

North Yorkshire County Council

Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 14 March 2019, commencing at 10.00am, at Ripon Community House, Sharow View, Allhallowgate, Ripon.

Present:-

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Philip Barrett, Mike Chambers MBE, Michael Harrison, Robert Heseltine, Stanley Lumley, Stuart Martin MBE, Patrick Mulligan, Gill Quinn, Andy Solloway, Richard Welch (Chairman) and Robert Windass.

County Council Officers: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Liz Meade and Marion Tweed-Rycroft (Stronger Communities Team), Gail Chester (SEND Transport Manager).

Others present: Caroline King (Ripon Community House) and Leon Fijalkowski (Pioneer Projects Foundation).

There were approximately three members of the public present.

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor David Ireton.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

21. Introduction by the Chairman

The Chairman, Cllr Richard Welch, welcomed members to the fourth meeting of the committee. He reminded all present that this was a County Council committee meeting that was held in public and not a public meeting.

22. Minutes of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee Meeting held on 13 December 2018

The Minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record.

23. Any Declarations of Interest

Cllr Stuart Martin MBE said that he needed to declare an interest regarding Item 6 on the agenda as a member of the Ripon Community House Board.

24. Public Questions or Statements

Mr George Greenbank, a member of the Clapham School Steering Group, read out the following statement to the Committee:

The Clapham School Steering Group has been formed following a public consultation meeting last Thursday. The group is preparing a submission with the aim of stopping the closure and we have been given less than four weeks to do so. We are working at some pace to put together the evidence and to test our arguments as to why the school

should be kept open. Today I am giving you the outline of our submission but I'm sure you will appreciate that it will evolve, become more specific and be backed by evidence as we get closer to the deadline to submit.

1. The decision by the Governing Body to propose closure and the decision by NYCC to start the consultation process did not consider critical information that was not known to them; a full understanding of (i) local housing development and (ii) changes to the local market for affordable, rented accommodation that are already having an impact on school numbers, paint a positive picture that do not justify closure.
2. The recent decline in pupil numbers is not due to permanent factors but some transient issues that are being addressed; recent changes to leadership are temporary but have already had a positive impact on school numbers with four new children starting and one returning pupil during the course of this academic year.
3. The financial position of the school is adversely affected by the need to pay for a dedicated Headteacher and Clapham Primary has been left in this position due to its well-intentioned participation in an early form of Confederation that did not deliver the intended benefits; it is now incumbent on the Governing Body, NYCC and the Diocese of Leeds to take the time needed to fix this and ensure that Clapham Primary School has a shared-Headteacher based cost model that is becoming the norm across the county.
4. Once higher but still realistic pupil numbers are realised and the cost structure is addressed, Clapham Primary School will be financially sustainable; local people have a proven track record of stepping in and supporting local services both with time and financially and will do so again to help the school during its period of recovery.
5. The quality of provision and ability to deliver the National Curriculum is also adversely affected by the legacy of failed collaboration; again, it is incumbent on the Governing Body, the Diocese and NYCC to support the Governing Body and take the time needed to put in place the forms of collaboration that have proved to be perfectly feasible elsewhere.
6. Clapham Primary School is a listed, rural school and so the presumption is against closure and a higher bar is set by statutory guidelines to ensure this is so; the consultation process has failed to address a number of aspects within the statutory guidelines, specifically those relating to (i) medium and long term demand for the school and (ii) the impact on the local community whose interests are evidenced by the Stronger Communities Programme of NYCC and the Attracting Younger People Programme of Craven District Council together with the emergent Clapham Neighbour Development plan that will prioritise an increase in the number of working families in the Parish.
7. In summary, had the Governing Body been made aware of the following earlier in the process:
 - 7.1. housing developments and changes to the local market for affordable, rented accommodation
 - 7.2 the statutory guidelines for the closure of rural schools, and had the necessary time been given to secure collaboration with other schools

then the decision to seek closure would not have been tabled unless and until the above had been fully considered. It is the judgement of the Steering Group that, had the proposal been tabled after a full and proper evaluation, it would not have been carried.

A copy of the statement was circulated to the Committee.

County Councillor Richard Welch said that he had some sympathy with the issues that had been raised by Mr Greenbank as in his own area two primary schools had closed in the past 18 months.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan, as Executive Member, said that the Council did not want to see rural primary schools or secondary schools closed. He said that the Council would do everything that it could do to support Clapham School. A consultation was currently underway and that the views of the Steering Group would be taken into account.

County Councillor Richard Welch then opened up the discussion to all Committee Members.

County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that from his experience the use of federations and close collaborative working between schools was key in ensuring their long term sustainability. He said that lessons could be learnt from the experience of Nidderdale.

County Councillor Robert Heseltine said that ten years of austerity and significant financial pressures in the public sector had impacted upon the sustainability of rural schools particularly primary schools. There needed to be a radical rethink on schools funding. He also noted that there was insufficient information available today to enable the Committee to thoroughly debate all the issues regarding the future of Clapham School.

County Councillor Michael Harrison said that he wanted to reassure the speaker that if there was a solution then the Council would try and find one.

County Councillor Margaret Atkinson said that more needed to be done to enable villages to grow and prosper and become community focal points and hubs in the larger rural areas of the county.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan said that with regard to discussions about the feasibility of small rural schools particularly primary schools the focus was always upon the wellbeing of the child. Key social and emotional needs could not easily be met when school numbers were very low.

County Councillor Andy Solloway said that the issue of the sustainability of schools was not of concern in rural areas only it was also an issue in urban areas. He said that when considering school places and housing development the Government's view was that four houses built generated one school place.

Mr Greenbank clarified that Clapham School currently has 30 pupils. He asked that County Council officers work with the School Steering Group to find a solution.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan said that he would have a further discussion with Mr Greenbank outside of the meeting.

Resolved –

- a. The committee expressed its sympathy for parents and carers of pupils at Clapham School and acknowledged the wider issue of the sustainability of schools in the county
- b. The sustainability of schools in the Skipton and Ripon Constituency Committee area to be put on the committee work programme

- c. All committee members to send issues of specific concern relating to the item on school sustainability to Daniel Harry
- d. Daniel Harry to develop some lines of enquiry with colleagues in NYCC Children and Young People's Services to bring back to the committee for consideration.

25. Update on Road Safety and Improvement Work that has been undertaken at the Site of the Junction A6131 (Skipton North) crossing A65 (Harrogate)

Daniel Harry introduced the report informing Members that a petition had previously been submitted to the Craven Area Committee on 9 November 2017 following the death of a 20 year old man on 13 October 2017 at the junction.

The decision of the Committee at that time was that the matter would be considered after the release of a Coroner's Report. It has since emerged that there will not be a Coroner's Report because there has been a criminal prosecution.

The report provides an overview of road safety improvement that has been carried out and Daniel Harry asked Members to consider whether any further action was required on behalf of the Committee.

County Councillor Robert Heseltine said that despite the works that had been done the junction still remained dangerous and a concern. He said there was a need for the Committee to maintain pressure upon the Council's Highways Department and also Highways England to get the necessary changes to the road completed.

County Councillor Philip Barrett said that he agreed with County Councillor Robert Heseltine. He said that minor safety changes and changes to the road structure or layout were not sufficient. Instead the area needed to be completely re-engineered with the introduction of a roundabout.

County Councillor Robert Heseltine raised his concerns that increased house building in the area will only exacerbated the safety problems at the junction.

Resolved -

- a. Daniel Harry to circulate a copy of the Fatal Accident Report relating to the death at the junction on 13 October 2017
- b. Daniel Harry to request that there is a further discussion on the approach being taken to road safety and improvement at the junction at the next meeting of the Highway Area Office member surgery
- c. Subsequent to the consideration of the above, the Chairman of the committee to write to the Director of Business and Environmental Services, David Bowe, to raise any concerns that the committee may have
- d. Daniel Harry to write to the petitioner, on behalf of the committee, to outline the action taken by the committee in response to the petition.

26. Strategic Highways Updates

- (a) Briefing on A59 at Kex Gill - Update on Report to Committee on 13 December 2018**

Daniel Harry introduced the report and asked Members of the Committee whether they had any queries or concerns they wished to be raised directly with the Highways and Transportation Department at the Council.

County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that the work to maintain the existing route at Kex Gill and develop a new route was all on target. There had been challenges with the maintenance of the existing route and that the job was being done properly and thoroughly. Work will continue with the resurfacing of the road in and around the Kex Gill area. All local residents and businesses will be informed ahead of that work. Any diversions put in place will have the intention of minimal impact upon local people and businesses.

Resolved -

- a. Committee members noted the report and requested ongoing updates from the Council's Highways service.

(b) Briefing on Progress with the Coniston Aire Causeway - Update on Report to Committee on 13 December 2018

Daniel Harry introduced the report asking Members to identify areas of concern that should be raised with the Highways and Transport Department at the Council.

County Councillor Gill Quinn said that local people were concerned about the ongoing damage to the bridge caused by vehicle collisions with the structure of the bridge and some of the quality and appearance of the temporary fixes that had been put in place. She said that she was liaising with the Area Highways Office to find out further information.

County Councillor Robert Heseltine requested that a Highways Officer attend the next meeting of the Committee to give an update on progress with the Coniston Aire Causeway.

County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that there were opportunities to raise any issues about either Coniston Aire Causeway or other highways related matters with Highways Officers either on a one to one basis or through the Area 6 Surgeries. He said that he had attended the Area 6 Surgery last week and found it extremely helpful in providing an update on all local highways issues. He said that he would be reluctant to draft in Highways Officers to attend the Committee unless there was something specific that needed to be dealt with there and then that was of strategic interest.

County Councillor Andy Solloway said that a number of the issues that were being discussed around highways all related to east-west connectivity and queried what would be happening with regards to the congestion study at Harrogate.

Resolved –

- a. Daniel Harry to request a more detailed report from John Smith in the Council's Highways service, for circulation to the committee.

27. Stronger Communities Showcase - Community Role and Access to Health and Support Services

Liz Meade and Marion Tweed-Rycroft of the Stronger Communities Team at North Yorkshire County Council introduced the report highlighting some of the key strategic issues associated with the work of the team.

Liz Meade explained that the Stronger Communities Team had identified a number of communities where additional support was needed for local community and voluntary sector organisations to establish themselves as anchors or hubs. She explained that the focus was upon community assets and doing what could be done to enable local people to do more for themselves.

Leon Fijalkowski from the Pioneer Projects Group gave a presentation outlining their work and lessons learnt. Key points from the presentation are summarised as below:

- ◆ At the time that the organisation was approached by the Stronger Communities Team the organisation was struggling for survival.
- ◆ Initially a consultant was brought in to assess what needed to be done to support the long term sustainability of the organisation.
- ◆ A new Strategic Director was appointed.
- ◆ Links were made with the ORB organisation in Knaresborough.
- ◆ Previously, the project had been perceived as a place for people who were old or unwell. This has been successfully challenged and changed as the organisation has changed the focus of its work and broadened its remit.
- ◆ The intention now is for the project to lead on the development of mental health hubs across the district. These will then enable services to be delivered out of them.
- ◆ The aim is to share the learning from Pioneer Projects with other VCS organisations in the community.

Liz Meade said that organisations like Ripon Community House played a key role in acting as a focal point for services, linking people together, and providing space for organisations to work and collaborate.

Caroline King of Ripon Community House gave an overview of the work that was done from the venue, as summarised below:

- ◆ A number of organisations are based in the building and running groups out of the site.
- ◆ The organisation is not for profit and invests in the community.
- ◆ The organisation has supported numerous projects including education for 16+ young people, community payback delivered by the Probation Service and a local food bank.
- ◆ The sharing of space at Community House means that organisations begin to share ideas, approaches and ways of working.
- ◆ The site is centrally based, responsive, neutral and respected.
- ◆ 200 people came through the door yesterday.
- ◆ It feels as though the organisation is quietly making a difference. It was accepted that more could be done to raise the profile but the focus of the work as volunteers was to do rather than talk.

- ◆ Things were becoming more challenging in the voluntary and community sector.
- ◆ Ripon Community House was involved in the provision of services from birth all the way through to death.

County Councillor Richard Welch thanked all those who had presented the item today and then asked whether Members had any questions.

County Councillor Michael Harrison noted that small amounts of funding could make a great difference in terms of building upon community assets that were already in place. He was interested in work that could help promote healthy lives and general wellbeing because this then would help promote what the Council was trying to achieve through Public Health and Health and Adult Services. In turn, reducing the demand for adult social care services. It was in effect, an 'invest to save' approach.

County Councillor Michael Harrison said that there had been significant change to the voluntary and community sector over the past ten years and funding could no longer be rolled out based on the method and approach that it had been previously. It was important to consider what services were needed in the community and how voluntary and community sector organisations could work together, work with the public sector, and work with the private sector to deliver them.

County Councillor Stuart Martin MBE said that the building had previously been owned by North Yorkshire County Council. At the point at which it was acquired it was derelict and had since been renovated and turned into a valuable community venue and asset.

County Councillor Andy Solloway said that he had been impressed by the presentations and that it showed the value of moving the venues for the Committee meetings across the county as Members were exposed to different projects, approaches and subjects than they were used from their own areas.

County Councillor Richard Welch summed up and said how amazed he was by all the work that was done by volunteers and their commitment to supporting their local community.

Daniel Harry asked Members to consider whether there were any issues that had been raised in the presentation regarding Stronger Communities that could be developed as further lines of enquiry for the Committee and included in the Work Programme.

Resolved –

- a. Committee members noted the report
- b. All committee members to consider whether there are any specific lines of enquiry that need to be included in the committee work programme that relate to the work of the Stronger Communities team, community resilience and community anchors/hubs.

28. Home to School Transport Policy Update

Gail Chester, SEND Transport Manager, North Yorkshire County Council presented the report.

Daniel Harry said that this is an opportunity for the Committee to discuss the local impact of the changes to the Policy and whether there are any concerns that need to be fed back to the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Gail Chester said that the changes to the Policy had been introduced to help reduce the increasing financial costs associated with home to school transport particularly for those children with SEN. The areas at which the Policy had been changed were discretionary areas of service delivery. The Council had worked with families to ensure that transport solutions could be found that were of benefit to the pupils concerned.

County Councillor Richard Welch thanked Gail Chester for the report and the overview and opened up discussions to all Committee Members.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan said that the changes to Transport Policy had worked for everybody, particularly the mileage allowance.

County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that there had been some concerns when the Policy was introduced but he was encouraged to see that there were no significant adverse impacts as a result of the changes.

County Councillor Andy Solloway raised a concern relating to the licensing of taxi services that were often used as part of the transport of children to and from school. He said that in many cases the shortages of taxi firms that were willing to contract for this business meant that many of the providers were coming from significant distances outside of the county. These were known as 'dead mile' contracts.

Gail Chester said that the lack of contractors locally did mean that there were times that as commissioners of the service the Council was obliged to look further afield for operators.

County Councillor Andy Solloway queried whether there was anything that people could do in their role as District Councillors to look at the licensing arrangements that are currently in place for taxi services that provide home to school transport.

Resolved –

- a. The committee noted that there were no immediate concerns with the change in policy but that any adverse impact would be highlighted by members with the SEND Transport Manager
- b. The committee noted concerns about the contracting of out of area transport providers for some home to school transport and referred this for consideration to the Chairman of the Transport Economy and Environment OSC.

29. Committee Work Programme

Daniel Harry introduced the report saying that the intention was that the Work Programme be owned by the Members of the Committee. He said that the discussions at the Committee this morning had demonstrated that there were concerns about the sustainability of rural schools particularly primary schools, concerns about road infrastructure particularly east to west connectivity, and also interest in better understanding community resilience and how existing community assets could be developed further.

Daniel Harry asked Members to consider any items for inclusion in the Work Programme.

County Councillor Philip Barrett said that he would like there to be a discussion at the Committee regarding the Kildwick roundabout at the A62 and whether anything could be done to address this longstanding problem with the flow of traffic.

Members then debated the appropriate route for a number of highways issues to go.

Daniel Harry said that it had now been confirmed that the Rt Honourable Julian Smith MP would be attending the Committee meeting on Friday 6 September 2019 in Ripon. The Committee will run from 11 am through to 1 pm, with the MP attending from 12 noon. He said that further work would need to be done to ensure that the time with the MP was well used and that issues of local concern were flagged directly with him during the hour that he was able to attend the meeting.

Daniel Harry reminded Committee Members that at the next meeting of the Committee at 10 am on 30 May 2019 there would need to be the election of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman as it had previously been agreed when the Area Constituency Committees were set up that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would only be in place for one year.

Daniel Harry asked Members to consider where the next meeting should be held. It was scheduled for either Skipton or Settle. He encouraged Members to suggest suitable venues either at Settle or Skipton.

Resolved –

- a. Committee members to consider whether there are any specific lines of enquiry that need to be included in the committee work programme that relate to the work of the Stronger Communities team, community resilience and community anchors/hubs
- b. Committee members to consider whether there are any specific lines of enquiry that need to be included in the committee work programme that relate to the sustainability of schools in the area
- c. Committee members to consider whether there are any specific lines of enquiry that need to be included in the committee work programme for the meeting with the MP on 6 September 2019
- d. An item on congestion and road safety related issues linked to the flow of traffic around the A629 Kildwick Roundabout to be added to the work programme for the 6 September 2019 meeting
- e. An item on strategic road links to be added to the work programme. This may include a number of separate issues that impact upon the area, including Kex Gill, Coniston Aire Causeway, the A629 Kildwick Roundabout and others.

The meeting concluded at 12.05 pm

DH/JR