

North Yorkshire Council

Thirsk and Malton Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Friday, 22 March, 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Nigel Knapton in the Chair plus Councillors Lindsay Burr MBE, Sam Cross (virtual), Gareth Dadd, Michelle Donohue-Moncreeff, Caroline Goodrick, George Jabbour, Steve Mason, Dan Sladden and Malcolm Taylor.

Officers present: Matt George, Nicki Lishman, Keisha Moore and Amy Thomas

Apologies: Councillors Joy Andrews, Alyson Baker, Janet Sanderson and Annabel Wilkinson

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

37 Welcome by the Chair - introductions and updates

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed there were no updates to provide.

38 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2023

Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Thirsk and Malton Area Constituency Committee held on 1 December 2023, having been printed and circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

39 Apologies and declarations of interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joy Andrews, Alyson Baker, Janet Sanderson and Annabel Wilkinson.

Councillors Lindsay Burr, George Jabbour and Steve Mason declared a non-pecuniary, non-prejudicial interest in Item 6 as they had been involved with the project.

Councillor Gareth Dadd declared a non-pecuniary, non-prejudicial interest in Item 10 as this would be brought to the Executive in the near future.

40 Public questions or statements

There were two questions from members of the public.

Question from Andrew Loftus

In your last council meeting you were told that 94% of North Yorkshire was connected to Superfast Broadband.

I live in Sessay a village south of Thirsk with approximately 500 residents. Both my wife and I work from home and rely on a good internet connection to work. We also run a holiday let from our premises. We don't have Superfast Broadband and our internet connection

regularly drops and has failed on at least 4 occasions this year. When this occurs we are unable to work and we receive numerous complaints from our guests.

We have been told recently that only a small proportion of the village will be offered a full fibre connection in what is described as Phase 3. Our house and my neighbour John's who is with me today, are not included in phase 3

We are being told we will be offered as part of Phase 4, a fixed Wireless Access solution being offered by North Yorkshire County Council and their partner Quickline Communications Ltd. This solution has been described on your partner's Quickline Communication Ltd website as for "hard to reach areas" and may be limited if there are any obstructions as it is a line of site technology.

3 years ago Sessay school was connected to a fibre cable that was laid through the village and past our houses. At the same time "nodes" used to connect houses to a fibre connection were installed on telephone poles outside our houses.

When this proposal was approved why did North Yorkshire County council not suggest that the village infrastructure was upgraded to fibre by either using this cable or another cable laid at the same time? Why are we being treated unfairly and being offered what we consider to be an inferior solution, when we live on the same road as other houses being offered a full fibre connection.

Response from Transformation

The Superfast programme has made significant improvements and the programme maximises reach wherever it is possible. However, it is a complex process with multiple factors at play which can cause limitations. These limitations may be due to the topography of the land, the ownership and availability of the land and assets and also the funding streams. While it is clearly frustrating to see build nearby that cannot be accessed, the school infrastructure that is mentioned was limited to the public sector buildings under the rural schools programme and cannot legally be used for residential.

We do understand that there is more to do, and the next steps for extending gigabit capable broadband are underway with the BDUK led Project Gigabit. North Yorkshire is in 'lot 31' for this project and Sessay is in the initial scope of this. This is due for procurement award in April - June this year, after which we will know whether your premises has been chosen for installation. The best option at the moment is the Fixed Wireless Access option.

Project Gigabit do publish quarterly updates on their website which may be of interest. The latest one is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-gigabit-progress-update-december-2023>. You can see here that this is targeted intervention for properties that are hard to reach such as those classified as rural and those with access to only sub-superfast connections.

Supplementary question/statement from Andrew Loftus

Whilst I appreciate the fibre cable laid for the village school can't be used, why wasn't the village infrastructure updated when this cable was laid eg by laying another cable. Also why were fibre nodes installed throughout the village at the same time the school cable was laid. These nodes support fibre connectivity to all the houses in the village.

We live on the same road as houses being offered full fibre. A fibre cable and conduit that could be used for additional fibre cables is within metres of our boundary wall. A telegraph pole with a node for fibre connection is within 5-10 metres of our property.

We don't want your proposed fixed wireless solution which makes no sense, is not suitable for property ie we are surrounded by trees etc. Fixed wireless will only be available through one provider. How is a fair offering when they can set the price they want for the service with no other competitors? Why are we being offered an inferior solution to our neighbours

living on the same road as us?

The Rt Hon Kevin Hollinrake suggested a meeting be held in Sessay with all parties involved for Phase 4, to consider this issue.

Question from Sue Cowan

As Social Exclusion for the elderly due to lack of transport is now strongly highlighted in all transport planning services, can I ask what is being done to get the desperately needed town bus service in Filey replaced and eliminate the biggest cause of social exclusion and loss of independence for the elderly residents of Filey. Some of whom are over 90 and can't afford taxis just wanting to be independent. 3 days a week would suffice. The current idea of volunteer car drivers will not work as many of them have walking implements and other accessories.

Response from Integrated Passenger Transport

Filey Town Service was operated on a wholly commercial basis by Olympic Coaches. The service ended in May 2023 when the owner of Olympic Coaches retired. The Council looked for another bus company to take over the route but there was no interest and no bids were received to run a replacement service.

Filey is still served by Service 12 (East Yorkshire Buses) operating daily between Scarborough – Filey – Bridlington, and Service 555 (Shoreline Suncruiser Buses) operating hourly between Filey and Scarborough. Scarborough Dial-a-Ride will also provide wheelchair accessible journeys for longer distance health appointments.

Integrated Passenger Transport is currently investigating the feasibility of a volunteer car scheme in the Filey area to support the current long distance health appointment journeys offered by Scarborough Dial-a-Ride. Volunteer car schemes provide pre-booked door to door transport to suit individual needs and can be used for short local journeys as well as longer trips. They are very flexible, accommodating different passengers and are often used for hospital appointments, shopping and leisure.

Following further discussion on the issue, it was suggested by Kevin Hollinrake and agreed that a meeting would be arranged with all interested parties to consider the matter further.

41 MP - Question Time

The Rt Hon Kevin Hollinrake MP joined the meeting virtually and highlighted the following:

- Sub Postmasters – If Councillors knew of any affected by the Horizon scandal, please refer them to Mr Hollinrake.
- Issues for farmers – Facing difficulties due to prices, the weather, sustainability and stewardship schemes which may impact food production and possible changes to new incentives within the Environmental Land Management Schemes.
- Hospitality – Still facing higher costs due to energy prices, National Living Wage and other higher costs. The hospitality, retail and leisure relief has been extended for another year.
- Indications of potential improvements in the economy
- A decision on the dualling of the A64 Hopgrove – Barton Hill remains due this year. The case is being made to the Transport Minister, despite the low cost/benefit ratio due to the rural nature of the area.
- Mr Hollinrake understood the demands on local councils such as the availability of resources for planning officers, the First Homes Policy which he would like the Council to adopt, second homes causing rises in Council Tax.
- Mayoral elections and other national priorities

A discussion followed, with the key points summarised below:

- Members discussed the duelling of the A64 including the possibility of duelling the length of the A64 from York to Scarborough. Discussion included the economic impacts of the issues with the A64 on local businesses and on attracting new business to the area.
- Members raised concerns regarding the use of agricultural land for solar farms, which may impact on food security.
- The development of the new Local Plan and the sustainability of new build houses.
- The apparent lack of progress on the RAF Linton-on-Ouse development and the impact of the resignation of the Defence Minister.

The Chair, Councillor Nigel Knapton, thanked the Rt Hon Kevin Hollinrake MP for attending the meeting.

42 Malton - Helmsley (via Hovingham and Kirkbymoorside) Active Travel Route Development

Considered – report by Karl Battersby, Corporate Director – Environment.

The Senior Transport Officer explained the detail of the proposal, which sought Members' endorsement to spend £22,157 of the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund on the development of the Malton to Helmsley (via Hovingham and Kirkbymoorside) Active Travel Route.

The officer explained that the funds were to be used to assess the feasibility and fundability of the proposal. The outcome of the assessment would provide potential route options, high level concept designs and an indicative delivery programme.

There followed a discussion of the project, with the key points being the social value of such schemes, collaboration with partners, pipeline of connection across the constituency, nature corridors, costs and access to central government funding, which is often offered on a tight timescale. Members were concerned with the costs of such schemes and the impact on Council budgets. The officer explained that the focus would be on external funding sources.

Resolved

That the proposal to spend £22,157 of the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund on the development of the Malton to Helmsley (via Hovingham and Kirkbymoorside) Active Travel Route be endorsed.

Voting record

Unanimous.

Councillor Sam Cross left the meeting at 11.45am.

43 Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund for the Area Constituency Committees

Considered – report of the Corporate Director (Community Development)

Following the agreement of the Committee to progress the Malton to Helmsley Active Travel Route, the Economic Development Service Manager advised Members that this left £27,843 of the 2023/24 fund unallocated. This would be carried forward to the 2024/25 fund, giving a total of £77,843.

Details of the suggested schemes were outlined in the report, together with a recommendation of their viability.

Members considered the merits of each scheme and supported the progression of Projects A and B to Project Scoping phase. Full scoping reports on both schemes will be shared with Members at a future meeting for a decision on whether or not to endorse further work.

Following discussion, it was agreed to request a report on Project C - repair of Thirsk Market Place footpaths to be brought to the September meeting of the Committee.

Kevin Hollinrake's suggestion that a meeting be arranged to consider Project D - Thirsk and Filey town bus services had a bearing on consideration of this project and Members agreed to defer a decision.

Resolved

- i) The following recommendations were agreed:

Proposed project	Recommendation (voting record)
Crayke to Easingwold cycle path	To be progressed (unanimous)
Cycle path connecting Hunmanby and Filey	To be progressed (unanimous)
Repair of Thirsk Market Place footpaths	A report to be brought to the September meeting of the Committee (unanimous)
Thirsk and Filey town buses	Recommendation to be deferred pending the outcome of a proposed meeting with the Constituency MP (unanimous)

- ii) Councillors to feedback any potential schemes to continue to build the longlist of ideas for consideration under the 2024/25 budget.

44 Appointments to Outside Bodies

Considered - report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services).

The Chair introduced the report and advised the following vacant positions to be appointed by the Committee.

- Ratify an appointment to the Heber Trust
- 4 appointments to the Thirsk and Sowerby Swimming Baths Charity
- 1 appointment to the Vale of Pickering Internal Drainage Board

Resolved

That the following nominations be agreed:

- i) The appointment of Jonathan Baker to the Heber Trust
- ii) The appointment of Councillor Alyson Baker, Councillor Nigel Knapton and Catherine Baker to the Thirsk and Sowerby Swimming Baths Charity
- iii) The appointment to the Vale of Pickering Internal Drainage Board to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

45 Work programme

Members considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) which contained the Committee's current work programme for the remainder of the municipal year (2023/24).

Resolved

- That the work programme for the remainder of 2023/24 be noted.
- That reports on the "Provision of sports and leisure services in the Ryedale district" and the Repair of Thirsk Market Place footpaths" be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

46 Schools, educational achievement and finance report - for information only

Report of the Assistant Director – Education and Skills, Assistant Director – Strategic Resources and Assistant Director - Inclusion circulated for information.

Members raised several questions with the Strategic Planning Officer in (remote) attendance at the meeting.

The questions and discussion considered several matters including:

- Links with the development of the Local Plan regarding housing developments etc. and the projected figures of families in the service villages
- The forecasting models used and projected numbers of students and parental preferences
- The effects of projections on financing

Members asked a specific question on the impacts of school closures on school financing and sparsity funding and it was agreed to provide a written response to be circulated to all members of the Committee.

The response was issued to Councillors on 4 April 2024, as follows:

The closure of a small primary school means that the lump sum/premises-related funding factor are not required for the closing school's individual budget share. Pupil-related funding factors (age-weighted pupil unit funding + other pupil-led funding) effectively follow the individual pupil to the receiving school. Lump sum funding is £134,400 per primary school. In that sense, North Yorkshire would lose some funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to reflect the lump sum for the closing school being no longer required to be funded. However, a school closure also means that school funding is not required to meet the premises-related expenditure and liabilities (e.g. maintenance etc) of the building that closed. It is also case-specific as to how the loss of funding associated with one school closure compares with the economies of scale in schools that receive any pupils from a closing school (e.g. through consolidated leadership arrangements, classroom arrangements etc).

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

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting concluded at 12.23 pm.