

North Yorkshire County Council

Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Thursday, 1st September, 2022 commencing at 10.00 am.

County Councillor Richard Foster in the Chair and County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Barbara Brodigan, Andy Brown, Nick Brown, Robert Heseltine, Nathan Hull, David Ireton, Andrew Murday, Simon Myers, David Noland, David Staveley and Andrew Williams.

In attendance: County Councillor Carl Les; Rt Hon Julian Smith MP.

Officers present: Daniel Harry, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, NYCC; David Smurthwaite, Strategic Manager, Planning and Regeneration, Craven District Council; Victoria Turner and Dan Atkinson, Public Health, North Yorkshire County Council; Emma Pemberton and Andrew Clarke of Business and Environmental Services, North Yorkshire County Council; Chloe Thwaites, Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Officer, Children and Young People's Services, North Yorkshire County Council.

Apologies: Phillip Barrett and Andy Solloway.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

14 Welcome and introductions and apologies for absence

The committee Chair, County Councillor Richard Foster, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were recorded from County Councillors Philip Barrett and Andy Solloway.

15 Minutes of the committee meeting held on 7 June 2022

Considered –

The minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 7 June 2022.

Resolved -

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 7 June 2022, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

16 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

17 Public Questions or Statements

There were none.

18 Update from RT Hon Julian Smith MP - verbal update

Considered –

An update from the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP, provided remotely using MS Teams.

The committee Chair invited the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP to give an overview to the committee of some of his areas of work, concerns and priorities. The key points are as summarised below:

- Recognition that the local authorities in North Yorkshire are all working well together to deliver on the new unitary authority and the devolution deal
- Looking forward to the next iteration of the Area Constituency Committees and how they will work to support local delivery and accountability
- The local support provided to Ukrainian refugees has been extremely well organised and has made huge difference to some very vulnerable people
- Nationally and for the government, the key concern is the Cost of Living Crisis. A great deal of work is underway to develop a response to this and so policy statements will follow the appointment of the new Prime Minister
- The increase in energy prices will have a significant impact upon Small and Medium Enterprises, many of which have suffered economically during the pandemic
- The Cost of Living Crisis poses a greater financial and economic challenge to the government than the pandemic
- It would help if members could provide details of the impact of the rising energy costs upon their constituents. This granular information would assist with raising awareness at Westminster of the specific issues faced in more rural areas, like the Dales
- Pleased to see that an update on elective home schooling is on the agenda. Concerns have been raised at Westminster regarding the need to understand where children are, what education they are receiving and how they are being supported and cared for.

There followed a discussion, the key points of which are as summarised below:

- The formation of the new unitary North Yorkshire Council will mean that some local authority offices are vacated. These could then be used by government departments that move out of London
- There is a need for government to take into account the impact of increasing energy prices upon local authority provided and commissioned services, including schools. Also, the impact of inflation generally and in particular in the construction industry and the impact that this is having upon large capital projects, such as the A59 re-alignment at Kex Gill.

Resolved -

The committee Chair thanked the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP for attending the meeting and providing an update for members.

19 North Yorkshire Cultural Framework - Report of the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services, NYCC

Considered -

A report by Mark Kibblewhite, Senior Policy Officer, Business and Environmental Services, North Yorkshire County Council regarding the North Yorkshire Cultural Framework.

Mark Kibblewhite was unable to attend the meeting and so David Smurthwaite, Strategic Manager, Planning and Regeneration, Craven District Council presented the report.

Some of the key points highlighted in the report are as summarised below:

- The Cultural Framework for North Yorkshire has been developed by a partnership working group made up of the District Councils and North Yorkshire County Council, with support from Arts Council England and Cultural Stakeholders in the County
- The framework was taken to the meeting of the Executive in March 2022, at which meeting the Area Constituency Committees were asked to review the document and identify any key cultural assets that may have been overlooked
- The framework seeks to draw out the role that culture can play in regeneration and place shaping; developing skills and supporting creative industries; individual health and wellbeing; and supporting community development and quality of life
- The framework will be a catalyst for the beginning of an ongoing cultural conversation in North Yorkshire
- Key themes in the framework are: innovation; use of new technology to open up access and expand reach within the County and beyond; using our creativity and voice to alert communities to the challenges we face around climate change and help catalyse action
- The pandemic had a significant and negative impact upon large parts of the cultural sector and so part of the framework is about sustained recovery
- Members were referred to the audit of cultural assets in the county at Appendix F to the main report.

There followed a discussion, the key points of which are as summarised below:

- There is often a lack of leadership which means that opportunities for local cultural organisations to work with each other and complement one another are missed. Often provision is dis-jointed and the links with economic development and tourism missed or not fully realised
- National funding tends to go to those organisations that have built a strong local reputation for the delivery of high quality cultural events. It is much harder for smaller, developing groups to access such funding
- Query raised about the lack of analysis in the report and framework document of the threats to cultural activity in the area, such as the loss of music venues
- The framework is a statement of what there is at the moment. What about the plan for what happens next and some clearly stated steps for the development of cultural activity and how this can support the local economy and growth
- There is a need to target a number of areas of the county
- Cultural activity can sometimes feel exclusive and not for everyone. Further work needs to be done to encourage people of all ages and from all backgrounds to engage in culture
- More work could be done to host larger cultural events in the county
- Query regarding the quality of some of the cultural events in the county and how events planners could be supported in their work
- The creation of a new unitary council for North Yorkshire will create opportunities for the development of a more coherent and sophisticated cultural offer for the county
- It would be helpful to consider as part of the framework how cultural events and assets could be used to encourage young families into the area
- More could be done to link culture and leisure to education.

The committee chair summed up and thanked David Smurthwaite for attending the meeting.

Resolved –

- a) That the committee notes the report
- b) That members forward any queries regarding the cultural framework to David Smurthwaite.

20 Local economic development - Report of the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services, NYCC

Considered -

A report by David Smurthwaite, Strategic Manager, Planning and Regeneration, Craven District Council.

Some of the key points highlighted in the report are as summarised below:

- There is low productivity across the committee area
- Wages tend to be lower
- There are low rates of economic activity due to an ageing population and increasing numbers of people retiring early (linked to the pandemic)
- House prices are relatively high and this can impact upon the number of younger people and young families moving into the county and staying in the county
- There is an overreliance on the micro-economy and very small, independent businesses
- Tourism growth and development is limited by the reliance upon day trips
- There are high levels of educational attainment and low levels of unemployment
- Good access to the A1 and the large urban centre of West Yorkshire
- There are a large number of assets, with attractive towns and villages and extensive heritage, such as Ripon Cathedral, Fountains Abbey and Bolton Abbey
- The challenge is to attract and retain younger, well educated people and re-vitalise towns and villages.

There followed a discussion, the key points of which are as summarised below:

- It is important that skilled staff in the districts and boroughs are not lost as the new unitary council is formed
- The economic challenges vary across the area covered by the committee. Ripon has different issues to those of Skipton or Settle
- A range of economic development projects need to be worked up and held ready so that opportunities for government grant funding can be seized. This recognises that often government grants are released at very short notice
- The agricultural and food processing sector is important but faces huge challenges with climate change, inflation and shortages in key resources
- Concerns raised that the economic development of Ripon and particularly the promotion of the city as a tourist destination had been overlooked by the Borough Council, which had a policy of investing in Harrogate as the main engine for economic growth in the area. It would be helpful to have a better understanding of what is in the 'Ripon Master Plan'
- There is a need to work with businesses and understand what support they need
- There is a lack of work, housing and higher education opportunities in the area
- The Area Constituency Committees in the new unitary council are likely to play a lead role in economic development.

The committee Chair summed up and thanked David Smurthwaite for the presentation and report.

Resolved –

- a) That the committee notes the report
- b) That an overview of the of the economic development plan for Ripon (the Ripon Master Plan) is brought to a meeting of the committee and that meeting to be held in Ripon with the option of a tour of the area, where possible.

21 Fuel poverty - Report of the Director of Public Health, NYCC

Considered –

A report by Victoria Turner, Public Health Consultant, North Yorkshire County Council on fuel poverty in the committee area.

Dan Atkinson from Public Health gave a presentation (remotely using MS Teams), the key points of which are as summarised below:

- Public Health is involved in work around fuel poverty due to the link with excess winter deaths. The more vulnerable people are those who have long term conditions, who are older and who have breathing problems
- Someone is defined as being in fuel poverty if they are living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or below and when they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line
- Three factors affect fuel poverty: household income; household energy efficiency; and fuel prices
- Scarborough Borough has the highest proportion of households in fuel poverty in North Yorkshire (18.7%)
- Only Selby and Harrogate districts have a lower rate of fuel poverty than the national average (13.2%)
- Craven, Ryedale, Richmondshire and Scarborough all have a higher proportion of households in fuel poverty than the North Yorkshire average (15.1%)
- The seasonal health strategy for North Yorkshire sets out a five-year plan from 2021 to improve the health and wellbeing of North Yorkshire residents during cold and hot weather, with a particular focus on reducing excess winter deaths.

There was a discussion, the key points of which are as summarised below:

- Retrofitting properties with high levels of modern insulation would help increase the energy efficiency of houses, reducing the demand for heating fuels
- What more can be done to improve the energy efficiency of schools and other public buildings
- There is an opportunity to fit solar panels to public building in the county and also use publicly owned land for energy generation
- It can be difficult to gain planning permission for larger green energy schemes, such as wind farms, hydro-electric and solar
- Demand management is key
- Solar panels should be a standard requirement for all new house built
- Concerns raised that we are currently allowing houses to be built that will need to be retrofitted in 10 years' time to meet anticipated regulations and standards. This will be far more expensive and inconvenient than making sure that they are of the required standard when built.

The chair thanked Victoria and Dan for attending the meeting and answering questions.

Resolved –

a) To note the report.

The committee Chair adjourned the meeting for 10 minutes at 12:35pm.

22 Digital Demand Responsive Bus Service - Report of the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services, NYCC

Considered -

A report by Emma Pemberton and Andrew Clarke of Business and Environmental Services, North Yorkshire County Council.

Andrew Clarke presented the report and some of the key points are as summarised below. Emma Pemberton attended remotely using MS Teams.

- YorBus is a flexible, on-demand bus service connecting Ripon, Masham, Bedale and surrounding villages
- The service started in July 2021, initially as a 12 month pilot project, and has recently been extended for a further year up to 30 June 2023
- The service is run with two 14 seater, wheelchair accessible buses using NYCC “in house” fleet vehicles and staff resource; operating from 06:55 to 18:00 Monday to Friday, and 09:00 to 18:00 on Saturdays
- Customers book journeys on the bus via the dedicated YorBus app or through the NYCC Customer Service Centre
- Fares were increased from the start of August with a single journey costing £2:00 for adults, £1:00 for a child, with under-fives travelling for free
- Customers with a concessionary bus pass may use their bus pass to travel for free within concessionary bus pass hours
- From 1 July 2021 to 31 July 2022, YorBus has seen more than 850 active riders complete over 13,000 passenger journeys
- The net cost of running the service for 2022/23 is budgeted as £229,000
- The average cost per passenger is currently twice that of other subsidised bus services but the fares have recently been increased and the number of passengers is steadily increasing, which then means that the cost per head is coming down
- It is to be expected that there would be increased costs associated with such a flexible bus service
- Further funding to support the extended pilot was applied for through the Bus Service Improvement Plan but the bid was unsuccessful
- A pre-booking element has been introduced that enables people to plan more complex journeys, such as timing a YorBus journey to enable them to catch a specific train
- The service has generated new bus users and so does not appear to be in competition with existing bus services. The objective is to be complementary and not in competition.

There followed a discussion, the key points of which are as summarised below:

- The service appears to be expensive, accepting that it is still in a pilot phase. The increased costs associated with providing such a flexible service need to be balanced against the access that this gives people to transport in a rural area with relatively few bus services
- The report indicates that each journey costs around £16 to £17 per person. There are questions as to whether this is sustainable and whether it provides value for money. The funding could be used on other travel schemes to greater effect

- There is clearly a need to drive down costs, as the average costs per person for a subsidised bus services is around £5, with more rural, fixed timetable services running at around £8 to £12 per person
- Not everyone who lives in a rural area has access to a car and so it is important that this pilot and others are pursued and properly evaluated to see what options there are for sustainable rural bus services
- The funding for the pilot could be used to support existing timetabled services in rural areas
- The pilot is innovative but concerns expressed that it was not practicable
- Could more effort be put into promoting car sharing the supporting villages in setting up care share schemes
- Concerns that the service may be undermining some of the existing bus services.

The Chair summed up and thanked Andrew and Emma for attending and answering questions. He noted that the pilot was innovative and it was the right thing to do to continue with it and fully test the operating model. He hoped, however, that the costs could be driven down further over time.

Resolved –

- a) A further update to be provided in 12 months' time.

23 Youth Council - verbal update - Report of the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services, NYCC

Considered -

A verbal update by Chloe Thwaites, Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Officer, Children and Young People's Services, North Yorkshire County Council.

Chloe Thwaites was joined by a representative of the Youth Council. Both joined the meeting remotely using MS Teams.

Some of the key points from the update and subsequent discussion are as summarised below:

- Mental health and wellbeing remains a key issue of concern for the Youth Council. There is interest in understanding what support is available in schools and whether this is sufficient to meet needs
- Would like to see greater diversity of books in libraries and include titles that reflect the experiences of young people today
- The Youth Council is focussed upon finding solutions, rather than simply flagging issues

or concerns

- It is important that young people are actively engaged in their local community and that they help shape the services and provision that they use
- There is an interest amongst young people in discussing politics at school but often there is not space on the curriculum to do so
- The Youth Council is looking to develop separate North Craven and Skipton Youth Councils, in recognition that the Youth Council in Craven has tended to be dominated by issues relevant to Skipton residents
- The lack of public transport remains an issue of concern for many young people as they cannot easily access school or work or engage in social activities without relying on someone who has access to a car.

The Chair thanked Chloe Thwaites and the representative from the Youth Council for attending the meeting.

Resolved –

- a) That the Youth Council be invited to the next meeting of the committee and that their item be moved up the agenda.

24 Notice of Motion - County Councillor Andy Brown

Considered -

A motion that had been proposed by County Councillor Andy Brown and seconded by County Councillor David Noland.

County Councillor Andy Brown requested that, in view of the time, that the Motion be deferred to the next meeting of the committee.

Resolved -

There was unanimous agreement that this be done.

25 Committee work programme - Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services)

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.

Resolved –

- a) That members raise any issues that could be included in the committee work programme with Daniel Harry.

26 Regulation of and support for home schooling - briefing note for information only - Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services, NYCC

This briefing note was for information only and so not discussed at the meeting.

27 Traffic safety and calming measures on Sutton Lane - briefing note for information only - Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services, NYCC

This briefing note was for information only and so not discussed at the meeting.

28 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 1.45 pm.