

North Yorkshire County Council

Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the remote, informal meeting held on Thursday, 2 September 2021 commencing at 10.00 am.

County Councillors Mike Chamber MBE (Chair), Michael Harrison, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton (Vice Chair), Stanley Lumley, Stuart Martin MBE, Patrick Mulligan, Gillian Quinn, Andy Solloway and David Staveley.

In attendance: County Councillors David Chance, Gareth Dadd and Carl Les.

Officers present: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, NYCC), Daniel Herbert (Improvement Manager, Highways and Transportation, BES, NYCC), Philip Allott (North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)), Melisa Burnham (Area 6 Manager, Highways Operations, BES, NYCC), and Cheryl Pocknell (Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Officer, CYPS, NYCC).

Other Attendees: a representative of the Youth Council, and two public speakers.

Apologies: County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Phillip Barrett and Robert Windass.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

120 Introductions and apologies for absence

The committee Chairman, County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE reminded the committee that the meeting was being held informally and that any formal decisions would need to be taken in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer using his emergency powers.

Apologies were noted.

121 Minutes of the committee meeting held on 27 May 2021

Considered the minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 27 May 2021.

Resolved -

- a. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 27 May 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

122 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

123 Public Questions or Statements

There were two public questions. As both related to the closure of Skipton High Street on

market days, the questions were taken together.

Public Question 1 - Angela Monaghan.

Mrs Monaghan was unable to attend the meeting and so Daniel Harry read out the question on her behalf, as follows:

I was deeply concerned and disappointed to hear that North Yorkshire County Council has rejected the request of Skipton Town Council to retain the closure of Skipton High Street on market days, after the temporary closure expires at the end of August 2021.

This decision, which appears to have been taken in summary fashion with no consultation, ignores the views of the majority of residents and businesses of Skipton, who supported the closure three to one when surveyed earlier this year.

Closing the high street on market days is beneficial for a number of reasons, some of which were stated in the request for a temporary closure and still remain true:

- It supports social distancing during the Covid pandemic. In spite of recent relaxations of Covid restrictions, rates of infection are still very high and above the national average in the Skipton area (399.3 per 100,000 population today) and social distancing is still a necessary public health requirement that will be required for some time.
- It creates a safer environment for pedestrians.
- It improves air quality for pedestrians and stallholders alike.
- It makes shopping a more pleasurable experience, which will attract local residents and visitors into the town centre and promote the local economy.
- It creates better access for disabled people who struggle with the cobbled streets, so promotes equality.

In addition, we are in the middle of a climate emergency, and all council decisions should reflect NYCC's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. Was a climate change impact assessment carried out before the decision was taken not to retain closure of Skipton High Street on market days?

The NYCC response to the request cited disruption to traffic and deliveries. Yet these have been managed effectively during the last few months, and the majority are still in favour of closure 10.00am-4.00pm on 3 days a week (18 hours out of 168 a week), so why not continue, given the significant benefits?

I request that you ask NYCC to reconsider the decision to refuse this request and take into account the many benefits and views of local Skipton residents and business when doing so.

Public Question 2 - Susannah Daley, CEO Peel entertainment Group Ltd.

We have heard in the local press from residents about their views on the success or otherwise of the High Street closure in Skipton on Market days but very little from the businesses of Skipton.

My company owns several businesses based in the Skipton area, one of which is Alexanders Grand Café, Bar and Terrace which is situated on the High Street. We invested circa £3,000,000 (3 million) pounds in our project on the High Street bringing back to life a Georgian building that had become run down. We painstakingly and lovingly restored it and added a contemporary terrace which is an attractive feature on the other side of the High Street. In the four years so far since opening Alexander's has served both residents and visitors as a great place to eat and drink and or a reason to come and enjoy occasions and celebrations or just some quality time in the town. We believe we have been a reason for

some people to visit Skipton (some of our guests tell us this) and for some others an added bonus if they were visiting anyway. The venue has turned over approximately £3,500,000 (three and a half million) of revenue in four years, even with the COVID pandemic. We have created over 20 new jobs in the town centre.

We made this investment for two reasons, one because we have been resident in the area as a business for over twenty years and we felt it would be good to put some energy and investment back into the town and secondly because of our belief that Skipton can be become an even better tourist attraction whilst serving its residents with a lively and active retail and events scene.

The markets have been a long established tradition in Skipton and people enjoy coming knowing they will be here. The other events held by the town council like the Christmas markets have been a great success and are very strong drivers for trade in Skipton. We believe these closures have hugely benefitted business and residents alike. They have firstly made visiting Skipton a safer and more accessible on Market Days, families can wander up and down the high street with prams and children without any concern, and accessibility for wheelchairs and mobility scooters is hugely improved. It makes following COVID guidelines easier for all by allowing the stalls to face the other direction which in turn makes them easier to access and leaves the high street less congested and therefore easy to use and more attractive to visitors.

We have seen great business coming on these days, significantly higher than when the market runs in its traditional manner with the High Street open. It also means that residents and visitors are not dicing with death with the vans that had taken to parking irresponsibly at the side of the road making a trip down the High Street on market days even more perilous.

We accept and understand that in order to do this there have to be traffic diversions, however being resident in the town, we have canvassed our 50+ staff and all (no exceptions) feel that the diversions are relatively small and worth it for the gain of having a safer space and a more thriving town. We therefore we ask you to consider making this a permanent fixture to further improve the economic, social cohesion and safety of Skipton.

Response – Daniel Herbert, Improvement Manager, Highways and Transportation, BES, NYCC

A response to both questions was given by Daniel Herbert, Improvement Manager, Highways and Transportation, BES, NYCC as follows:

The closure was implemented to facilitate social distancing requirements to allow the market to reopen safely once the lockdown restrictions began to be eased. It was implemented at a rapid pace using a temporary traffic regulation order which can only be in place for 18 months and cannot be extended beyond that timeframe without becoming permanent. The temporary order will end after the Saturday market on 4th September 2021. A permanent traffic regulation order requires a different legal process involving a period of statutory advertisement inviting formal objections.

The temporary traffic regulation order was implemented using the powers that the County Council has as local highway authority which are delegated by the Executive to the Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services in accordance with the Delegation Scheme contained within the County Council's Constitution. Although the closure accommodated social distancing through the pandemic unfortunately at the same time it interrupted public transport / school transport services so had a knock on effect of increasing traffic congestion on the alternative routes. It is appreciated that users of the market will have enjoyed the benefits of the removal of traffic from the High Street but we must look at the wider implications across the highway network.

The current road network does not currently have the capacity to accommodate the extra

traffic that comes with the removal of a main route through the town such as the High Street. We are also aware that in the next few weeks roadworks will commence on The Bailey that are expected to run until Christmas for highway improvements funded by the new development and High Street will be the advertised diversion for any road closures that are required. In addition there are utility works planned in the town centre that have been on hold until post the lockdown reopening of businesses to aid the recovery along with major highway schemes next year including the Transforming Cities Fund which will see us delivering significant improvements for pedestrians and cyclists accessing the station and again High Street will be the advertised diversion for any road closures.

The desire being expressed by some who would like to see the closure of the High Street for market days made permanent is noted but hopefully the information provided above explains the rationale why that is not advisable at this time and for at least the rest of 2021 and 2022. We will look at this issue again later in 2022 though as part of the wider conversation about the further improvements in the town on the back of initiatives such as the Transforming Cities Fund project.

There followed a discussion during which it was County Councillors agreed that this was a contentious issue locally and that it was hoped that there could be further dialogue between the County Council and the Town Council to find a compromise. The complexity of managing modern traffic movements and pedestrian access in a Victorian market place and surrounding streets was noted.

124 Attendance of the RT Hon Julian Smith MP - an opportunity for the MP to share his views on main issues of local interest

The Rt Hon Julian Smith MP sent apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting due to another commitment.

125 Presentation by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner - Mr Philip Allott

Considered –

A presentation by Philip Allott, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC).

Philip Allott gave a presentation on his priorities and plans, as summarised below:

- The focus in the first three months has been upon getting out and about and meeting with staff across the Police and Fire and Rescue Service
- Priorities include the safety of women, support for victims of crime, greater use of youth diversion, tackling drug supply and drug use, reducing anti-social behaviour, dealing with cross border crime
- There is to be a renewed focus upon tackling rural crime and issues such as speeding on rural roads and road safety in general, noisy motorbikes, dog theft and wildlife crime
- Work will be done to supported the retained/volunteer fire fighters and small rural fire and rescue stations
- There is a need to develop the relationship between the Police and local communities so that they are better able to work together to promote community safety
- Will look to review and address the problems that exist with the 101 service
- Noted that the public appeared in general to be less tolerant following months of lockdowns and restriction during the pandemic
- Currently consulting on the Police and Crime and Fire and Rescue Plans
- There will be a need to appoint a deputy PFCC by May 2022. This is a statutory requirement.

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

- Concerns were raised about the frequent movement of Police Officers between roles and areas during their career and the difficulties that this often caused when trying to develop lasting relationships in the local community
- PCSOs were seen as being a key link as they moved around less and were more visible and available in the community
- The greater use of Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems in rural areas was highlighted as a simple and efficient way of tracking speeding and other driving related offences
- ANPR could also be linked to decibel meters to enable motorcyclists with noisy exhaust systems that did not meet legal limits to be identified
- The renewed focus upon Ripon in recent months was welcomed as was proposed investment in the existing Police and Fire and Rescue stations, which were not seen as being fit for purpose.

County Councillor Andy Solloway asked whether the PFCC will continue to make pots of seed funding available for community-based projects.

In response, the PFCC said that there will be opportunities to bid for funding to help promote community safety projects and initiatives.

County Councillor Stanley Lumley said that more needed to be done to support volunteer fire fighters and ensure the long term future of rural fire stations.

The PFCC said that approximately half of the fire and rescue workforce was made up of on call fire fighters. Over the years, there had been improvements in fire and road safety, which has meant that there is less for on call fire fighters to do. The low levels of emergency call outs can affect recruitment and retention. Part of the solution will be to do more training and realistic exercises, a review of the shift patterns and a re-think of how rural fire stations are used. There may be a case for developing them into local business and community hubs.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE asked what action was being taken to tackle rural crime and crimes against animals.

In response, the PFCC said that the existing Rural Taskforce would be beefed-up and greater use of existing Police powers would be made to tackle wildlife crime. In many cases, the powers of the Police were limited, when the alleged offence was on private land with the landowners consent.

The PFCC said that greater use would also be made of modern technology, such as the use of drones which would extend the reach of Police officers and PCSOs, in rural areas.

County Councillor David Staveley left the meeting at 10:45am.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and thanked Phillip Allott for taking the time to attend the meeting.

Resolved –

- a. That the committee receive an update on progress after the first 12 months in office.

126 Executive Member update

County Councillor Carl Les thanked the Chairman for the invitation to attend the committee. He said that he welcomed the feedback from committee members on what was happening in their local area and the issues that are important to them and the electorate that they

represent.

County Councillor Carl Les noted the apologies for County Councillor Gareth Dadd and then updated as follows:

- Welcome the positive engagement with the PFCC
- Local Government Review is progressing with the Structural Change Order being finalised. Work is also underway on warding arrangements for the new Council, based upon 89 or 90 councillors
- The transition from the existing structures to the new would need to be as smooth as possible and there is a need to reassure both staff and members of the public
- Covid remains an issue and is likely to be the focus of work for the coming months. Infection rates are up but the level of hospital admissions has not risen at the same rate and people who are vaccinated tend to be less ill
- Renewed focus upon work to mitigate the effects of climate change and reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions in the county
- Rural Commission report was a fresh look at known issues associated with living in rural areas of the county. The Executive will consider the recommendations in due course
- Interest in the demand responsive travel pilot and what this may mean for the future of bus services in rural areas of the county
- As part of the work on the establishment of a new unitary authority, there will be an opportunity to review the role and responsibilities of the Area Constituency Committees and what they do as a locally responsive and accountable element of the new council.

County Councillor Michael Harrison updated as follows:

- There are strong budgetary pressures in social care, particularly adult social care and concerns that there may be a bubble of unmet need, linked to the pandemic and lockdowns, that is now starting to work its way through the health and social care system
- There is a risk that the Government requirement that all care staff are fully vaccinated may exacerbate existing adult social care staffing shortages in the county.

County Councillor David Chance updated as follows:

- The Community Support Organisations continue to work with people in the community. The focus is upon building confidence and self-reliance
- Work is underway as part of a national effort to resettle Afghan refugees, following the withdrawal of Coalition Forces.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan updated as follows:

- Preparations are well underway for a return to school next week. Public Health have been actively involved in supporting schools
- The removal of bubbles in schools will help manage school attendance as the knock-on effect of a positive Covid test will be lessened
- It is likely that there will be some disruption but it is hoped that things quickly settle back to normal and children and continue with their education.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd was able to attend the meeting and updated on the budgetary pressures faced by the Council, particularly around adult social care.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and thanked the Executive Members for attending and updating the committee on key issues and priorities.

127 NYCC Permit Scheme and Co-ordination of Works - Report of Karl Battersby, Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services, NYCC

Considered –

A report by Allan McVeigh, Head of Network Strategy, Business and Environmental Services.

Melisa Burnham, Area 6 Manager, Highways Operations, presented the report, with key points as summarised below:

- This is the 6 month follow-up to the presentation to the committee on 11 March 2021
- At that meeting the following concerns/areas for improvement were raised: communication of works, co-ordination of works, damage to other services caused by works, the quality of re-instatement of the road surface after works had been completed
- The Council's permit scheme was established in February 2018 to increase the efficient running of the highway network by proactively managing works on the highways
- There are four main types of permits: major, standard, minor and emergency
- A quarterly co-ordination schedule is sent out to all statutory undertakers in order for them to populate any major works they have coming up in the next 3-6 months
- Where there is multiple demand for road space, we seek to encourage collaborative working
- Where emergency works need to be undertaken, it is requested that the utilities company contacts the team directly
- Any utility company working on the network has a statutory obligation to ensure that their works should not cause damage to other services
- Utility companies are actively encouraged to complete works with a first time permanent reinstatement
- Core samples can be taken of re-instatements to assess the quality of the work
- The introduction of the new, national flexi-permit scheme, which is currently out for consultation, would mean the statutory undertakers will no longer be required to submit a permit for every street they want to work on. Instead, they would be allowed blanket permissions for an area for four weeks.

There followed a discussion about the possible introduction of a national flexi-permit scheme and what this would mean for the Council. The consensus was that this will severely limit the ability of the Council to manage and co-ordinate works on the highways undertaken by utilities companies and so this may lead to some significant disruption to the network.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE thanked Melisa Burnham for the update and asked that, in view of the time, any questions relating to the report be directed to Melisa by committee members by email.

Resolved –

- a. The committee to keep a watching brief, particularly on the possible introduction of the national flexi-permits scheme. No further update required by the committee at this time.

128 Youth Council update to committee - Report of Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services, NYCC

Considered –

A verbal update on the work of the Youth Council by Cheryl Pocknell, Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Officer, CYPS, NYCC and a member of the Youth Council.

Daniel Harry introduced the item, noting that this was an opportunity for the committee to engage with young people and take into account some of the issues that they face, when considering the matters on the work programme.

Cheryl Pocknell gave an overview of the work of the Youth Council and then the member of the local Youth Council outlined some of the key concerns for young people in the area. Of particular concern was the environment and climate change mitigation.

The member of the Youth Council noted that there is a need to recruit to the Youth Council locally as a number of members have left to go into higher education outside of the county.

Cheryl Pocknell said that the Youth Cabinet for North Yorkshire was beginning to prepare for the next Youth Parliament elections and so was looking for people to stand as candidates.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and thanked Cheryl and the representative from the Youth Council for attending and updating the committee.

Resolved –

- a. That the committee continues to engage with the Youth Council locally and take into account the priorities identified by young people in the area.

129 Committee work programme - Report of the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager

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.

The substantive item on the agenda for the December meeting was noted as the Annual Education Report.

It was agreed that the work programme be amended to include an update on the demand responsive transport pilot, the report and recommendations of the Rural Commission and further consideration of work to protect the environment and tackle climate change.

Resolved –

- a. That the committee work programme be updated by Daniel Harry and reviewed by members.

130 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 12:30pm.