

North Yorkshire County Council

Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 17 December 2020 remotely using MS Teams, commencing at 10am.

This meeting was live broadcast on the North Yorkshire County Council YouTube site and a recording is available using the following link - <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/live-meetings>

Present:

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Philip Barrett, Mike Chambers MBE (Chairman), David Ireton, Stanley Lumley, Stuart Martin MBE, Patrick Mulligan, Gill Quinn and Andy Solloway.

County Council Officers: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Andrew Dixon (Strategic Planning Manager, CYPS), Sally Dunn (Head of Finance - Schools and Early Years, CYPS), Julie Pattison (Principal Adviser, Education and Skills (CYPS), Head of SEN and Disability Service (CYPS), Louise Wallace (Director of Public Health, HAS) and Victoria Ononeze (Public Health Consultant, HAS).

Other County Councillors present: Gareth Dadd and Carl Les.

78. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Michael Harrison, Robert Heseltine, Richard Welch and Robert Windass.

County Councillor David Chance gave his apologies. Although not a member of the committee, he regularly attends as Executive member.

79. Minutes

Considered the minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 14 October 2020.

Resolved -

- a. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 14 October 2020, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

80. Any Declarations of Interest

There was none.

81. Public Questions or Statements

There were no public questions or statements.

82. Annual Education Report

Considered -

A presentation by Andrew Dixon, (Strategic Planning Manager, CYPS).

The key points from the report are as summarised below:

- The academy conversion rate is low in the committee area, when compared to the rest of the county
- Secondary school performance and attainment is comparatively strong in the committee area
- There has been an increase in the number of children being taken out of mainstream school and educated at home, particularly in September and October, which appears to be related to concerns about Covid-19 transmission in schools
- Secondary school funding comparatively low in the committee area and the county as a whole as the funding formula tends to benefit urban areas
- Some concerns about the use of Fixed Term Exclusions
- Long term school sustainability is impacted by falling pupil rolls, school standards and financial pressures
- There have been 10 school closures in the county over the last three years. Five of these have been in the constituency area
- Housing growth means that planning for increased capacity within primary and secondary schools is underway.

There followed a discussion, during the course of which County Councillors raised some specific queries.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE asked what was driving the increase in elective home schooling and what measures are in place to ensure that a child schooled at home receives the quality and breadth of education that enables them to progress as a young adult.

Nikki Joyce said that there have been significant increases over September and October that were driven by parental concerns about Covid-19 transmission in schools. This was similar to what has happened nationally over the same period but not at the same levels.

Nikki Joyce said that every request for elective home education goes through the Early Help Team. They then meet with the family to understand why they have opted for home education and whether assistance with other unmet needs or issues would be helpful.

County Councillor Andy Solloway said that schools are highly regulated and there is a strong focus upon attainment. He asked what is put in place for those children who are home educated to ensure that they receive a comparable education to those children who are at school.

Nikki Joyce said that parents and carers have the right to elect to home educate their children. The Council has a duty to support that right and cannot be seen to frustrate it with the application of stringent or limiting rules and requirements. There is, however, a balance to be struck and many parents and carers welcome the support that the Council is able to provide.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE asked whether there was any data available that enabled a comparison of educational attainment and outcomes for children and young people educated at home and those educated at school.

Julie Pattison said that she would see what data and analysis was available and share it with the committee.

County Councillor Philip Barrett said that the housing growth in the greater Bradford area would have an impact upon schools in south Craven, as schools there already

had a significant proportion of their pupils travelling in from that area, which was out of county.

Andrew Dixon said that the housing growth in south Craven would lead to an increased demand for school places from families in the school catchment areas. Over time, this would then lead to a re-balancing of the pupils in a school, with a gradual increase in the number of pupils from within the school catchment area and a commensurate decrease in the number of pupils from outside the school catchment area.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up the discussions and thanked officers for attending the meeting and answering questions from the committee members.

Resolved –

- a. To receive the next annual report at the meeting of the committee on 16 December 2020.

83. Update from Executive members

The committee Chairman, County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE, invited County Councillors Gareth Dadd and Carl Les to provide an update on current priorities for the Council at this point in the agenda.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd said that the Local Government Settlement is due to be announced today. The financial position of the Council, as we approach the end of the financial year, is better than had been projected during the summer. Challenges remain with the cost incurred by the local response to the pandemic and the ongoing and increasing demands of adult social care provision. The future demands upon the Council and how these will be met by central government funding remain uncertain.

County Councillor Carl Les said that an announcement will be made today about the restrictions that are going to be in place now that the tier system is being reviewed. It is anticipated that North Yorkshire will remain in Tier 2. Whilst an approach to applying restrictions that is more granular is welcomed, it is noted that the rates of infection across North Yorkshire have been volatile. The low population levels in some areas has often meant that a relatively small outbreak or cluster of positive tests can lead to a significant peak in the overall infection rate for the county.

County Councillor Carl Les gave an update on Local Government Review and the likelihood of a precept specific to funding for adult social care being included in Council Tax, as part of the Council's budget considerations.

There followed a discussion about funding for adult social care. The conclusion of which was that a national review was needed and that the reliance upon national grants and council tax was not sustainable. It may be time for national government to look at funding adult social care through general taxation and perhaps some form of insurance scheme.

84. Public consultation on services changes proposed for the Healthy Child Programme

Considered -

A presentation by Louise Wallace (Director of Public Health, HAS) and Victoria Ononeze (Public Health Consultant, HAS).

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE welcomed the officers to the meeting. He said that the purpose of the meeting was to invite the committee to comment on the consultation proposals and pass those on to the meeting of the Scrutiny of Health Committee on 18 December 2020.

The key points from the presentation are as summarised below:

- The Healthy Child Programme is a national scheme, delivered locally by Public Health, that promotes health and support at an early stage for children, young people and their families
- A public consultation on proposed changes is being run from 26 October 2020 to 4 January 2021
- A report outlining the proposed changes to services and the feedback from the public, Area Constituency Committees and the Scrutiny of Health Committee will go to the Executive in January 2021
- It is proposed that the new service starts in April 2021
- Healthy Child Programme is funded through the North Yorkshire Public Health Grant
- The Public Health Grant was subject to an 8% reduction between the financial years 2017/18 and 2019/20, with an inflationary increase only for the financial year 2020-21. As a result savings of £657,000 in public health funded services need to be found by 2024
- The priority will be to children under five and maintaining the support that is necessary for them to promote their early development and to ensure that they are ready to learn
- All new-born babies and their parent(s)/carer(s) will have a face-to-face visit from a qualified Health Visitor
- Targeted support for 5-19 year olds will still be funded, albeit through a range of different programmes and services
- The Healthy Child 0-19 services will combine a mix of face-to-face, online, individual and group work services.

There followed a discussion, during the course of which County Councillors made the following points:

- Children and young people's mental health as suffered during the pandemic as extended periods away from school and social support networks has left many feeling isolated and lonely. This impact of the pandemic needs to be taken into account as the proposed changes to services are being finalised.
- The proposed changes to the way in which support for young people is provided may mean that they find it more difficult to access the services that they need, particularly in the more rural areas of the county. Previously, the focal point was the school. The proposal is to work with a much wider range of agencies and organisations.
- The response to the pandemic, two national lockdowns and various local restrictions has meant that a whole range of public, private and third sector organisations have adopted new ways of work. Typically, this has involved remote meetings/appointments/assessments and an increased use of internet-based services. Whilst for many this has been liberating, for some this runs the risk of excluding them from the services that they need. Face-to-face and telephone-based access to services needs to be maintained for those people who cannot or will not use technology.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE asked what action had been taken to ensure that the delivery of a public consultation on service changes during a pandemic had the same reach and level of engagement as a consultation in person. The approach taken during a pandemic assumed that people would engage remotely.

Victoria Ononeze said that to date over 200 responses to the consultation had been received by email. The Council's communication team had targeted a broad range of stakeholders and interested parties. As a result, it may well be that the response to the consultation is higher than would be the norm for one undertaken pre-pandemic.

County Councillor Caroline Dickinson, Executive member for Public Health, Prevention and Supported Housing, said that the development of the proposals for the changes to services had been delayed by the pandemic. Key lessons on service design, however, had been learned from the experience of running services during the pandemic. The focus was upon prevention and it was anticipated that there would be greater access to a broader range of services, following the proposed changes.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and said that the following points would be passed onto County Councillor John Ennis, by Daniel Harry, who is chairing the meeting of the Scrutiny of Health Committee tomorrow (18 December 2020):

- The committee broadly supports the proposed changes, as outlined in the consultation document
- The financial pressures that Public Health is under are acknowledged
- Reassurances are sought that everything reasonably possible has been done to promote engagement with a broad range of agencies, organisations and people as part of a consultation undertaken during a pandemic, where there has been a heavy reliance upon remote means of communication
- Reassurances are sought that the dispersed model of services for 5 to 19 year olds does not result in people finding access to services more difficult, particularly in rural areas
- Further consideration may be needed as to how the Healthy Child Programme will support children and young people with mental health problems and/or those at risk of poor mental health. The past 9 months of the pandemic and social restrictions has seen a decline in children and young people's mental health.

Resolved –

- a. To support the proposed changes, as outlined in the consultation document
- b. To forward the views of the committee, as outlined in the previous section, to the Scrutiny of Health Committee for their meeting of 18 December 2020.

85. Committee Work Programme

Considered -

A report by Daniel Harry, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, outlining the committee work programme.

Daniel Harry introduced the report and asked that Members review the committee's work programme, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the area.

Daniel Harry said that the agenda items scheduled for the next meeting of the committee on Thursday 7 January 2021 are:

- Committee discussion with the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP
- Council Budget proposals.
- Harrogate Transport Improvement Programme.

Resolved -

- a. That the committee work programme be reviewed by members.

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

There was none.

The meeting concluded at 11.35 am.

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