

North Yorkshire County Council

Thirsk and Malton Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Ryedale Indoor Bowls Club, Scarborough Road, Norton on Wednesday 3 July 2019 at 10.00 am.

Present:-

County Councillors Robert Baker, Lindsay Burr MBE, Caroline Goodrick, Peter Sowray, Helen Swiers, Roberta Swiers and Greg White.

Apologies: County Councillors Val Arnold, Gareth Dadd, Keane Duncan, Caroline Patmore and Janet Sanderson.

Also in Attendance: County Councillor David Chance; Stacey Bulet (Chief Executive, Ryedale District Council)

Officers in Attendance: Richard Marr (Area Highways Manager, Highways and Transportation, BES), Andrew Dixon (Strategic Planning Manager, Education & Skills), Howard Emmett (AD Strategic Resources), Jane Le Sage (AD for Inclusion), Joy Willis (Principal Adviser, Education & Skills), Melanie Carr (Principal Democratic Services & Scrutiny Officer) & Hannah Bowls (Business Support Officer).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

31. Appointment of Chairman

On being nominated and seconded, it was

Resolved -

That County Councillor Caroline Goodrick be elected Chair of the Thirsk & Malton Area Constituency Committee, to serve until the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2020.

32. Introductions and Updates

There were no updates from the Chair.

33. Minutes of the meeting held 28 November 2018

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Thirsk & Malton Area Constituency Committee held on 28 November 2018, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

34. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved –

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That County Councillor Keane Duncan be elected Vice Chairman of the Thirsk & Malton Area Constituency Committee to serve until the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2020. As Cllr Duncan was absent from the meeting, it was agreed that County Councillor Peter Sowray would act as Vice Chairman for this meeting.

35. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

36. Public Questions or Statements

The Committee received one public question from Mr Barry Connor in regard to the transport needs of Brafferton, Helperby, Myton, Tholthorpe, Flawith and Aldwark, as follows:

County Councils have a legal duty as specified in the Transport Acts of 1985, 2000 and 2008 to properly identify the transport needs of people in their areas and to then determine how those needs might be met.

Contrary to past County statements, the duty to identify transport needs can't simply be dismissed because it expects that funding might eventually be required. Whether support is needed and whether the funds are available can only be determined after transport needs have been identified. Our 6 villages believe that there is no evidence that the County has undertaken this research.

The County should also properly consult with the local communities. This also has not been done adequately.

It is claimed that letters were sent to the Parish Councils in May 2018 seeking their views on Supported bus services. None of the Parish Councils recall or have records of any such communication and the Commercial service they did have (Service 29) was not then under threat of cutback. It was, though, already regarded as being 'unfit for purpose' by users, potential users and even by Reliance Bus Company and this accounted for the poor patronage figures which the County have since quoted to justify the loss of the route. However, restoration of the Service 29 is not the matter which is being pursued here.

Instead, the villagers are questioning why the County Council has not identified the transport needs of the area and why (at the very least) they have consistently avoided making available the resources and expertise of its Integrated Transport Department to help the communities find alternative ways of meeting their transport requirements. Instead, the County have suggested that either the Parish Councils' budgets or the local County Councillor's devolved Community Fund should be used to avoid Transport Department involvement.

Both in 2015 and now it has been left for local residents to negotiate with bus companies – surely a role which should be that of the Transport Department? This begs the question: for whose benefit does the Department exist?

It has been suggested that failure to act has been due to lack of funds. However

In 2010 and 2011, NYCC received a grant of over £831,000 from the Department for Transport as additional funding for community public transport.

A Freedom of Information request in 2014 showed that none of these funds had been spent and there is no evidence to show any spending on additional transport measures since.

Also, in 2015 the County were awarded £120,000 by the Department for Transport to encourage integrated rural transport. A 2017 Department for Transport Report states that it

was instead used to help save the local CCG £200,000 on an ambulance contract with no benefits accruing to County residents.

In light of these points and on behalf of our 6 communities, I now ask you to support the 127 letters which have been presented to the County Council urging it to fulfil its legal obligations.

The committee were provided with a written response from NYCC's Contract & Commissioning Manager for Integrated Passenger Transport, which was read out at the meeting by the committee clerk in the absence of the officer.

The Council has responded in a detailed letter to the recent petition received from Mr Connor and others. The Council's obligations are set out Transport Act 1985 section 63 (as amended 2000). This places the following duty on the Council: to:

“secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the Council considers it appropriate to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not, in their view, be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose’. In exercising this duty the Council is entitled to take account of the amount of funding available.

In May 2015 the Council consulted on proposals to reduce the amount spent on supporting local bus services. The public consultation was countywide and extensive with plans and proposals being shared with a wide variety of stakeholders including Parish Councils. “Drop in” sessions were held for the public and other stakeholders to give their views on public transport in the county.

The plans were implemented in April 2016. Having checked the final report, there are no comments listed at that time from Brafferton, Aldwark/Flawith & Youlton, or Tholthorpe Parish Councils.

In May 2018 we started a review of public transport in the Hambleton, Harrogate and Richmondshire areas. On 18th May 2018, in an effort to get feedback and suggestions prior to the planning of the services in the area, all parish councils in the areas including, Brafferton, Aldwark/Flawith & Youlton, Tholthorpe were emailed explaining that the Council were reviewing public transport services and asking for any comments that they might want to be considered as part of the review. Whilst we did receive 78 responses across the 3 areas our records show that we did not receive any comments from any of those parishes listed above.

When we met with Reliance Motors in February 2019 they made us aware that they were not in a position to continue serving all villages for all journeys on their commercial service, 29. At that time we reviewed the passenger data and considered whether we were able to financially support the journeys but given the very low passenger usage and the costs involved we weren't able to do so.

In summary,

- We recognise our duty to assess and consider transport needs but are able to have regard to cost when doing so. We cannot continue to provide support for services that are not well used.*
- We have undertaken a reasonable process to understand local needs and deliver them in 2015/16 and again in 2018.*
- We recognise that residual transport needs remain and will offer support to community based schemes including car schemes and support for CT and would be happy to offer support (including financial) to a community solution if parishes or other groups wish to pursue that option.*
- We have committed to continue supporting service 150 which operates Tuesday and Thursday from Thirsk to Ripon, via Helperby and we will continue to provide funding to both Boroughbridge and Easingwold voluntary car schemes.*

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- *Since 2011 the Council has allocated and spent £1.9m to support Community Transport which includes the use of the £832k grant received from the Department for Transport.*
- *We have distributed the funding to the CT sector by:*
 - *Introducing two grant funding schemes which cover items such as help with vehicle purchase, marketing and publicity etc.*
 - *Providing funding to support car schemes across North Yorkshire.*
- *The NYCC Total Transport Pilot was designed intentionally to work with the CCG, specifically “To investigate and pilot delivering some patient transport services that are traditionally provided by Ambulance Trusts. Delivering savings through the project of £200k for the CCG was evidence of the potential value of collaborative initiatives like this.*

The Chair confirmed that Mr Connor was able to ask a supplementary question in order to clarify the information provided in the officer response, but it was not within the Committee’s remit to make a decision based on the information provided at the meeting. As no officer was available at the meeting to respond to a supplementary question, Mr Connor agreed to submit further comments in writing direct to the Chair of the Committee.

37. Rural Policing

Considered -

A presentation provided by Inspector Jon Grainge, head of the Rural Taskforce Unit of North Yorkshire Police.

Inspector Jon Grainge provided an overview of the role and make-up of the Taskforce Unit, established in 2016 alongside the introduction of a Rural Policing Strategy. The presentation focussed on the four key strands of that Strategy – Prevention, Engagement, Enforcement and Support for Rural Communities, and confirmed:

- Prevention was predominately the work of PCSOs.
- There were a number of ongoing operations focussed on farms, rural businesses and metal theft.
- There were currently 18 ‘Mobile Rural Watch’ schemes in place across the county, involving community members going on active patrol with the Police and volunteers acting as the eyes and ears of the Police, identifying suspicious vehicles etc. A scheme was established in Thirsk a number of years ago and more recently one had been established in Helmsley.
- All media avenues were being utilised to increase engagement, including social media, and in particular WhatsApp, which was enabling the Taskforce to tap into community group communication and carry out a graded assessment of the incoming data. This was seen as a supplement to 999 and 101 communications, not a replacement.
- Engagement also involved being present where rural communities frequented e.g. county shows, auctions, parish council meetings etc.
- Community intelligence was being used to help identify extremism, rural based modern slavery and other vulnerable people in communities.
- In regards to enforcement, the Rural Taskforce Unit was able to access further support from other policing teams as and when needed, enabling considerable resources to be focussed on the needs of a rural community, and often involved cross border work.
- Ongoing operations focussed on rural burglaries, farm burglaries and fly tipping, which for the latter involved working in partnership with Trading Standards, DVSA, DVLA and Local Authorities.
- As private landowners were responsible for clearing up fly tipping on their land, those offences were not always reported, and therefore the true scale of the problem was unknown.

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- Wildlife crime in the Thirsk & Malton constituency area was mainly focussed on deer poaching, with around 150 core offenders across the county. To address it, the Taskforce were working closely with other forces.

Members noted there was a public perception of the under policing of rural crime leading to an under reporting of such crime, and whilst they were pleased with the Rural Watch schemes, they agreed the challenge was to ensure a lasting legacy beyond the involvement of specific individuals or groups.

County Councillor Lindsay Burr raised concerns about drug related crime coming from bigger towns across the region and its effect on families living in rural areas. Inspector Grainge acknowledged the issue and agreed to raise it with his colleagues in the appropriate teams. He noted that joint collaborative working with partners was assisting in addressing the ongoing issue.

County Councillor Greg White acknowledged the changing face of community policing and expressed concern about teams working in silos. Inspector Grainge acknowledged that communication between policing teams was vital.

County Councillor Caroline Goodrick highlighted concerns about speeding through villages and inquisitive crime resulting from particular events such as Seamer Horse Fair. Inspector Grainge confirmed that whenever a specific event took place, the whole Taskforce Unit was engaged to resource an appropriate response. County Councillor Caroline Goodrick thanked Inspector Jon Grainge for his attendance and it was

Resolved – That:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) A further update be provided in July 2020.

38. Update on the Experimental 7.5T Weight Restriction – Norton Level Crossing

Considered –

A report advising members of the recommendation to be taken to NYCC Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services and the BES Executive Members on the continuation of the Experimental 7.5T weight restriction at Norton Level Crossing.

Richard Marr, Area Highways Manager introduced the report which provided Members an opportunity to provide formal representation to the Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services and the BES Executive Members on the continuation of the weight restriction.

County Councillor Lindsay Burr expressed disappointed at the length of time it had taken to carry out the modelling. However she confirmed the restriction had improved air quality, and that Malton & Norton Town Councils wanted the restriction to continue, even though there was some concern about the displacement of HGVs. She therefore stressed that the knock on effects of the restriction needed addressing.

Richard Marr confirmed that officers were of the opinion that the Order should be made permanent, and that by the end of 2019, once the traffic modelling had started producing reliable data, they would be in a more informed position, to review that decision.

The Chair expressed her support for the proposal that the restriction be made permanent but kept under review and Committee members voted in support of that approach.

Resolved – That:

- (i) The report be noted.
- (ii) The Committee endorsed the proposed officer recommendation due to be reported to the NYCC Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services and the BES Executive Members on 26 July 2019

39. HGV Overnight Parking

Considered – a summary of the current and potential impacts of overnight parking by Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) on the highway network and surrounding environment, and the proposal to develop a county strategy to address the increasing problem.

Members expressed their concern about the displacement of overnight parking and Richard Marr (Area Highways Manager) provided reassurance that the county council was working in partnership with Hambleton District council to address the issue and other highway management concerns.

Members noted there was no strategy currently in place, and any such strategy would require a multi-agency approach. They also queried the use of a Public Space Protection Order – who policed them; were they the same as a byelaw etc, and it was confirmed that the Police were responsible. Members agreed a countywide strategy was required to address the likely increase in incidents and would deliver a consistent approach going forward.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

40. Schools, Educational Achievement & Finance

Considered –

The report of officers from the Children and Young People's Services Directorate, providing an overview of the local educational landscape, educational achievement and the financial challenges affecting schools in the Thirsk & Malton constituency area.

The report introduced by Andrew Dixon provided an overview of the area including a comparison of standards and attainment levels, against the rest of North Yorkshire and nationally. It was confirmed that the number of conversions to academies was slowing with none planned after December 2019. Members suggested that the County Council would need to ensure support for small schools across the area to prevent them falling into special measures, which would require them to convert to academies. They noted that the hiatus after an academy order is made was a very difficult time for a school as it created a great deal of uncertainty for parents and staff.

County Councillor Peter Sowray referenced a school in Easingwold where some additional land had been secured to enable the school to expand, but the new housing in the area had not yet resulted in additional pupil numbers.

In regard to the School Ofsted judgements highlighted in the report, members noted that 8 schools were judged as requiring improvement and 3 as inadequate. Officers confirmed that the Local Authority was working with those schools and that School Improvement Partnership Plans were now in place which included a package of support measures and performance indicators to measure the impact of that support.

It was noted that schools in Ryedale appeared to be underperforming across all key stages and members questioned what was being done to address that. It was confirmed that best

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practice from elsewhere was being shared and Locality Boards were looking at clusters in specific areas and targeting support.

Jane Le Sage, Assistant Director for Inclusion, provided a detailed overview of the delivery of SEND and gave examples of how different schools were tackling exclusions. She confirmed that the number of fixed term and permanent exclusion was expected to drop this year following the changes being implemented to the delivery of alternative provision, the introduction of a Behaviour Policy, improved staff training and the introduction of locality based SEND teams.

County Councillor Greg White queried school planning areas and it was confirmed they were a requirement of central government with funding being granted on that basis. It was noted that the planning areas were last changed four years ago to ensure pressure on places in the towns was not masked by surplus capacity in the rural areas, and thereby ensuring the annual settlement for North Yorkshire was appropriate.

Resolved – That:

- (i) The report on educational factors in the Thirsk and Malton constituency area be noted.
- (ii) A further report be provided in September 2020, and annually thereafter.

41. Thirsk & Malton Area Constituency Committee Work Programme for 2019/20

Considered –

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Democratic Services), providing a work programme for the municipal year for the Committee to consider and adopt.

Members noted the future meeting dates and the addition on an extra meeting on 10 January 2020 to consider the Annual Budget, ahead of its consideration by the Executive on 28 January 2020.

In regard to the next scheduled meeting on 30 August 2019, it was noted that the meeting would take place in Easingwold, to enable the attendance of the RT Hon Kevin Hollinrake MP. Members identified a number of discussion topics for that meeting:

- Care for the Elderly
- Education Funding
- Fairer Funding Review
- A64 Connectivity

Finally, it was noted that the NYCC Digital Strategy item currently scheduled for the August 2019 meeting would have to be slipped to the November 2019 meeting to enable the relevant officer to attend.

Resolved -

- i) That the work programme attached at Annex A of the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12:08pm
MLC