

North Yorkshire Council

Thirsk and Malton Area Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 31 March 2023 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Nigel Knapton in the Chair and Councillors Janet Sanderson, Greg White, Joy Andrews, Alyson Baker, Sam Cross, Michelle Donohue-Moncrieff, George Jabbour and Malcolm Taylor.

Members attending remotely: County Councillors Gareth Dadd and Steve Mason

Other Members: County Councillor Carl Les

Officers present: Barry Khan and Paddy Chandler

Other Attendees: There were three members of the public and press present.

Apologies: Councillors Caroline Goodrick, Keane Duncan, Lindsay Burr MBE, Dave Whitfield and Annabel Wilkinson

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd February 2023

County Councillor Janet Sanderson noted that, in respect of minute no. 24 – relating to the question on a timeline for the development of a new school at Norton – she was not the Executive Member with portfolio for Schools and Education, as her portfolio covers Children and Families including inclusion, fostering and adoption, children's social care, safeguarding and prevention

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the amendment detailed above.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made, at the meeting.

3 Public Questions or Statements

Question from Mike Hepworth, Filey (delivered at the meeting by Councillor Marilyn Anthony of Filey Town Council

Re: Adequate Internet Connection along Filey Seafront.

"I own a holiday rental property on Filey seafront and I have struggled to obtain an adequate internet connection for the past 5 years. My initial approach was via Plusnet and Openreach only to be met with indifference, time-wasting and obfuscation at every step of the way. Eventually I had to resort to a self-funded Wi-Fi connection from a nearby building. It is very basic (2mb) and will only support internet surfing and emailing. Streaming and connection to

a smart TV is out of the question.

Recently it has been brought to my notice that my section of Filey seafront has not been included in the NYNET and Openreach Superfast contract. The reasoning for this is not entirely opaque, although I have a strong suspicion that cost is a factor. Additionally, I have learned that in the contract Openreach has been allowed to 'claim' properties that they supply. In other-words they can reject properties that might cost in excess of their connection cost limit of £300 per household. This certainly does not rest easily with the Government's Universal Service Agreement that places the free connection limit at £3,400.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that, according to 'Statistica', Openreach made profits of £357million in the last quarter of 2021/22!

I am very worried that my property and probably others that are close by, are omitted from the roll out of a fibre connection and as a result, it is highly unlikely to have this facility available to them for the foreseeable future. It is not as if my property is a remote farmhouse in the middle of nowhere. It is an integral part of an urban town.

So, my question is, why is it not a high priority to install a fibre network to all the properties in this crucial part of a town that depends on the income from visitors who have high expectations of the services provided when they come on holiday? The sun does not shine all the time!

I am sorry that I am unable to attend the meeting in person but I would be happy to speak to any attendee about this issue. Cllr. Anthony will be able to give you my contact details."

It was stated that a response to the issues raised had been requested from the relevant County Council officers, and this would be provided directly in due course.

County Councillor Greg White stated that until recently he had been the Executive Member whose portfolio covered this matter. He was aware of the situation outlined and noted that NYNET were providing the necessary infrastructure via a contract with BT and they determined how to maximise the number of properties connected through the funding available. Currently this left some properties without the Superfast Broadband availability. Every effort was being made to accommodate these properties, and additional funding was being made available via central Government to try different connection methods to enable this to happen. In terms of the specific case raised in the public question he was aware that there were additional complications in respect of this matter. He stated that he would liaise with the questioner and the local Member to consider this issue further. The local Member stated that he had been in contact with the questioner regarding this matter and recognised that it required addressing for his business to operate effectively.

It was stated that the matter would be followed up and information on how this was to be addressed would be provided to the questioner.

Members thanked Mr Hepworth for his question.

4 Stronger Communities Update - Report of the Stronger Communities Delivery Managers

Considered

The report of Stronger Communities Delivery Managers for the Constituency area, presented by Paddy Chandler, Stronger Communities Delivery Manager for Ryedale and North York Moors. He highlighted the following key points:

- The development of Community Support Officers (CSOs), the challenges faced and their response, including a response to central Government initiatives. It was noted that grant funding for CSOs was now ending and consideration would be given to how they should be resourced, going forward.
- Two major events have been held to determine the future direction of CSOs with consideration given to the development of a Community Advisor Organisation that would assist with community resilience and social representation. A grant was available for the development of this initiative. CSOs, community groups and key service providers are well known in the area, and to each other, so will collaborate to build resilience.
- Funding from other sources had helped provide initiatives in a number of areas, assisting Stronger Communities to deliver a number of partnership schemes.
- A school holidays activities and food programme was operated with the assistance of a number of partners, including CYPS and Stronger Communities.
- Details of the assistance provided through the Household Support Fund was outlined. Stronger Communities worked with local Councils to identify those eligible and provide vouchers to assist with their needs.
- Assistance has been provided to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with support offered to the various community groups.
- Digital Inclusion had progressed significantly, with Community Champions from both the Local Authorities and community sector providing support for local communities. Local libraries and an IT budget had enabled the further delivery of this initiative, known as Reboot North Yorkshire.
- Research into food insecurity in the North Yorkshire and City of York areas has been taking place with results expected shortly. This would provide opportunities for evidence based interventions and a variety of food projects.
- Work continued with health and mental health partners to provide community services that assist with Community Mental Health information and service provision. Significant work had been taking place to transform community mental health services with over £2m invested. Grants from CYPS had also been utilised to support speech and language services for young people.
- Details of the community projects supported and the external funding secured to build community capacity, were outlined.
- Support was provided to the LGR “Let’s Talk” campaign alongside colleagues from District and Borough Councils, with future priorities discussed.
- Work had been undertaken alongside Age UK in Filey to deliver the “Stay Healthy, Independent and Connected” project. Other areas had utilised different partners to deliver this project.
- Ryedale Community Connect had been developed as a community “one-stop shop” hub in local towns, which would continue, going forward.
- The introduction of the new Authority would provide a platform for a number of new opportunities.

A discussion of the report was undertaken and the following issues were raised:

- A Member raised concerns regarding the current cost of living crisis and the effect that could have on vulnerable people, particularly in terms of a suicide risk, who were unable to access the services they required because of a lack of funding invested into providing these. In response it was acknowledged that, despite the Community Health transformation, more needed to be done, and every effort was being made to address this. The service was looking to develop a community role to provide an initial point of contact in terms of suicide prevention, and the development of a strategy around prevention.

County Councillors Carl Les and Janet Sanderson declared non-disclosable, non-pecuniary interest with regards to their involvement as Trustees of the North Yorkshire Union responsible for managing resources that are provided to the Authority.

- A Member asked whether there were any areas of the Constituency that were not currently covered by CSOs, and if so, whether any additional resources were to be made available. In response it was noted that CSOs assisted with the delivery of community services throughout the Constituency area, even in areas where they were not physically located.

Resolved

That Paddy Chandler be thanked for the report the contents of which be noted.

5 Services in local towns and villages - Discussion

County Councillor George Jabbour raised concerns in relation to the closure of services in Helmsley, particularly Post Office services. He stated that Helmsley Post office had been closed a number of months previously with very little notice. The service was moved to be delivered from the Costcutter shop but was again halted with little notice when the shop closed. Discussions were held with the Post Office, the local MP and Helmsley Town Council in respect of providing this essential service for the town. On several occasions the Post Office promised that services were to be re-introduced within a short time frame, but nothing materialised. As a result a temporary solution was found, with a mobile Post Office introduced to operate three days per week. After a few weeks the Post Office requested that the mobile unit be ceased as they were working on a permanent, full-time solution, however, this was yet to take place, leaving the town with no Post Office services. As a result Councillor Jabbour organised a petition and there was coverage of the issue in the press and local television. Currently there was still no Post Office services in the town, and no indication from the Post Office as to when these would be put in place.

Members outlined the following:

- Members agreed that a representative of the Post Office should be invited to the next meeting of the ACC to discuss the current situation in Helmsley.
- Members outlined anecdotal evidence in relation to issues they had faced with the provision of local services, including banks and the Post Office, in their Electoral Divisions. It was noted that these issues had been the focus of a scrutiny review in 2017 and it was considered that now would be an appropriate time for scrutiny to revisit this. It was emphasised that the closure of such facilities enhanced loneliness and isolation in local communities.
- Members emphasised the need for physical facilities to be retained to assist those who were not comfortable with the technological solutions that were now being promoted. It was also noted that some services could not be undertaken online.
- It was considered that the Post Office was a community service that was essential for the viability of local communities.
- The disappearance of ATMs from local areas, particularly rural areas, was also raised as a concern.

Resolved

- (i) That representatives of the Post Office be invited to the next meeting of the ACC to discuss the situation at Helmsley
- (ii) That the issues raised during the discussion of this item be referred to scrutiny to determine whether a further review should be undertaken.

6 Rural policing update - Report of North Yorkshire Police

PCSOs Andy Birkinshaw and Kimberley Laws provided a written update on rural policing services in the Constituency area.

Members welcomed the report but noted the lack of recognition of the east of the Constituency area, particularly around Hunmanby and Filey, and requested that their inclusion in future reports be fed back to those involved in compiling the report. It was felt particularly important at a time when the Council was about to become a Unitary, and some communities were worried about losing their identity. It was stated that this would be fed back to ensure that details for the whole Constituency area were provided in future.

Resolved

That the report be noted and the issue raised be fed back, accordingly.

7 Work Programme

Considered

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) providing a Work Programme for Members to consider, develop and adapt.

The following issues were suggested as additions to the Work Programme, to be considered at subsequent meetings:

- The provision of electric vehicle charging points particularly in areas of the Constituency that attract a large amount of visitors during the year. It was noted that an overarching report was in the process of being submitted to the Executive, which would consider a range of issues being implemented to address climate and carbon issues. This would include the provision of electric vehicle charging points in all areas. It was suggested, therefore, that the results of this report be taken account of before further reports were requested for the ACC.
- A report on the future development of the ACCs, following LGR, with consideration given to their powers and responsibilities.

Resolved

That the Work Programme be noted and the issues highlighted be included in the Programme and considered at subsequent meetings of the ACC in line with what was stated.

8 Next meeting

Resolved

That the next scheduled ordinary meeting of the Area Constituency Committee would take place on Friday 16 June 2023 at 2pm at a venue to be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 11.15am.