leader expected assistance to be provided via the various local council support organisations, such as the YLCA, to ensure that training and advice was in place for Parish Councils seeking to enhance their provision. Elected county Councillors could assist in signposting Parish Councils to available assistance.

The Leader provided an update on the current situation regarding the COVID 19 pandemic in the area, outlining the following:-

- ◆ Infection rates had begun to rise again leading to a time of uncertainty and this was likely to have an impact on Council services, with additional resources likely to be required in some service areas.
- ◆ There had been a big impact on the economy of North Yorkshire, and it was expected that further financial assistance to mitigate this would be provided by Central Government. On a positive note the recent airing of the new version of “All Creatures Great and Small” had seen a positive impact on tourism in the area.
- ◆ He provided details of local outbreaks and noted that the majority of the County Council’s workforce continued to work from home. It was expected that virtual meetings would continue for some time, going forward.
- ◆ A Member asked about the implications of a second impact of the virus on the Council, particularly in terms of impact on finances. The Leader stated that it was difficult to predict the affect of a second impact but currently there was around a £40m shortfall of funding in respect of that has been required in response to the pandemic and a second impact would cause additional burden. It was expected that Local Authorities would receive additional financial help from Government (NYCC had received £36m to date), but reserves were being utilised in the interim to ensure essential services continued to be delivered. He noted that funding had been obtained from the Government to assist with the repairs to the A19, to be discussed later in the meeting, but emphasised that the next budgetary round would be difficult with some difficult decisions to be made.

**Resolved -**

That the update, and the issues raised, be noted.

**71. “Better Together” Programme - update**

Considered-

The report of the Programme Director, Joel Sanders updating Members on progress in relation to the Better Together Programme.

Since 2013 North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and Selby District Council (SDC) have worked together to establish greater collaboration in service delivery to the benefit of both the public and the two organisations. The Better Together Programme was established to enable shared expertise, intelligence and leadership between the two councils to maximise how assets are used to deliver savings whilst redesigning services to achieve the best possible outcomes to all customers in the locality.

The Chief Executive of Selby DC, Janet Waggott, Dave Caulfield (Selby DC) and Joel Sanders presented the report, highlighting the following:-

- ◆ Details of the Governance Framework delivered through the Steering Group and Joint Members Group.
- ◆ The Collaboration Agreement – agreed in July 2015 and extended until March 2023, which currently includes the following services:-
  - ◆ VOIP Telephony System
  - ◆ Registration Service – Office Accommodation

- ◆ Lagan CRM System
- ◆ SDC Website/Intranet Support
- ◆ Shared IT Infrastructure Service
- ◆ Natural Environment Advisory Service and Landscape Architectural Advice
- ◆ Financial Service
- ◆ Learning & development (Learning Zone)
- ◆ Legal Services
- ◆ HR Service
- ◆ Payroll Service
  
- ◆ The key benefits of the Programme, including:-
  - ◆ Sharing of back office services in an appropriate and sustainable manner which has enabled more customer focus.
  - ◆ Focused, joined up delivery of services at a community level.
  - ◆ An increase in the number of online direct debit payments (139%)
  - ◆ A 322% increase in the number of volunteers at community hubs
  - ◆ Across all libraries in the district volunteers gave 15,760 hours to deliver services, including assisting 1,865 individuals to access services online of which 732 related to NYCC or SDC services
  - ◆ Increased resilience for Community Hubs through enabling income generating services (meeting room hire at Tadcaster Hub and improved facilities at Sherburn Old Girls School)
  - ◆ Increased business levels resulted in Sherburn being awarded Highly Commended in the NY Library of the Year awards.
  - ◆ Selby Library has seen a 27% increase in visits and a 12% increase in active users since the refurbishment
  - ◆ Broader health and wellbeing benefits such as improved mental health and reduced isolation which are all community led
  - ◆ The establishment of Selby Health Matters
  - ◆ Innovative digital platforms for our customers and communities accessing information and services through modern online platforms.
  - ◆ Co-location opportunities have been implemented through an asset management review, improving working environments and generating income for both organisations.
  - ◆ Joined up approach to planning services both in terms of communications, prioritisation, processes and consistent relationship management with developers and external organisations.
  - ◆ Improved experience for business customers through joined up communications, relationship management and processes
  - ◆ Joint Investment in areas such as public transport to improve passenger experience
  - ◆ Maximising council tax base and business rates income through the joint investment in a SDC Property Inspector and an Empty Homes Officer.
  - ◆ Supporting our residents to “live well” through the joint work on Health, Social Care and Housing work.
  - ◆ SDC have worked with NYCC, Ryedale and Scarborough to develop a new partnership approach between NYCC and all of the District Council Housing Authorities in relation to the provision of homeless prevention and support services
  - ◆ At present a total of £1,720,206 savings have been achieved and a further £312,770 have been identified. This, therefore, provides a current total achieved and forecasted saving for the programme from April 2014 to March 2021 of £1,987,206.
  
- ◆ The current work streams within the programme were outlined as follows:-

- ◆ Health, Social Care and Housing – including:-
  - Transfers of Care / Multi-Disciplinary Team Approach
  - Disability Facilities Grant (DFG) Assessments
  - Public Health/Selby Health Matters
- ◆ Economic Growth and Infrastructure – including:-
  - Local Plan
  - Key development sites - through major applications to the Local Planning Authority (LPA)
  - Work to promote Strategic Development Sites; and
  - Regeneration and Development Projects
- ◆ Full details of the projects being undertaken within the current work streams were outlined.

The Chairman noted that he had served on the Joint Members Group for the programme both as a representative of Selby DC (current position) and NYCC.

#### **Resolved –**

That the progress made and the ongoing work of the Better Together Programme be noted.

## **72. Return to Schools**

Adrian Clarke (Principal Education Adviser – CYPS) gave a verbal update on the return to school of pupils in the Constituency Area following the enforced closure due to the COVID 19 pandemic, between March and September 2020. He highlighted the following:-

- ◆ The department had been working hard with Head Teachers, Teachers, Professional Associations, children and all involved with schools to ensure the return was as risk free as possible.
- ◆ A great deal of information and resources have been created and delivered to assist with this.
- ◆ All 58 schools in the Selby area had returned at the beginning of September.
- ◆ The first week had seen 61% attendance but that had been affected by a staggered return for a number of year groups.
- ◆ The latest figures (24<sup>th</sup> September) showed an overall 87% attendance rate, which was above the North Yorkshire average.
- ◆ Attendance was also being monitored for different categories of pupils, eg. Those with an EHCP, those known to social care, etc.
- ◆ Returning numbers are being shared with the DfE.
- ◆ The overall numbers of pupils across North Yorkshire was pleasing and was above expectations.
- ◆ A primary school had been forced to close since the return, due to an outbreak of COVID affecting a number of pupils and teachers. It was expected that the school would re-open on Monday 28 September.
- ◆ There were other schools where some cohorts had been sent home due to COVID outbreaks.
- ◆ Public Health were dealing with issues in individual schools and providing guidance on when schools should be closed and/or pupils sent home.

- ◆ Monitoring of the situation would continue on a daily basis for the foreseeable future.

Members discussed the issues raised and the following matters were highlighted:-

- The situation at the local primary which had closed due to the COVID outbreak had been exacerbated by this being a small school, and two Members of staff, including the Head, having been affected. It was noted that some complaints had arisen around the lack of testing taking place, in the local media, from this. There had been a suggestion that schools should be prioritised for testing. In response it was stated that the appropriate authorities had been contacted to try and obtain a priority for the testing of teachers, but currently, testing was limited in terms of numbers that could be ordered, and results took time to be provided. Every effort was being made to enhance the system and prioritise teaching staff.
- Members welcomed the successful return to school in the area. It was noted that officers from the School Improvement service had been instrumental in the success of the return, and had worked closely with schools to ensure they were in a position to re-open. These Officers are also identifying any issues in areas and are working together to develop appropriate solutions, alongside officers from CYPs.
- It was asked how it was decided that a school was to close due to COVID and who makes the decision. In response it was stated that this was a complex process which utilised a flow chart to determine what action was required following positive COVID tests. Locally, the Public Health Team would liaise with a school on what action should be taken and, in turn, they would liaise with the DfE via a national helpline. Each school provides a running total of confirmed cases, on a daily basis, and Public Health would make a decision on whether a school should close, based on that information.
- In respect of Academies it was noted that a different monitoring process was in place, however, the local authority retained a safeguarding duty, therefore this had to be adhered to. Consultation has been taking place with the CEOs of Academies to ensure there is a consistency to the approach to COVID related issues. The Local Authority and Academies were working well together in relation to this matter. It was noted that Independent Schools were working directly with Public Health.
- It was clarified that the Selby and Ainsty Constituency are had the second highest attendance in the North Yorkshire Constituency areas over the previous week with 87%.
- Resources were being provided to schools to assist with the return and also to plan for any further lockdown, should schools be closed, with home learning lessons fully prepared being provided to assist schools. A member noted that some pupils had difficulties with home working, some gaining access and others undertaking this, and welcomed the reopening of schools. It was emphasised that any return to home lessons would require a more wide spread distribution of equipment and connectivity to assist all pupils in gaining access to these. It was noted that a few schemes were in operation to ensure that pupils had the correct equipment and connection for any move to home lessons, with the DfE and the national Oak Academy assisting these.
- It was noted that support for mental health within schools was also to the forefront of assistance being provided.

## **Resolved -**

That Adrian Clarke be thanked for attending the meeting as a late substitute and providing the details in relation to the return to schools in the area, which were noted.

### **73. A19 Rebuild and Repair – Update**

James Malcolm (Area Highways Manager) and Sharon Fox (Area Highways) provided an update regarding the current situation in relation to the rebuild and repair of the A19 following extensive damage to the road resulting from flooding earlier in the year. The following issues were highlighted:-

- An estimate for the scheme of £4.869m had been provided at the previous update.
- Since then a great deal more preparatory work had been undertaken with a design for the whole project having been submitted by the contractor.
- Alongside this utility work being undertaken by BT and Northern Gas had delayed the contractor's access to the site. This had been particularly lengthy by Northern Gas and the contractor was making every effort to ensure they will be leaving the site as quickly as possible.
- The Environment Agency and the Internal Drainage Board had been consulted regarding the culverts at the side of the road and these would not be replaced, and structures would not be removed.
- There had been some issues getting appropriate materials to be used in shoring up the banks but a supplier had now been secured.
- In view of the issues outlined a revised estimate for the scheme was now £5.372m
- The timescale for the completion of the project had also been revised and was now expected to be 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021.
- The contractor would be carrying out an optimisation of the project, going forward, with a view to bringing down the timescales and cost.
- Further updates would be provided to Members as these details emerged.

Following the initial update the following issues and points were raised during a discussion with Members:-

- A Member raised concerns regarding the delays caused by the utility companies and asked for this to be addressed. It was noted that there had been a robust effort to try and speed up the works being undertaken on the site to enable the contractor to begin work there, and these efforts were being enhanced. It was likely that the contractor would begin some work even if the Gas Company remained on site.
- A member expressed his disappointment at the proposed project end date of 8<sup>th</sup> July, noting the additional pressure that was being put on local routes while the road remained closed. It was stated that the current optimisation process being undertaken by the contractor would shorten the period of time required to complete the project. The Member noted that much of the work would be taking place during the winter period with the possibility of further flooding occurring. The Area Highways Manager stated that, to try and alleviate this problem, the project would be undertaken in stages, with work completed to

protect against flooding at each stage before the road repairs begin, in an attempt to prevent this from happening.

- It was stated that updates on the progress of the project would continue to be provided at the regular meetings between Members and Area Highways and updates would be provided at ACC meetings.

**Resolved-**

That the Area Highways Manager be thanked for the update, the contents of which be noted, and updates on the project continue to be fed back to Members directly and via the various communication channels available.

**74. Work Programme**

Considered -

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

It was noted that the Work Programme had altered significantly due to the COVID 19 pandemic and Members were asked to provide details of any issues that they may wish to be added to the Work Programme, going forward, and were advised that they could also provide details of issues they wished to consider outside of the meeting. It was expected that issues related to the pandemic would feature in forthcoming meetings.

The County Council's Budget for 2020/21 would be considered at the next ACC Meeting.

**Resolved -**

- (i) That the development of the Work Programme be undertaken, and the items mentioned be included on forthcoming agendas for the Committee;
- (ii) That the contents of the report be noted.

**75. Future Meetings**

**Resolved -**

That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Friday 15 January 2021 at 10am. It was likely that this would be a virtual meeting held on the Microsoft Teams platform.

The meeting concluded at 11.25am.

SL