

North Yorkshire Council

Richmond (Yorks) Area Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 16th September, 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Yvonne Peacock in the Chair. plus Councillors Caroline Dickinson, Bryn Griffiths, David Hugill, Tom Jones, Carl Les, Heather Moorhouse, Stuart Parsons, Karin Sedgwick, Angus Thompson, Steve Watson, David Webster, John Weighell OBE, Annabel Wilkinson and Peter Wilkinson.

Councillor Kevin Foster attended remotely.

Also in attendance: Councillor George Jabbour.

Officers present: Christine Phillipson - Principal Democratic Services Officer, Mark Codman - Parish Liaison and Local Devolution Manager, Andy Clarke – Public and Community Transport Manager, Jon Holden - Strategic Planning Manager, Jayne Charlton - Area Manager Areas 1 and 2, Louisa Carolan - Principal Regeneration Officer and Vicky Davies, Democratic Services

Other Attendees: Katie Privett, Regional Insights Manager, Northern Powergrid and nine members of the public.

Apologies: Councillor Alyson Baker and Malcolm Warne. .

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

100 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alyson Baker and Malcolm Warne.

101 Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 June 2024

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2024, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

102 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Yvonne Peacock declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of minute number 104 - Public Transport in the Constituency Area in relation to her being a Board Member of the Upper Dales Community Partnership who had a great deal of involvement with the Stronger Communities service. She also declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in minute number 107 regarding the discussion on subsidised educational transport as she was a home to school transport contractor. She left the meeting room and took no part in the discussion.

103 Public Participation

The Democratic Services Officer read out two statements/questions regarding public transport, details of which are set out below:

Northallerton Town Council

Bus Provision to Serve New Residential Developments to the North of Northallerton.

In 2016 planning consent was granted by Hambleton District Council for some 900 houses forming part of the North Northallerton Development Area. Much of the residential element has now been constructed and is occupied. The signed Section 106 Agreement (dated 2nd December 2016) clearly includes the requirement to fully implement the incorporated Framework Travel Plan, which contains the statement that an hourly bus service would be funded for a five-year period by the applicant, along with associated infrastructure.

Whilst bus stops have been implemented no bus service has been provided to date. Given the large size of the development and its distance from the town centre, the Town Council would like to ask why no bus service has been provided to date, as referenced in the Section 106 Agreement, and what measures are now proposed to ensure that residents are able to access key town centre services by public transport? Furthermore, the Town Council would like to understand how NYC can provide assurances that any future major planning applications, specifically relating to land to the east of Stokesley Road, will be serviced by public transport?

It should be noted that NYC's Let's Talk Transport consultation demonstrated that bus services in the Hambleton area was the main transport related issue for residents. This was confirmed and reinforced by a well-attended Transport Consultation Event held by the three Parish Councils in Northallerton on Saturday 10th February 2024.

Northallerton Area Over Fifties Forum

Why does NYC Passenger Transport not give adequate time for consulting members of the public, in particular bus passengers, prior to making changes to all bus services?

A recent example of this is the Northallerton Town Bus Service 74a & 74b bus services which are suddenly being adapted to incorporate a 74c service, totally to the detriment of the 74a & 74b services.

Whilst it is recognised that the North Moor Road development requires a bus service, it should not be to the major detriment of existing bus services, which is what has happened before with this bus service.

We did request that the introduction of the 74c service be PAUSED until a suitable alternative & acceptable proposal can be made available, a request which has been ignored.

Response from North Yorkshire Passenger Transport Services – Andy Clarke

When the Highway authority was initially consulted on planning application 15/01083/HYB, the North Northallerton development site, it was recommended a number of payments were sought, including money to help fund additional bus services. However, as detailed in the planning officers report for the application eventually considered by the planning committee at Hambleton DC, it was noted that some of the funding originally requested (not just the bus contribution but also some other payments) were not to be included due to the impact this would have on the viability of the whole development. The S106 that was eventually signed, dated 2/12/2016, did not detail a payment from the developer to the highway authority for bus services. With no specific funding being provided we have been unable to introduce a new service to the North Northallerton to date. However, we do recognise the need that the development gets serviced by buses and are now proposing to extend the North Yorkshire Council town service to include some new off peak 74C journeys to the development. These will start on 17th June.

With regard to future applications the highway authority would review the proposals in due course but accessibility by all means of transport and all users will be a key requirement. On bus provision specifically should it be deemed the existing services do not adequately

serve a proposed development the developer may put forward their own proposals or be requested to contribute towards or fund new services. However, there can be competing financial demands and viability assessments for an application that have to be taken into account and it would be for members of the planning committee to assess the benefits of any development coming forward and what if any financial contributions can and should be sought for public transport.

The changes made to the Northallerton town bus timetable earlier in 2024 were in response to requests from members of the public and councillors for a bus service to North Northallerton.

Proposals were shared with councillors in April and then more widely in mid-May with the changes due to take effect on 10th June.

Feedback was then received which resulted in some timetable amendments and the start date was then delayed until 17th June to allow time for these to be communicated.

A Member referred to planning application 15/01083/HYB, the North Northallerton development site, and stated that this was a complex issue going back to the initial S.106 agreement and he was struggling to find an audit trail back to the former Hambleton District Council. He requested that the Town Council, the Executive Member and North Yorkshire Council's legal officers be asked to investigate the position of the S.106 obligations and audit trail.

The Chair noted that a lot of houses would need to be built and the Committee ought to be vigilant about the future provision of transport services.

104 Public Transport in the Constituency Area

The Corporate Director – Environment submitted a report providing an update on local bus services in the Constituency area with particular focus on Richmond, Stokesley and North Northallerton.

There had been a significant increase in operating costs and national difficulties recruiting bus drivers, engineering staff and sourcing spare parts. This had brought about providers reviewing their services resulting in commercial service level reductions and higher prices for council contracted routes.

North Yorkshire Council continued to support local bus services within budget and by accessing central Government grant funding.

The report also highlighted the following:

- Community Transport
- National £2 fare cap scheme
- Funding from central Government and the Combined Authority

Going forwards, funding would be an important issue in trying to maintain existing services in core times. Any extension to services would depend on Government funding settlements.

Members suggested that the new Combined Authority had a role to play in public transport provision and it was proposed that the Mayor should be invited to the next meeting of the Committee.

During the debate, the following issues were raised:

- Details requested of the footfall on the new Northallerton bus service.
- Some of the buses were large for the size/width of road they were operating in, and

- smaller buses would be welcome.
- The service covering the A3161 was not dependable and choc-a-bloc. Extra buses (half-hourly) were needed at peak times.
 - A Member referred to the unreliability of buses in some areas and people end up waiting 2/3 hours or paying for a taxi.
 - Joint working with Network Rail could be helpful.

Resolved –

That the update and issues raised are noted and that the Mayor of the Combined Authority be invited to attend the next meeting of this Committee.

105 Resilience and Emergencies Annual Update 2024

A report was submitted by the Head of Resilience and Emergencies updating the Committee on progress and incidents impacting emergency planning and community resilience within the Constituency and wider Council area. As the Head of Resilience and Emergencies was unable to attend, Members decided to defer the item to the next meeting but did make the following comments:

- Some smaller parishes have plans but not yet fed into NYC.
- Emergency planning covered much more than just flooding such as terrorism.
- There was a lot of mismatches between plans, more co-ordination and communication between the Council and parishes was needed.
- Work was ongoing in the background to ensure community and parish council resilience.

Resolved –

That the contents of the report are noted and that the topic is deferred to the next meeting of this Committee when an officer can be present to respond to Members questions and comments.

106 Enabling regional de-carbonisation - Presentation by Northern Powergrid

Katie Privett, Regional Insights Manager for Northern Powergrid gave a presentation on how Northern Powergrid were assisting with decarbonisation in the region.

Northern Powergrid was responsible for the electrical distribution network and move electricity from where it is generated to businesses and homes. They were in the second year of their new business plan delivering around £3bn of investment. Northern Powergrid amongst other things provide connections to the network, facilitate growth and decarbonisation and support vulnerable customers and communities. As they were a regulated business, costs were kept as low as possible for residents.

The presentation included details of how the company collaborated with local authorities in supporting publicly funded decarbonisation schemes including:

- Local electricity vehicle infrastructure
- Social housing decarbonisation fund
- Public sector decarbonisation scheme.

Members welcomed the presentation and the following points were raised during the discussion:

- EV charging points and the power required to serve such a vast area.
- A Member referred to power cuts in some rural locations that lasted for days and

wanted to see progress on the installation of new transformer at Scotch Corner which would hopefully solve the problem.

- There needed to be a more proactive approach to improving capacity issues rather than reacting when problems arise for example increasing the number of EV charging points in towns.
- It was asked about energy generated from solar panels being put in the grid. Members noted that there was a ceiling due to the transmission grid getting overloaded. Northern Powergrid were looking at projects that had not started or completed so that megawatts could be freed up for those in the queue.

Resolved –

That the presentation and the issues raised be noted.

107 Subsidised Educational Transport - Discussion

As part of the Council's Public Participation Scheme, Gordon Stainsby, Headteacher of Reeth and Gunnerside Schools addressed the Committee to read out his previously submitted statement and additional remarks which are replicated below:

“As previously stated, we have concerns regarding the application and impact of the new transport policy in our area. For many years, pupils from our schools in Reeth and Gunnerside have attended Richmond School – our catchment secondary school. This makes a lot of sense as the B6270 to Richmond is our only low-level route to a nearby town. Swaledale is surrounded by high altitude moorland. While some other secondary schools may well be closer, these upland routes are 420m, 468m and 515m above sea level. The digital tool that has been developed to identify the nearest school for each pupil uses the shortest route by road, irrespective of the nature or type of road, or its feasibility as a school transport route. For example, The Wensleydale School in Leyburn is identified as the nearest school for pupils living in Reeth. The calculation is based on travelling on a minor road through Grinton, and over the moor. Larger vehicles are not allowed by law to use the road, due to a weight restriction yet it has been used to identify the nearest school. Due to pupil numbers a full-size bus is required to transport pupils from Swaledale to Richmond School at the moment. If some or all of these pupils attended the Wensleydale School a large vehicle over the weight limit would be required, perhaps not in the first year but at some point, as the policy impacts more and more school cohorts. The route from Reeth to Leyburn that is suitable for a larger bus is actually further than the distance to Richmond School. Clearly this does not make sense. In upper Swaledale, the digital tool has identified Kirkby Stephen as closest although the route there is 515m above sea level and dangerous in winter. While the nearest school principle is easy to understand in most contexts, its application in our region requires further consideration.

Another issue with the digital tool has emerged since parents started using it. Two families living one mile apart and on a road that would be used to travel to all the nearby schools have received a different list of schools. For example, family one has received a Wensleydale school at 8.0320 miles, Richmond School at 9.892 miles and a third school at 10.139 miles. Family 2 also received Wensleydale school as the closest one at 7.032 miles but the second school listed is the Risedale School at 9.633 miles and then the Richmond School at 9.716 miles – clearly there is a discrepancy between those lists despite the fact that the families live on the same road and the bus would have travelled past both houses.

The DoE statutory guidance tells us that councils have a duty to undertake risk assessments. I understand that the Council has not yet risk assessed the routes identified by the digital tool. Telling people that this will be completed at some point in the future is not sufficient for pupils in Swaledale as the digital tool is identifying schools based on routes that are not suitable.

What the DoE guidance does do, is ask that information is easily accessible by parents so they can make a decision on which school to apply for. For Swaledale, that information is not easily available and parents have been left second guessing which school their child will be able to attend with free transport because the Council has not yet done the risk assessment or decided which roads will be used. The digital tool has not provided the clarity needed and raises questions about its accuracy and reliability.

A suggestion would be to identify the nearest school that can be accessed safely, legally and with consideration for the type of vehicle that will be needed for the minimum of pupils in the area. A solution like this is urgently needed to meet the DoE statutory guidance – the information must be easily available.

Parents of pupils in Y6 need to apply for a secondary place by 31st October. I ask you to do all you can to help the Swaledale community to have the information it needs to be able to do so. They need certainty about which school their child will be able to attend with free transport.

The Department for Education statutory guidance for local authorities travel to school for children of compulsory school age, states that health and safety law requires local authorities to complete risk assessments, identifying hazards and putting in place measures to eliminate or control risk.

However, the Council has not yet risk assessed the routes identified by the digital tool to calculate the nearest school or considered practical matters like the size of the vehicle needed. Telling parents that this will be completed at some point in the future is not sufficient. For pupils living in Swaledale, the digital tool in identifying schools based on routes that are not suitable.

'Parents should consider their children will get to school at the time they are choosing which schools to apply for. For some, the availability of free travel to school may be an important factor in their decision making. Information about travel to school should, therefore, be easily available to parents during the normal admissions round. Department for Education.'

A suggestion would be to identify the nearest school that can be accessed safely, legally, and with consideration for the type of vehicle that will be needed given the number of pupils in the area. A solution like this is urgently required in order to meeting the DfE statutory guidance. Parents of pupils in year 6 need to apply for a secondary school place by 31st October. They need and deserve to know which school their child is able to attend with free transport."

Members thanked Mr Stainsby for his representations and made the following comments:

- The exceptional topography of Swaledale did not merit normal practice in any way, shape or form when assessing school transport provision.
- Issues relating to parents having to choose a school without prior knowledge of the transport arrangements. The process should be paused and assess the routes before parents have to make their selections.
- A Member pointed out the roads in Swaledale were not gritted properly. North Yorkshire, at the moment was not in the position to enable these young people to travel safely to school unless changes are made to the gritting/maintenance regime.
- The digital tool did not appear to be fit for purpose.

Jon Holden, Strategic Planning Manager responded to the statement made by Gordon Stainsby and Members' comments and highlighted the following:

- The digital tool had been subject to extensive testing before it was released. However, the issues raised regarding the two families living less than a mile apart on

the same road, who received different outcomes from the tool, would, if the results could be anonymised, be investigated.

- In accordance with good practice, it was not possible to consider transport routes until the admissions process had been completed because until then, the number of children and their home location where they would be transported from were not known.
- Once the offers have been made, transport colleagues will be able to start looking at numbers and routes and start commissioning arrangements with transport providers.
- Transport providers were required to monitor routes daily and any routes deemed unsafe should not be used and where possible, alternative routes would be utilised.
- Parents who think their children may be affected were being encouraged to visit all potential schools that came up on the digital tool and were also in the catchment area and any others and discuss transport options.

Councillor Annabell Wilkinson, Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills stated that the new policy had been approved by Full Council and there was a statutory process that had to be followed. The area of Swaledale was very complex and it had the Moor Road that had to be addressed and dealt with. The Executive Member understood the anxiety parents were feeling as it was difficult situation, however the routes that were arranged were not necessarily the shortest routes that are used to calculate to the nearest school and different options would be considered. Additionally, in stating it was important to reassure parents and alleviate some of their fears, she committed to meet with relevant officers to see what could be done and report back to the Area Committee.

Resolved –

That the statement made by Gordon Stainsby, the response made by the Strategic Planning Manager and the issues raised during the debate are noted.

108 Winter Maintenance in the Area Committee Area - Presentation

Jayne Chorlton, Area Manager for Highways gave a presentation on winter maintenance of the extensive road network and the hierarchy for road gritting. The presentation also highlighted various facts and figures as well as the processes and policies Highways followed when making decisions on treating the highways.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- Salt and grit that had hardened in the bins over time needed breaking up to make it useable.
- A large-scale map of the roads salted around Richmond would be helpful to Division Members.
- Silver Hill had been downgraded as it did not meet the criteria to be a priority two road.
- The gritting of unclassified roads was dependent on them being an access to a service centre or need.
- Gritting could not be based on bus routes as that would cover essentially most of the network an increase in gritters and workers would be required as well as a change in current policy.

Resolved -

That the presentation and issues raised be noted.

109 Parish Sector liaison - Presentation

A presentation was given by Mark Codman (Parish Liaison and Local Devolution Manager) and Christine Phillipson (Principal Democratic Services Officer) which gave Members an

overview of the parish sector in North Yorkshire and the work being undertaken to support parishes including regulatory requirements:

- Parish Charter
- Parish liaison meetings
- Double devolution and devolution generally
- Parish sector engagement panel
- Parish portal
- Parish sector consultation engagement review
- Review of community rights process
- Training
- Points of contact
- Maintain register of interests
- Community governance reviews

Members noted that details of the single point of contact had been circulated to all parishes and that participation at Code of Conduct training sessions was important and attendance by parishes needed to be encouraged.

Resolved –

That the presentation be noted.

110 Proposals for the Allocation of the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund

The Corporate Director (Community Development) submitted a report asking Members to agree the process and the three proposals recommended by the steering committee which, if approved, would be funded from the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Development Fund. Two proposals in the report did not meet the fund criteria and therefore were not recommended. The £50k development fund allocation for 23/24 had not been spent and the carry forward to the 24/25 financial year had been authorised, giving an overall amount of £100k to the Area Committee. The projects had to be delivered by March 2025.

Specific details of each recommended proposal shown below were set out in the report:

1. Parking spaces for private hire taxis at Hildyard Row, Catterick.
2. Transport scheme to support individuals to get to places of work, study and health provision across Richmond's rural areas.
3. A684 Morton Flatts responsive signage from Northallerton to the A1.

Resolved –

- (1) That, the Committee approve the process as outlined in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report now submitted.
- (2) That, the recommended proposals put forward to the Committee and which contribute to the objectives of the fund are put forward for a full scoping review and endorsement to an additional meeting of this Committee in October 2024 are approved.

111 Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Yvonne Peacock introduced the Committee's updated work programme for 24/25 and invited suggestions for additions, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the area.

Members referred to the following:

- The issues highlighted at today's meeting for consideration at subsequent meetings would be added to the work programme.
- That the elected Mayor is invited to attend the next meeting with a focus on public transport in the Constituency.
- That the Resilience and Emergencies Annual Update 2024 is brought back to the next ordinary meeting of this Committee.
- The Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills to report back to Committee on the issues raised regarding the home to school transport policy particularly in relation to the concerns of Swaledale parents.
- A Member raised his concerns regarding the shortcomings and level of service provided by the Richmond planning office and asked that an item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting together with an update on the new staffing arrangements that have been introduced.

Resolved –

- (1) That the work programme be noted.
- (2) That the issues raised above be added to the Work Programme.

112 Any other items which the Chair agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances.

There were no urgent items of business.

113 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Resolved –

That it be noted that the next scheduled ordinary meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 18th November 2024 at 10am at a venue to be confirmed and that a special meeting of the Committee is convened at a date to be determined, in October 2024 to consider a full scoping review and endorsement of the agreed projects under the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm.