

North Yorkshire County Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the remote informal meeting held on Thursday, 16 September, 2021 commencing at 10.00 am.

County Councillor John Mann in the Chair, plus County Councillors Philip Broadbank, Jim Clark, David Goode, Michael Harrison, Paul Haslam, Don Mackenzie, Zoe Metcalfe, Matt Scott, Cliff Trotter and Robert Windass.

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

Officers present: Melisa Burnham and Ruth Gladstone.

Other Attendees: Philip Allott (North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner).

Apologies: County Councillors Richard Cooper and John Ennis.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

101 Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 10 June 2021

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the informal meeting held on 10 June 2021 be taken as a correct record.

102 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

103 Presentation by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner - Mr Philip Allott

Considered –

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

Philip Allott described his initial priorities, following his election, namely, to:-

- Tackle neighbourhood crime through a clamp-down on drugs; a new approach to anti-social behaviour; countering cross-border crime; and reduce reoffending.
- Protect the vulnerable and victims by preventing harm before it happened; promoting the Victim's Code; enhancing safety for women and girls; tackling hate crime; and developing a Public Safety Service.
- Enhance rural services by addressing fair funding for North Yorkshire; the on-call Fire Service; stopping speeding; rural and wildlife crime; and dog theft.

Philip Allott also spoke about:-

- Providing Services that were fit for the future and were properly equipped; customer focused; enhanced collaboration; and saving to re-invest.
- The Force Control Room, its staffing and demand, and use of technology.

Philip Allott outlined his plans for the future regarding and referred to:-

- Governance.
- Consultations he was currently conducting on a Police and Crime Plan and a Fire and Rescue Plan.
- His commissioning priorities.
- Working in partnership.

Philip Allott responded to Members' questions, which sought his thoughts about prosecuting people for Class A drugs and whether employers should be encouraged to test employees to identify drug use; tackling littering in villages; liaison with town and parish councils; increased numbers of police officers in North Yorkshire; changes in the nature of crime; provision for people having a mental health crisis; recruitment of more retained firefighters; the different types of local projects for which funding could be applied from the PFCC; tackling prisoner illiteracy; and enforcement of 20mph speed limits.

Resolved –

- (a) That Philip Allott be thanked for attending and for his very interesting and informative presentation.
- (b) That all County Councillors be encouraged to respond directly to the consultations which Philip Allott is currently conducting.

104 Verbal Updates from Executive Members

Considered –

Verbal updates of Executive Members on the issues identified below. Executive Members also responded to Members' questions regarding these issues.

- County Councillor Gareth Dadd (Deputy Leader):-
 - Warding arrangements for the new unitary Council would be considered by the Executive on 21 September 2021.
 - The Brierley Group's recent reports were very positive news, indicating strong signs of economic recovery from the Covid pandemic.
 - The County Council was now working towards its usual process to make a decision, in February, to set a budget.
- County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Access):-
 - The County Council had invested in 18 new gritters and would be ready for the start of the next winter gritting season.
 - Works to improve junction 47 on the A1(M) were well underway.
 - The opening of tender bids was anticipated shortly from construction companies who wanted to build the Kexgill diversion.
 - Northern Rail had published their 2021 December timetable and had included a second train per hour, in each direction, between Harrogate and York following improvements made to signals and track at Cattal.
 - YorBus, a demand responsive app based service in the Bedale/Masham/Ripon area, was doing very well and had received very good feedback from customers.
 - Active travel schemes were progressing in accordance with the programme and construction would commence on Monday 20 September of the Otley Road cycle path and junction improvements along Otley Road.
 - The Transforming Cities Fund gateway scheme for Station Parade was due to go out to consultation again in the near future with more detailed designs.
 - A public Wi-Fi system was now operating in Ripon. The County Council

would be introducing, in due course, public Wi-Fi systems in Harrogate and Knaresborough.

- The County Council was seeking Government approval to be able to sell the local full fibre network to private users and private businesses.
- Phase 4 of the Superfast North Yorkshire Programme was now live. It would be connecting a further 16,000 North Yorkshire residents, mainly in rural areas, to superfast broadband over the next 3 years.
- County Councillor Michael Harrison (Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration, including Health and Wellbeing Board and Extra Care):-
 - Levels of Covid infection continued to circulate in the general community and within North Yorkshire care homes and staffing. It was very important that people remembered the key messages, particularly around hand sanitisation.
 - One of the main stresses in the system at present was around resources within the care sector, in particular, where the private sector was unable to provide care and care packages were being handed back to the County Council. This meant that the County Council was having to move resources around, ie from Reablement Teams into providing planned care. Members' support was sought in publicising the "Make Care Matter" website which provided information about what working in the care sector meant and current vacancies in both the private sector and in the local authority.
 - The County Council was reviewing the implications of recent Government announcements around funding for health and adult social care, which included increases in national insurance and tax on earned income. Whilst this had provided certainty for residents around what their costs would be, it left councils with uncertainty about how much funding they would need to provide to support those initiatives.
 - With regard to Covid vaccinations, 16 September was the last day for care home workers to get their first dose of the vaccination so they could be fully vaccinated by the time new Regulations came into force in November. The Regulations meant that, unless you were fully vaccinated, or had an official exemption, you were not allowed to work providing care in a care home. Of the 20,000 staff across North Yorkshire, around 400 had not been vaccinated to date.

The meeting was advised that County Councillor Carl Les (Leader of the County Council) and County Councillor David Chance (Executive Member for Stronger Communities) had had to leave this meeting at an earlier stage to attend other commitments. County Councillor David Chance had passed a copy of his speaking note to the Principal Democratic Services Officer who would forward it to all Committee Members following this meeting.

Resolved –

That Executive Members be thanked for attending this meeting and for their updates.

105 Receipt of Petition "Remove the barriers blocking Beech Grove and Lancaster Road, Harrogate and stop this proposed LTN"

Considered –

The petition entitled "Remove the barriers blocking Beech Grove and Lancaster Road, Harrogate and stop this proposed LTN". The petition included a list of 15 reasons why the removal of the barriers was requested. The petition was brought before the Committee in accordance with the County Council's Petitions Scheme.

The petition was presented at the meeting by Lucy Gardiner and Anna McIntee (petition organisers) who spoke for 5 minutes.

A statement by Kevin Douglas (Chair of Harrogate and District Cycle Action) was read out at the meeting on his behalf. The statement asked the Committee to reject the action requested by the petition and to retain the modal filter until August 2022. (Notice of this statement had been received in accordance with the item of business "Public Questions or Statements".)

Members debated the petition. Points raised during the debate were as follows:-

- The Beech Grove Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) had been introduced as an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. It was a very modest step towards carrying out what had been sought by the vast majority of respondents to the Harrogate Congestion Study Public Engagement carried out in 2019, namely, to introduce a system of better facilities for walking and cycling in Harrogate town centre and also to encourage people out of their cars and instead to walk, cycle or use public transport. There had been 15,500 responses to this Public Engagement. Members commented that they recognised that any changes brought about, subsequent to the massive response to this Public Engagement, would be controversial.
- Members wanted to see the trial Beech Grove LTN continue and, as such, allow the public the opportunity to object/comment, as had been planned.
- This trial was important because the County Council wanted to learn the best ways of tackling traffic congestion and "rat-runs".
- The Beech Grove LTN would link into cyclepath works to be undertaken in Otley Road and Victoria Avenue.

Members also made the following comments:-

- They recognised that each of the 15 bullet points within the petition was either mistaken or flawed. A briefing note from Melisa Burnham (Area Manager – Area 6) had been emailed to Members on 15 September 2021 setting out officers' comments on the 15 bullet points within the petition.
- Members had received letters from residents who supported the Beech Grove LTN.
- The majority of signatories to the petition were from the Harrogate district area. However, some were from outside North Yorkshire. Very few signatures were from the Beech Grove/Victoria Road area.
- A Member criticised the use of online social media from outside the area and highlighted that this impacted detrimentally on local democracy.

With the Chairman's agreement, Ruth Gladstone (Principal Democratic Services Officer) undertook to email Members, after the meeting, with a copy of the comments which the petition organisers had put in the MS Teams Chat facility whilst Committee Members had been debating the petition.

Resolved -

That the action requested by the petition be not taken in order to allow this pilot LTN to continue for the reasons put forward in the debate.

Note: Notwithstanding the Committee's decision, the petition content/objections will be considered in line with the statutory process for traffic regulation orders when this Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is reviewed and objections considered between June and August 2022 by the BES Corporate Director and BES Executive Members.

106 Public Questions or Statements

Considered –

Two members of the public had given notice to make a statement or ask a question at this meeting. One notice was from Kevin Douglas (Chair of Harrogate and District Cycle Action) and related to a statement which had been presented to this meeting during consideration of the item of business 'Receipt of Petition "Remove the barriers blocking Beech Grove and Lancaster Road, Harrogate and stop this proposed LTN"'. The second notice was from Mr Christopher Dunn (resident of Bilton) and comprised a lengthy statement and a question. Mr Dunn's statement and question were put to the meeting at this stage.

Mr Christopher Dunn – Use of the Highways

At Mr Dunn's request, a precis of his statement, together with his question, were presented to the meeting by County Councillor Don Mackenzie, as follows:-

Mr Dunn questions "the lack of fortitude, resilience, legal duty and obligations" by North Yorkshire County Council to citizens, especially to disabled people. He feels the Council has abandoned all classes of highway in the County. Many urban, unnamed back streets, according to Mr Dunn, are blocked by parked cars, wheelie bins and caravans. He feels there is too much pavement parking and he gives examples on the A59 and on Hall Lane in Bilton. He feels that road surface signage needs to be repainted. Mr Dunn gives a further example of a UCI cycle team whose Winnebago's were parked and camped illegally on Harlow Moor Road in 2019. Mr Dunn claims that both Harrogate Borough and North Yorkshire County Councils ignored the mess that was left and Mr Dunn cleared it up himself. Mr Dunn then goes on to give a list of examples where utility companies abused highway rights by obstructing pavements for wheelchair users. He suggests that Yorkshire Water has excavated without consulting with local residents. He criticises North Yorkshire County Council for abandoning proper drain cleaning which he described as "outrageous". He gives an example on the A61 in Killinghall where a massive hedge is overgrown and blocking signage. Finally, Mr Dunn claims that the North Yorkshire County Council allows illegal obstructions to its Public Rights of Way network. The question at the end of Mr Dunn's statement is "When will North Yorkshire County Council assert its legal authority to end verge-jacking and allow non-car users to have a clear passage on their highway".

Melisa Burnham (Area Manager – Area 6) thanked Mr Dunn for bringing these highway matters to the Committee's attention and advised that a number of the matters had been discussed historically with Mr Dunn by the relevant service areas including the Area 6 Highways Team, Street Works, and Countryside Access Service. Melisa Burnham then provided, for the meeting, an update on each of the items raised by Mr Dunn.

The Chairman thanked Melisa Burnham for providing a very full and lengthy reply. He asked Ruth Gladstone (Principal Democratic Services Officer), on behalf of Melisa Burnham, to send Mr Dunn a copy of the many points in Melisa Burnham's response and advised that Mr Dunn was very welcome to correspond with the Area 6 Highways Team.

Mr Dunn was given an opportunity to ask a supplementary question. Mr Dunn spoke as follows:- "Whilst it is appreciated that the sheer size of North Yorkshire and the volume of highways of all classes, especially Public Rights of Way, prevents adequate policing, I urge the North Yorkshire County Council:- (a) to fortify, instruct and support all legal and highway officials, especially those frontline site engineers, in order to prevent highway obstruction, misuse, abuse, verge encroachments and any utility disrespect of engineering and reinstatement; (b) instruct their Public Rights of Way Department to desist from immediately prompting, accepting and supporting the diversions of footpaths when confronted by landowner obstructions or illegal diversions as it shows weakness and apathy. I also ask that, following a rambler's own response to official consultation regarding a diversion and apathy towards this particular path, your Public Rights of Way Department do disregard this body, ie the Ramblers, because of their lack of response to an official consultation. Please investigate immediately as to why thousands of un-cleared road drains were apparently left abandoned by your previous contractor. Finally, please give the disabled a good deal".

County Councillor Don Mackenzie responded that he did not think there was a question within Mr Dunn's supplementary contribution. He advised, however, that he took on-board all the points that Mr Dunn had made, as had Melisa Burnham, and that they would be very happy to discuss the additional points, and any other matters which Mr Dunn wished to raise, separate from this meeting. County Councillor Don Mackenzie thanked Mr Dunn for taking the trouble to attend this meeting and pose his questions and statements.

107 Committee Work Programme

Considered –

The report of the Principal Democratic Services Officer which invited Members to consider, amend and add to the Committee's Work Programme.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Work Programme be noted.
- (b) That Members contact the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman or the Principal Democratic Services Officer with any suggested business for future meetings.

The meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.