

North Yorkshire Council

Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 18th March, 2024 commencing at 10.00 am at Mercury House, Station Road, Richmond.

Councillor Yvonne Peacock in the Chair. plus Councillors Caroline Dickinson, Kevin Foster, Bryn Griffiths, Carl Les, Stuart Parsons, Karin Sedgwick, Steve Watson, David Webster, John Weighell OBE and Annabel Wilkinson.

In attendance: Lisa Pope – Deputy Place Director, North Yorkshire, NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Board.

Officers present: Sarah Holbird, Democratic Services Officer.

Other Attendees: 7 members of the public.

Apologies: Councillors David Hugill, Heather Moorhouse, Angus Thompson and Peter Wilkinson.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

73 Apologies for Absence

Apologies noted (see above).

74 Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 18 December 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 18 December 2023 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

75 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

76 Public Participation

Richmond Town Council submitted the following public question/statement:-

In September 2023 I tabled a question, regarding the Public Space Protection Order put in place by Richmondshire District Council in April 2021 to combat anti-social behaviour at Richmond Falls and the Batts area of Richmond.

The current order lapses at the end of March 2024 and it is with concern that we have received a briefing note from a Richmondshire Police Inspector that there is no intention by North Yorkshire Council to undertake a consultation for variation or extension in relation to the PSPO.

The question I submitted in September 2023 specifically detailed the need for the PSPO to be renewed as it gives Police and council officers powers to move groups on, fine them for unruly behaviour and prevent certain activities such as littering, lighting a fire or barbecue

so it is vital that this PSPO is renewed in April 2024.

Failure to renew the PSPO will take away from the Police a vital tool to act to control behaviour and will be greeted with dismay by residents of the town, in particular those involved in the tourism industry who received many negative comments about the disgraceful gatherings fuelled by social media comments to treat the Falls area as the 'Ibiza of the north'. Damage to the grass area at the Batts, wilful depositing of litter, faeces and the associated products of anti-social nitrous oxide inhalation had a profound negative impact on this beautiful area of Richmond during Bank Holiday and warm weather events. Indeed, the impacts spread into the town centre itself with assaults on shopkeepers and dangerous driving in the Market area of the town.

Richmond Town Council would ask that North Yorkshire Council renews the PSPO in order that the Police can have the powers and the confidence to uphold public order in the designated area and that this is done in time to ensure no lapse in the protection afforded by this legal instrument. This request has the full support of North Yorkshire Police Richmondshire Division as can be seen from this statement:

'The PSPO is an excellent tool to prevent issues occurring and without it, there will be little Police Officers can do until it is too late – because entering the Falls and river is dangerous. Without the PSPO power available, I am convinced there will be an increase in issues in the area during the Summer months which, at its worst, could lead to serious injury or fatality when people are under the influence of alcohol and we are unable to prevent them from congregating there.'

Odette Robson, Head of Community Safety and CCTV provided the following response which was read out at the meeting:

We have had a couple of meetings with North Yorkshire Police on this matter. Only one this week (w/c 11 March), where we met with other services within NYC and Fire and Rescue to ensure there is a robust, sustainable plan in place. With regards to the PSPO, no decision has been made and we have a meeting next week (w/c 18 March) with NYC legal advisor and Assistant Chief Executive, Rachel Joyce to consider the different options and agree the next course of action.

From the meeting this week there continues to be a continuing commitment to community safety within the local area. An update will be provided following our next meeting on the 20th March.

Save our Swale Community Group submitted the following public question/statement:-

As a community group of volunteers, Save our Swale (SOS) was founded in July 2023 with the aim of ensuring the River Swale is clean and healthy for wildlife and recreation; to hold polluters to account and to influence policy and legislation to protect our river.

For the last 35 years Yorkshire Water (YW) has failed to invest in the infrastructure needed to keep untreated sewerage and harmful chemicals out of our rivers. Over that same period, YW has taken out billions of pounds in loans to pay excessive dividends to its shareholders, the repayments of which account for around 20% of the cost of our water and sewerage bills. In the last 10 years, YW's corporate shareholders received £1.2 billion in dividends. The payment of these dividends has massively reduced available money to fund much needed investment in infrastructure. As of 2022/23 YW carried a debt of £6.1 billion. At privatisation in 1989, there was no debt.

Save our Swale want to know how North Yorkshire Council intend to hold YW to account and ensure that profiting from pollution ends?

Callum McKeon, Assistant Director of Regulatory Services, Registration, Bereavement,

Coroners Services provided the following response which was read out at the meeting:

The responsibility for management and regulation of river water quality and the performance of private water companies sits with the Environment Agency and Ofwat. Whilst we do not have direct responsibility for the regulation of river water or water companies North Yorkshire Council will always take a proactive approach in seeking to address issues relating to the quality of our natural environment and a good example of this is the task force which NYC pulled together to discuss the poor water quality in Scarborough South Bay. NYC will continue to work closely with key partners such as the Environment Agency and as the concerns regarding investment and ensuring water quality fall directly within their remit we will ensure that the issues that have been raised by Save our Swale will be passed through to them for their consideration and further comment.

Mr Richard Lewis of Low Row submitted the following public question/statement:-

Concerns relating to the BT Digital Phone line roll out in Upper Dales Areas

My name is Rik Lewis and I am a resident in the village of Low Row, Upper Swaledale. I have been involved in the area as a past Parish Councillor, and I am currently one of the area leads for the Melbecks Civil Emergency plan and volunteer group. As a resident, and also as a spokesperson for the area, I can say we have great concerns in relation to the BT/Openreach Digital Changeover. We realise that the Digital rollout is coming, and we fully understand the practical and financial reasons that BT wishes to pursue it. We also realise that we cannot stop it.

However, we feel, both as residents and as the Melbecks Civil Emergency Group amongst others, that the Upper Yorkshire Dales are being adversely affected by the rollout. This is due to a lack of suitable information from BT/Openreach, their understanding of the topography of the dales, the situation relating to mobile phone coverage in the area, and general guidance and lack of practical support from them.

Those who know the areas of the upper dales will know that many residents live in remote locations, and access to a reliable form of instant communication is as basic an essential requirement today as electricity and water. The area has an above average population of people in the upper age brackets, and the issues of health, isolation and rural loneliness play an increasing problem in everyday life. Properties can be hard to find and hard to reach, and they are easily cut off in adverse weather.

The telephone plays a critical part in maintaining everyday life and protecting our vulnerable people. The upper dales are not towns and cities, where help can be obtained simply by knocking on a neighbour's door if the phone lines are down. For example, my nearest neighbour is a quarter of a mile away and is an extremely vulnerable person. Currently, BT/Openreach tell us that when the digital system fails, just use your mobile phone.

Many people in the upper dales don't even possess mobile phones, and many of those that do, do little else than make a simple phone call if they can find a mobile coverage spot. So, when the digital network goes down, mobiles are certainly not 'Smart' phones to many people in the upper dales area. Age, vulnerability and remoteness should not exclude people from being able to utilise and benefit from digital technology, simply because BT/Openreach are not doing enough to support and equip rural and remote areas.

So, what's the difference between a phone connected to the current 'copper wired' system and the new digital phone network?

Quite simply, in the event of a power cut the digital network phones stop working immediately. The old copper wired or 'hard wired' phones carry on working. This is because a digital phone operates in conjunction with your wireless router, and as soon as power to the router is lost, your internet and phone connection go with it.

So, imagine this; Currently, if power is lost people can call neighbours and friends to find out if this is a local issue and to gain help or offer assistance. This is simply because the power supply to the phone network is largely independent of the main electricity networks; People can also contact their power company to report a failure, or gain information as to how long a power outage is likely to last; and vitally, the Emergency Volunteer Group has time to activate the civil emergency plan. Medical emergency devices such as lanyards continue to work, and we can easily check on our vulnerable people.

If the digital phone network goes down due to a power outage, none of what I've just said is immediately possible. People are in the dark. They are confused as they have no idea if what has happened is just at their property, whether the situation is widespread, or how to obtain information or help. No one has any idea how long the situation will last for.

During Storm Arwen, many parts of the upper dales were without power for a week in deep snow, ice and the most bitter of weather conditions. No heating, or cooking facilities, no lighting, no water, and in some cases no sewerage facilities. Without significant input from BT/Openreach to ensure basic communication lines, this situation could be even worse in the future.

BT/Openreach tell us that this situation is not critical at all, as it will not affect mobile phones or mobile signal, and for most areas of the country they are correct, but not in the dales. In many dales areas mobile phone signal does not exist, or is at the least, sporadic and may rely on batteries or generator back-ups at a mobile phone mast to continue operation for a short period. As I have already stated, many of our elderly or vulnerable residents do not possess mobile phones, or if they do there is no mobile coverage in many areas, or it is erratic to say the least. Many people still do not understand the technology. Many people do not know how they can be helped.

Our Emergency Volunteer Group now have 2-way radios and satellite hubs for use in the field (our thanks to Cllr Peacock & Callum McKeon for this) which can be utilised in the event of emergency. But if power is suddenly lost, they will not know that an emergency has been declared until some time had passed, and the Community Emergency plan kicks in by its defaults. Many of the properties in the dales are holiday homes, and visitors to the area will have no knowledge of how to contact anyone, or where to seek help or assistance.

BT/Openreach say help is available to vulnerable and at-risk residents but this is only partially accurate. They say that UPS back-up systems are available to at risk groups, but they have made this a 'chicken and egg' situation. For information, a UPS (Uninterruptable Power Source or Battery Back-Up System), (which incidentally are not expensive) immediately restore power to the digital router at times of a power cut and therefore telephone and internet facilities will continue to work for an additional period of time. This can be for between 1 and 24hrs. Long enough to get help or assistance.

In a recent call to BT/Openreach Technical, (which was the only department I could get through to), the conversation went like this; I asked about getting the UPS backup. "No problem," came the reply, "When the power goes off, call us and if you are at risk or vulnerable, we'll get a UPS out to you". "How can I call you when my digital phone won't work?" "Simple, call us on your mobile!" "But I don't get a mobile signal where I live" "Hmm, well in that case we can't help you" was the reply.

This is simply not good enough. BT/Openreach have a duty to help protect their vulnerable and at-risk customers. The information they give out in their public emails is either too small in print to read, so far down the paraphernalia to reach that most people don't ever see it, or so technical in its format that people just don't understand it. Even if you are able to comprehend what is available, it is nearly impossible to discuss it with anyone at BT/Openreach Customer Services or management during normal times, let alone in an emergency situation.

What do we as rural and isolated communities need??

We need our councillors to liaise with BT/Openreach in order to bring about a practical and technical resolution for residents in the upper Yorkshire Dales areas. We need BT representatives to come to the area and explain to people how the system works and how they can be helped. We need UPS battery backup systems for all of our Emergency Volunteers and our vulnerable and at-risk persons BEFORE they are changed over to the digital system, not after.

Upper dales residents general safety, welfare, and potentially their lives are at risk here, and we need urgent clarification and assistance on these matters as soon as possible. We also need local representation at these meetings as well. We urge Council to pursue this as a matter of urgency, and I thank Council for taking the time to listen to these important issues.

Cath Ritchie, Business Relationship Manager, Transformation provided the following response which was read out at the meeting:-

Background

BT has taken the decision to retire its Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) by December 2025 and this means other providers that use BT's network must follow the same timescale. Other companies with their own networks such as Virgin Media plan to follow a similar timescale.

This means that in the future, landline calls will be delivered over digital technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) which uses a broadband connection. The change will affect all devices that rely on a phone line. This includes critical equipment like telecare and fire alarms.

The migration is underway, and customers are being switched. The responsibility for communicating with residents is with the communications providers. There are many different communication providers, and they are required to work with people to keep them safe and there is an expectation that they have provision for people who could be made vulnerable by the switch. This can be anyone who is reliant on their landline, for example, telecare users, those without a mobile signal or without a mobile phone, those who are at risk of power cuts (as the new digital lines do not carry power).

This is an industry led process which is backed by the government but there has been no national guidance of communications to date. As the telecommunications sector regulator, OfCom, is responsible for ensuring that service providers meet their obligations to consumers. This includes ensuring that customers are not subject to 'undue disruption' and are protected from harm during the migration process. More information is available here [Moving landline phones to digital technology: what you need to know - Ofcom](#)

PTSN Charter

Due to concerns raised about early migrations of customers, in December 2023, the PTSN Charter was agreed. The Public Switched Telephone Network charter sets out a voluntary agreement between the government and communication providers to protect vulnerable people when they are moved onto digital services.

For the vast majority of consumers, this change will cause little if any disruption. However, for some, particularly those more vulnerable and with additional needs, sufficient support needs to be in place to support their migration. This charter sets out further steps which industry will take to protect vulnerable consumers through the transition. [Public Switched Telephone Network charter - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) This was updated in February 2024.

The Communications Providers that have signed up have committed to the following:

1. We will **not undertake any non-voluntary migrations** to digital landlines, until we have full confidence that we are taking all possible steps to protect vulnerable people through the migration process.
2. **No telecare users will be migrated to digital landline services without us**, the customer, or the telecare company confirming that they have **a compatible and functioning telecare solution in place**.
3. Where battery back-up solutions are provided, we will **work to provide solutions that go beyond the Ofcom minimum of 1 hour of continued, uninterrupted access to emergency services** in the event of a power outage.
4. We will collectively work with Ofcom and Government to create a **shared definition of 'vulnerable' customer groups that require greater support**, specific to the digital landline migration.
5. **We will conduct additional checks on customers who have already been non-voluntarily migrated to ensure they do not have telecare devices we were unaware of**, and if they do, ensure suitable support is provided.

List of signatories to date

- BT
- Virgin Media O2
- Sky
- TalkTalk
- Vodafone
- Shell Energy
- KCOM
- Zen Interne

North Yorkshire Council

North Yorkshire Council are working to manage their own switch impact including our in house and commissioned telecare services. NYC also understand that the switch is causing anxiety and confusion for people and that there is no national communications on this to date. Therefore, NYC will be communicating the key messages out to residents starting April 2024.

Key messages

- Services that rely on an old landline system such as home phones and healthcare devices will be switched to upgraded digital landline services as part of a national switchover led by the UK Telecomms industry. This includes:
 - Home phone landlines
 - Amplified phones (for those with hearing loss)
 - Personal telecare products
 - Fall and motion detectors
 - Portable healthcare devices such as ECG or oxygen monitors
- Your telephone provider will contact you to give you a switchover date and should work with you to make sure your service isn't affected. Please read the letter when it comes and contact them if you have any questions or concerns.
- If you have a telecare safety device, or know someone who depends on their landline and/or use a telecare device connected to a phone line such as fall monitor, lifeline or personal alarm, please contact the provider of the service to find out how this device will be affected.
- The digital switchover is free of charge and you should not be asked for your bank details, be aware of scams and if unsure contact your provider directly.
- If you have any concerns or have no other way of making emergency calls, contact

your telephone provider directly (Virgin, BT, Sky, Talk Talk etc)

The ORBTA, the Richmond Business and Tourism Association submitted the following public question/statement:-

I am approaching the Richmond Area Constituency Committee on behalf of ORBTA, the Richmond Business and Tourism Association, which represents around 90 businesses in the Richmond area. Last September, I contacted Cllr Parsons about issues relating to business deliveries and collections in Richmond Market Place, and I am grateful to him for following up, but there seems to have been little further action taken and so I am now sharing this with the Area Committee in the hope that you will be able to press for some action.

The problem

There is no delivery bay for the central island of the Market Place but there is a long taxi rank which covers two of the four sides of the central island and is significantly underused.

The need for deliveries and collections has increased significantly in the last couple of years, as Johnsons Dry Cleaners is a delivery and collection point for DPD, UPS and DX, but also Day Lewis Pharmacy has moved into this part of the Market Place with several deliveries as days. This is addition to the needs of the other businesses with further deliveries from DHL, Royal Mail and Parcelforce.

Some delivery vans have tried to use the taxi rank for drop-off or collection but have been ticketed for so doing, including one delivering dangerous chemicals to the Dry Cleaners. The nearest loading bay is on the other side of the Market Place. This means that the deliveries and collections have to be dragged across the cobbles and take far longer than they need to. With chemicals there is also a Health and Safety issue.

In practice some drivers are double parking, rather than collect a ticket for parking in the taxi rank. This causes congestion.

Disabled customers also have a problem accessing the chemists and sometimes park in the taxi rank, risking a ticket, or double park, as there is only one disabled space in this part of the Market Place.

The solution

Change the taxi rank spaces at the bottom of the island into a loading bay, or a loading bay and a joint loading bay/time limited disabled parking space.

The cost would be minimal but the benefits significant.

I am sure you don't need to be told that businesses are facing significant pressures at the moment and this is a further stress that can easily be avoided. One of the weaknesses in our economy is poor productivity. Having to spend 25 minutes on a task that could only take 4-5 minutes is a classic example of poor productivity, and making this small change would be both cost effective and demonstrate that the Council is both listening to and supporting businesses rather than creating barriers.

There are other issues related to parking, and, in the longer term ORBTA would like the Council to conduct a review, but this is an immediate issue with a simple solution.

I hope that you will show support in this matter.

Barrie Mason, Assistant Director – Highways and Transportation, Parking Services, Street Scene, Parks and Grounds provided the following response which was read out at the

meeting:-

There are approximately 11 disabled parking bays and seven loading bays currently within the market place and whilst it is acknowledged that none of these are directly outside the dry cleaners or pharmacy, there is a stretch of double yellow line approximately 35m to the west where those with a blue badge are permitted to park for three hours providing they are not causing an obstruction and delivery vehicles can stop to load/unload. Taking all of this into account officers consider that the needs of loading and blue badge holders are relatively well served.

77 Updates from the Previous Meeting

The Democratic Services Officer provided an update on the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project advising that on the 7th March 2024, the Secretary of State for Transport approved the Development Consent Order (DCO) for the project.

There is now a six-week period in which parties can lodge an intention to legally challenge the DCO decision, via the Planning Inspectorate.

The Committee were advised that there is no update available on progress in relation to the assessments being carried out into the viability of the suggested projects for the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund.

78 Development of the Catterick Integrated Care Campus

Considered – A verbal update from the Deputy Place Director, North Yorkshire for the NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board on the latest position on the Catterick Integrated Care Campus which covered the following main points:

- The vision of the project, being to deliver a purpose-built, state-of-the-art, health and wellbeing campus which provides high-quality, safe and sustainable primary and community care for the population of Catterick and the surrounding area.
- The groundworks are now complete. Phase two commenced in January 2024.
- Stakeholder and community engagement events are planned for Summer 2024.
- The build is due to be completed in 2026.
- The scope of services that will be provided at the facility.
- The benefits of an integrated model on the population, workforce and systems.
- The four purposes of an integrated care system:
 - improve outcomes in health and healthcare
 - tackle inequalities in outcome, experience and access
 - enhance productivity and value for money
 - help the NHS support broader social and economic development
- A video walk through is available for anyone that would like to view it.

In the subsequent discussion, the following questions and points were raised:

- Has there been any change in relation to the dentistry provision? Will there be civilian dentistry on the site?
There will be a significant number of MOD dental chairs at the facility to ensure that deployment needs can be met. A dentistry needs assessment is being carried out which will include the requirements of Catterick Garrison. The position in relation to NHS Dentistry is very complex across the whole country. At the current time there is no NHS dentistry incorporated within the facility, but conversations are still continuing around its inclusion.

Resolved –

The Chairman thanked Lisa for the presentation.

79 Appointments to Outside Bodies

Considered – A report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) which invited the committee to appoint the Council's representative to the Richmond School Trust.

Resolved -

That Councillor Stuart Parsons be appointed as the Council's representative on the Richmond School Trust and to serve until a replacement is appointed.

80 Annual Schools Educational Achievement & Finance Report - Report for Information Only

Considered – A report which informed the Committee of the local educational landscape, educational achievement and the financial challenges which affect schools in the Richmond (Yorks) constituency committee area.

The report included details of:

- The number of schools across the area and their status;
- School standards and attainment;
- Suspension incidents and exclusions;
- Special educational needs and disabilities;
- Elective home education;
- School Finance; and
- Local school place planning issues.

During debate Members discussed:

- The provisional key stage 4 data, specifically the Attainment 8 score, which measures achievement of a pupil across eight qualifications. The score for pupils across the constituency area has been consistently below both the North Yorkshire and national average for a number of years. Clarification on what steps were being taken to address the situation was requested.
- The issue of school funding and budget management.
- The marked increase in suspensions and in particular the significant increase in 2022/23 with clarification sought on the reasons behind the increase and the measures being taken to bring about a reduction in the numbers. Separate figures showing the length of suspensions was also requested.

Resolved –

That the report be deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

81 Draft Work Programme 2024-25

Considered – A report presenting the committee's draft work programme for the municipal year 2024-25.

The Chair, Councillor Yvonne Peacock introduced the work programme and asked that Members review the committee's draft work programme, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the area.

Members suggested the following items for the work programme:

- An update from Richmondshire Leisure Trust
- A684, Morton Flatts, River Swale Flooding

Resolved –

That the work programme be noted, and the agreed additions explored for inclusion on the work programme.

82 Any Other Items

There were no other items of business.

The meeting concluded at 11.25 am.