

## North Yorkshire County Council

### Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 31 May 2018, commencing at 10.00 am, at Bolton Abbey Village Hall.

**Present:-**

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Mike Chambers MBE, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Stanley Lumley, Stuart Martin MBE, Patrick Mulligan, Andy Solloway, Richard Welch and Robert Windass.

Officers: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Alice Gill (Business Support), James Malcolm (Highways)

There were members of the public present.

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Michael Harrison, Gillian Quinn and Philip Barrett

#### 1. Appointment of Chairman

Daniel Harry, the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager for North Yorkshire County Council welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee. Daniel Harry stated that as this was the first meeting the first item of business would be the election of a Chairman. Daniel Harry requested whether there were any nominations for Chair of the Committee. Councillor David Ireton nominated Councillor Richard Welch to the Chairman. This was seconded by Councillor Patrick Mulligan. Councillor Richard Welch was unanimously elected to be the Chair of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee for the next 12 months.

**Resolved –**

That County Councillor Richard Welch be appointed Chairman, to serve for the next 12 months.

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**County Councillor Richard Welch in the Chair**

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

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#### 2. Minutes of the Craven Area Committee Meeting held on 8 February 2018

Councillor Richard Welch stated that the Minutes of the Area Committee would need to be noted and that any outstanding items from the Area Committee could be picked up as part of the discussions around the Work Programme for the Area Constituency Committee that was later on in the agenda.

**Resolved -**

That the Minutes of the Craven Area Committee meeting held on 8 February 2018, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**3. Appointment of Vice Chairman**

Councillor Richard Welch asked for nominations for the Vice Chairman of the Committee to serve for a period of 12 months. Councillor Patrick Mulligan nominated Councillor Mike Chambers MBE and this was seconded by Councillor Margaret Atkinson. Councillor Mike Chambers were unanimously voted to be the Vice Chairman of the Committee.

**Resolved -**

That County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE be appointed Vice Chairman, to serve for the next 12 months.

**4. Any Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5. Public Questions or Statements**

There were no public questions or statements.

**6. Business relating to the Craven Area Committee that needs to be addressed at this meeting**

**Petition**

Daniel Harry introduced the item noting that whilst the Area Committee for Craven no longer existed there was an item relating to a petition about winter gritting in Rockwood Drive and surrounding cul-de-sacs in Skipton, North Yorkshire. Councillor Andy Solloway then proceeded to introduce Kathryn Harrison, who had submitted the petition.

Kathryn Harrison handed around to the Committee Members copies of those letters of support that had been received regarding the petition and also photographs that illustrated the nature of the road area during the winter months. She said that 323 people had signed the petition and that a request was being made for upgrade from a Priority 3 to a Priority 2 route to commence from winter 2018. If the request for an upgrade is not granted then Kathryn Harrison requested that reasons be given as to why this was not suitable.

Councillor Richard Welch expressed his thanks to Kathryn Harrison and the local residents that she represented for all of the hard work that they had put in to gather together the petition, letters of support, photographs and other evidence that had been brought forward to the Committee. Councillor Richard Welch then invited the representative of the North Yorkshire County Council Highways Service, James Malcolm, to respond to the petition.

James Malcolm explained that every September the winter gritting routes are considered by the Highways Service at North Yorkshire County Council. Ahead of this meeting all County Councillors are informed that they have an opportunity to provide evidence supporting changes to the priorities for winter gritting. Once these have all

been received they are then considered in the round. James Malcolm noted that North Yorkshire is the most gritted county in England.

James Malcolm explained that there was limited capacity to change the scheduling due to financial restrictions and also the complexity of arranging multiple routes over a county like North Yorkshire. In effect what this would mean is that if one route goes on another route must come off.

Councillor Patrick Mulligan queried what were the differences between Priority 1, 2 and 3 routes. He said that there would be very difficult choices to be made as to why some routes were gritted and some were not. He noted that there were a number of routes in his area that were of concern and which he would like to have looked at again. Councillor Patrick Mulligan said that people could travel by routes that were gritted but acknowledged that this may add time to their journey.

Councillor Robert Heseltine stated that there was a need for the Committee to recognise the strength of the argument that had been put forward by Kathryn Harrison and the people who had completed the petition. He requested that the Committee make formal representations to the Executive Member for Highways highlighting the need for further funding to be committed to winter gritting.

Councillor Mike Chambers said that whilst he had a great deal of sympathy for the residents of Rockwood Drive and the cul-de-sacs leading off of it he was concerned about setting a precedent. He said that there was a need to be even handed and consider each route as part of the existing process undertaken by the Highways Services in September of each year.

Councillor Patrick Mulligan recognised that the case put forward by the petitioners was strong. He said that he had confidence that the Highways Service would take on the evidence that had been presented and review the case and the request for the change in priority alongside other requests made in September.

County Councillor Carl Les reminded Committee Members that every County Councillor receives a letter ahead of the September meeting which enables them to provide the necessary evidence to support the nomination of new routes for gritting or re-prioritisation of existing routes.

Councillor Carl Les supported the proposal to make formal representations to the Executive Member and also to the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services. Councillor Carl Les noted that the budget for winter gritting had been protected for the past seven years which was unlike the vast majority of other Council budgets that had faced reductions or cuts.

Councillor Carl Les stated his belief that petitions were an extremely valuable and powerful tool for the Area Constituency Committees and the County Council as a whole. He noted that the existing criteria for a petition to go to the Area Constituency Committee is that the number of people who had signed the petition exceeded 1% of the population covered by the Committee. When it was the Craven Area Committee this amounted to 555 people. Under the new geography for the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee this amount to about 1,000 people. Councillor Carl Les felt that this limit of 1,000 was too high and would discourage petitions and so he was considering lowering the limit for petitions to be considered by Area Constituency Committees to 500 signatories. This would be discussed at the first meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs for the Area Constituency Committees in the county.

## **Resolved -**

- (i) That the Chairman write to the Executive Member for Highways and to David Bowe, the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services to highlight the petition that had been raised for a change in the priority for winter gritting on Rockwood Drive and all the cul-de-sacs leading off of it.
- (ii) Request that David Bowe attend the next quarterly Highways Area 5 meeting where in general winter gritting prioritisation for the area could be discussed with Members in more depth.

Councillor Stanley Lumley stated that the committee area was now covered by Highways Area 5 and 6.

Councillor Patrick Mulligan acknowledged that the discussion had been useful and productive but that the petition related to old business or legacy matters arising from the Craven Area Committee. He now looked forward to moving forwards with the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee and other items on the agenda about how the new Committee would work.

Councillor Robert Heseltine formally thanked the Chairman for his positive response to the petition.

## **Report - Coniston Aire Causeway**

Councillor Richard Welch asked James Malcolm to present the report on the feasibility study for changes to the Coniston Aire Causeway.

James Malcolm referred Committee Members to the study that had previously been circulated with the papers. He noted that the cheapest option that was being considered was for traffic signals but this had been ruled out early on because of the impact this would have upon traffic flows. The options then became ones of widening the existing causeway or creating a new causeway. James Malcolm stated that these were the only two practical options being considered at this stage and asked that Members discuss and feedback their views.

Councillor Robert Heseltine expressed his support for Option 5 in the report which was the construction of a multi-span causeway with an estimated cost of £9.5m. Councillor Richard Welch also expressed his support for Option 5 and stated that he was glad that the traffic lights solution had been ruled out.

Councillor Patrick Mulligan stated his support for Option 5 but queried where the money would come from. He expressed his concerns that the proposal for the new causeway would not pass the economic benefit test.

In response, James Malcolm said that a cost benefit analysis would be undertaken to see whether the expenditure could be justified.

Councillor Carl Les suggested that it would be helpful if the Committee could write to him as Leader of the Council and provide supporting evidence as part of a bidding process to Transport for the North and Highways England.

Councillor David Ireton noted his support for Option 5.

The Committee resolved to formally support Option 5 in the proposal document, that being the construction of a multi-span causeway with an estimated cost of £9.5m.

Councillor Richard Welch then asked James Malcolm to comment on the recent closure of the A59 following damage to the road in the Kex Gill area.

James Malcolm informed the Committee that in the previous evening a tear in the road had been reported and that this issue was currently being investigated. He noted that Members would be aware that an alternative route around that area was under consultation but that any new route would not be available for 2 to 3 years and so not help with the immediate problems surrounding the A59.

Councillor Stanley Lumley noted that improvements to the A59 around Kex Gill needed to progress as this was a key east-west route supporting both business growth and tourism in the local area.

## **7. Area Constituency Committees A Suggested Way Forward**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) appending a guide to the report outlining how the new committee could work. Members are asked to review the report and decide what approaches best fit for them.

Daniel Harry introduced the report stating that this was officer advice and guidance for the Members of the Committee. He suggested that there were a number of issues that it would be helpful to resolve early on that might help free up the agenda of the Committees 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 Committee would have on average between 10 and 12 hours' worth of business time per annum in which to work.

Daniel Harry suggested that Members might wish to consider whether co-option was appropriate. He said 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 said, however, that the Area Constituency Committee was not a specialist committee but one that looks 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 they could apply throughout the course of all the year's meetings. Daniel Harry suggested, therefore, that Members consider not co-opting any additional members onto the Committee.

In response, Councillor Robert Heseltine noted that the Committee now covered a large area and that if they went the route of co-option then the Committee could become unwieldy with very large numbers of people present. Whilst he suggested not co-opting additional members, Councillor Heseltine asked that the position be reconsidered in 12 months.

Councillor Stanley Lumley stated that a good County Councillor knows the local issues in their local area and would have strong working relationships with Parish Councillors and other community groups. As such, this information could be brought to bear at any of the meetings without the need to formally co-opt people.

Councillor Stuart Martin said that it was important that the Committee kept on the front foot and had the flexibility to invite specialists in as and when required.

Councillor Andy Solloway said that in the past Parish Council involvement in the work of the Area Committees had always been useful and that he would be reluctant to see the link lost.

In response, Daniel Harry stated that the links with Parish Councils need not be lost and that there were many routes by which their information and local knowledge could be brought in, not least of which through public questions and statements.

Councillor Richard Welch, in summing up, stated that the Committee appeared to agree that there was no need at this stage to formally co-opt any additional Members to the Committee but that this should be reviewed in 12 months.

Daniel Harry referring back to the report asked Members whether they wish to continue to receive regular updates and agenda items from the Police, Fire and other organisations.

Daniel Harry suggested that, based upon a review of the seven Area Committees, these regular updates were often highly localised and used up a lot of time on the agenda. He proposed that instead of them being formal agenda updates, they could be received as part of the papers to note. Also, that once a year a formal session could be held on place or community safety.

Councillor Robert Heseltine stated that he would welcome a quarterly report from both Police and Fire but did not see a need for them to attend unless there was a specific issue of concern that affected the Committee as a whole. He supported the suggestion for an annual session on place or safety.

Councillor Robert Heseltine stated that the Area Committees themselves had grown out of Area Highway Committees and that it was important to have highways updates on a regular basis and a standing item on the agenda for highways matters.

In response Daniel Harry stated that there was no intention to sever the link with Highways and that highways issues would be important for all of the Area Constituency Committees. He suggested that it was a case of working out how highways issues could best be dealt with in particular very localised highways issues that were relevant to only a very small area of that covered by the Committee.

Councillor Patrick Mulligan said that the Area Constituency Committees were new and were still finding their way but were very different from the Area Committees that preceded them. As such, it would be helpful to try and explore other ways to deal with local highways issues such as either a meeting prior to the main meeting of the Area Constituency Committee or subsequent to the meeting.

Councillor Margaret Atkinson supported the idea of a highways drop-in session prior to the meeting.

James Malcolm stated that there are many existing mechanisms by which very local highways issues can be reported and acted upon and as such he would not seek to encourage reporting through the Area Constituency Committee as this would undermine the existing mechanisms that had been put in place.

Councillor David Chance said that in some of the Area Committees very minor highways issues had bogged down the agenda and prevented them from focusing in on bigger strategic issues on which they could have had an impact.

Councillor Robert Heseltine said that the report indicated that the Leader of the Council was considering devolving greater powers down to the Area Constituency Committees, should they demonstrate in the first year that they were working effectively. He questioned how effective working would be measured.

Councillor Richard Welch summed up the discussions at this point of the Committee meeting. The Committee resolved to receive a quarterly report from the Police and

Fire and Rescue Service updating on key issues in their local area. This report to be published as part of the Committee papers but marked as to note only.

## **8. Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee Area Profile**

Considered -

Daniel Harry introduced the area profile for Skipton and Ripon. He noted that it was a very detailed report and hoped that Members had had the opportunity to go through it. The intention of the report was to introduce Members to their new area and also to begin to identify areas of interest for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme.

Daniel Harry gave an overview of some of the key issues that he had identified in the area profile as follows:

- Central heating, energy efficiency of housing stock, insulation of houses and fuel poverty possibly linked to income deprivation
- Employment opportunities and progression from school to career. Including, how small businesses are supported and enabled to develop into larger businesses
- Income deprivation and where this occurs in an otherwise affluent area and what may be done to tackle it
- Child wellbeing linked to the environment possibly including access to green space particularly in built up areas
- Alcohol misuse and further work being done to understand whether this is a significant problem in the area or not
- Digital services and broadband download speeds and what is being done to improve them
- Funding and access to a range of alternative funding streams such as the National Lottery and why this seems lower in the area when compared to others
- Primary schools and the quality of teaching and educational outcomes from smaller schools.

Councillor Richard Welch thanked Daniel Harry for the report and noted that it was extremely detailed and may merit further in-depth consideration by Committee Members.

**Resolved -**

That the report be noted.

## **9. Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee Work Programme**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) asking the Committee to review the draft Work Programme, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the area.

Daniel Harry introduced the report stating that it was preferable for a Committee to have a clearly defined Work Programme for the next 12 to 18 months outlining what it will be doing.

Daniel Harry asked Committee Members to consider what items either from the Area Profile or from the previous Area Committee would be relevant for the new Area Constituency Committee to consider as part of its Work Programme. He requested

that any suggestions be sent through to himself and the Chairman Richard Welch for consideration.

Councillor Robert Heseltine said that educational issues were important in the area in particular the viability of some secondary schools in the long term.

Councillor Andy Solloway said that it was important that the Committee was able to have sight of the Adult Social Care Agenda and the expenditure on services in their local area.

Councillor Carl Les suggested that the Committee may wish to consider looking at the Adult Social Care Green Paper and that this might be relevant for discussion with the local MP at a future meeting of the Committee. He said that Julian Smith had already expressed his intention to attend.

Daniel Harry said that it could be possible to invite the MP to the next meeting of the Committee, which was scheduled for September.

Councillor Patrick Mulligan welcomed the attendance of the MP and stated that this would provide increasing leverage for the Committee in terms of escalating local matters of importance both to the County Council and the Committee. Councillor Patrick Mulligan went on to say that he welcomed an item on schools and recognised that there were questions about the sustainability of Skipton Academy in the area. He noted that there was a meeting planned for the end of June to address school based issues in the Craven area which would be attended by the Regional Schools Commissioner. The Regional Schools Commissioner has responsibilities for academies.

Councillor Patrick Mulligan also welcomed a discussion about the long term sustainability of rural primary schools particularly those with 50 or less pupils. He stated it would be helpful to have this on the agenda for the meeting with the MP. It is important because it is linked with a broader issue around the long term sustainability of rural communities.

Councillor Richard Welch asked Members where the subsequent meetings of the Committee should be held.

Councillor Stuart Martin said that the venue should be dictated by what is on the agenda.

**10. Other business which the Chairman agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances**

Councillor Richard Welch stated that the Lord Lieutenant for North Yorkshire, Barry Dodd CBE, had recently been killed in a helicopter crash. He expressed his sympathy for Barry Dodd's family and noted the huge impact that it had upon the provision and development of services in North Yorkshire.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm

DH