

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

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

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Phillip Barrett, Mike Chamber MBE (Chair), Robert Heseltine, David Ireton (Vice Chair), Stanley Lumley, Stuart Martin MBE, Patrick Mulligan, Gillian Quinn, Andy Solloway, David Staveley and Robert Windass.

In attendance: County Councillors David Chance and Carl Les.

Officers present: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, NYCC), David Kirkpatrick (Traffic Engineering Team Leader, BES, NYCC), Andrew Dixon, Cerys Townend and Rebekah Taylor (Education and Skills, CYPS, NYCC), Neil Irving (Assistant Director, Policy, Partnerships and Communities, NYCC) and Chloe Thwaites (Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Officer, CYPS, NYCC).

Other Attendees: Craven District Councillor Stephen Morrell.

Apologies: County Councillor Michael Harrison.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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### **131 Welcome and 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.

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

### **132 Minutes of the committee meeting held on 2 September 2021**

Considered the minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 2 September 2021.

#### **Resolved -**

- a. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 2 September 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **133 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

## 134 Public Questions or Statements

There was a public statement from Craven District Councillor Stephen Morrell, as follows:

Following the recent tragic death of George Lewis on Sutton Lane, I was contacted by a number of residents, including John Wakeling, asking me what, as a Craven District Council Ward representative, I intended to do about road safety on this lane.

On 6th October I organised a meeting which was attended by Ward Councillors from NYCC, CDC and Bradford MDC along with highways staff from both NYCC and West Yorkshire. NYCC Police were also represented. Those present looked at the historic background to previous talks on road safety issues with Sutton Lane, and discussed possible short term and long term proposals. All those present agreed to work collaboratively.

On 22nd November a second cross-border meeting took place with Ward representatives and Highways staff and more detailed proposals were discussed. Those discussions are ongoing.

Both the above meetings were with Press and Public excluded and so I can't go into more details at this time, other than to say that North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire councillors and Highways staff are working collaboratively to make a much needed difference in order to prevent further loss of life on Sutton Lane.

It is hoped that NYCC will give full support to any proposals that arise from these meetings and discussions.

The Chairman, County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE, thanked Councillor Stephen Morrell for attending and making his statement. He asked that David Kirkpatrick respond to the issues that had been raised and that this be done by bringing Item 6 forward to this point in the agenda.

David Kirkpatrick, responded by referring to the briefing that had been provided at Item 6 on the agenda.

There followed a discussion, as summarised below:

- Noted that additional funding would be needed to support physical safety improvements on the stretch of road
- Over time, various councils had not been successful in sourcing funding previously when commercial and residential developments had taken place in the vicinity
- The volume of traffic on the stretch of road had increased significantly over time, as the surrounding area had been developed
- Bradford MBC and North Yorkshire County Council are working together to try and resolve the issue of a footpath
- It was appreciated that all parties were working well to tackle this problem and to look at more safety improvements.

All present noted the tragic death of George Lewis and offered their condolences to the family.

### **Resolved -**

- a. That the committee be kept briefed on the progress being made with safety measures and the work that was being done jointly by the local councils and police forces.

### 135 Executive member update to the committee

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 summarised below:

- A lot is still unknown as the Covid-19 Omicron variant and the impact that it will have locally upon health, social care and businesses
- The number of infections appears to be rising steadily
- The Council and partners is continuing to monitor the situation will respond as needed. The focus will always being upon protecting the vulnerable and ensuring the continuation of front line services
- The Structural Change Order has been signed off by the Secretary of State. This then means that the County Council will be the continuing authority and that there will be 89 divisions and 90 Councils at the May 2022 County Council elections
- The County Council and the seven district and borough councils are working closely together on the development of the 13 work streams that have been identified as needed to enable the implementation of the new unitary authority. The work is overseen by the informal Implementation Board, made up of the County Council Executive and the Leaders of the district and borough councils, which is then supported by an Implementation team of officers from across all eight councils
- No significant decisions about the shape and form of the new unitary authority will be made until after the May 2022 elections
- Today is the financial settlement day. A tough settlement is expected, as it is recognised that the Government faces a large number of financial demands and pressures
- A member seminar will be held in January 2022 to go through the settlement in detail. The six Area Constituency Committees will also be reviewing the local impact of the settlement at their January 2022 meetings.

County Councillor David Chance provided an update on his portfolio, as follows:

- The Community Support Organisations (CSO) are continuing to support vulnerable people in the community during this next wave of the pandemic. This involves welfare checks, befriending and general support
- The CSOs are funded through to March 2022 but will be maintained as long as is needed
- The Household Support Fund (£3.5million) is underway and people can apply for support with household essentials. Upon application, a total of £250 per household is available with £125 in December and £125 in January
- The Department of Education Holiday Fund is also available over the Christmas holidays to support activities for school children.

County Councillor Patrick Mulligan provided an update on his portfolio, as follows:

- The new Covid-19 variant is spreading fast. The intention is to do all that is possible to keep schools open but the increase in infections will inevitably impact upon the availability of teaching staff. Fortunately, remote schooling at home is well established and could be used as needed in January 2022.

There followed a discussion, summarised below:

- The Locality work stream is looking at the development of the role and responsibilities of

the Area Constituency Committees (ACCs)

- The ACCs will have an important role to play in the new unitary authority and the views of the existing Chairs and Vice Chairs will be sought as the work develops
- The Covid-19 booster campaign has been a success to date but more local vaccination centres could be opened up.

County Councillor Carl Les noted that the Local Government Association (LGA) had recently undertaken a peer review of the County Council response to the pandemic and the Council was assessed as having done well. Whilst this was good to hear, it is important not to forget the number of deaths and severe illness that occurred in the county over the past 18 months. A report had been taken to the Executive at the meeting on 7 December 2021.

Daniel Harry said that he would circulate the link to the Executive report.

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

**136 Briefing on the response to a petition regarding the installation of a footway and traffic calming measures on Sutton Lane** - Report of the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services, NYCC

This item was dealt with as part of the discussion around the public statement (item 4 on the agenda) that was made by Craven District Councillor Stephen Morrell.

**137 Annual education report - schools, educational achievement and sustainability** - Report of the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services, NYCC

Considered –

A presentation by Andrew Dixon, (Strategic Planning Manager, CYPS).

The key points from the report are as summarised below:

- There are 8 primary academies and 4 secondary academies within the Skipton and Ripon constituency area
- The percentage of good or outstanding schools is higher in the constituency area than North Yorkshire as a whole
- The academy conversion rate is low in the committee area, when compared to the rest of the county
- There has been an increase in the number of children being taken out of mainstream school and educated at home which appears to be related to parental concerns about Covid-19 transmission in schools
- Secondary school funding is comparatively low in the constituency area and the county as a whole as the funding formula tends to benefit urban areas.

There followed a discussion, with the key points as summarised below:

- There have been 7 primary school closures in the area in recent years. This has largely been due to the financial problems that small, rural schools encounter when the numbers on the school roll start to fall
- The increase in elective home schooling is of concern as it is not clear to what extent the Council is empowered to check the quality of the education provided in the home setting and what work is being done to help ensure the development of social skills
- The number of people requesting an assessment under the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) process has increased significantly since 2015, when the national guidelines were revised. Over the period 2015 to 2021 the number of EHCPs doubled and there remains an upward trend. This increase in assessed need has not been matched by

additional funding from Government.

County Councillor David Ireton asked what more could be done to lobby the Government to make them aware of the increased costs associated with running rural schools and so adjust the funding formula accordingly.

Howard Emmett said that the Council was frequently in discussion with the Government on this matter and that the Department for Education is considering how to take into account the impact of sparsity in a consistent and fair way in the funding formula.

County Councillor Philip Barrett said that the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions seemed particularly high in the constituency area and asked why this was the case.

Cerys Townend said that there appeared to be a particular issue in Ripon and that the Council's Inclusion Team was looking into this and offering the schools support.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE asked how much stock do can we put in OFSTED inspections, bearing in mind that the inspection regime has changed over time and some schools have not been re-inspected in over 10 years.

Rebekah Taylor said that the current OFSTED focus is more upon quality and less upon outcomes. Some schools in the county have not been inspected in a long while but all schools will be re-inspected within the next 3 years. In the interim, the County Council continues to work closely with all LA maintained schools to provide support and help ensure that school performance remains good.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up the discussions and thanked officers for attending the meeting and answering questions from the committee members.

#### **Resolved –**

- a. To receive the next annual report at the meeting of the committee on 15 December 2022
- b. To have a follow up briefing on Elective Home Education at a future meeting of the committee.

#### **138 Rural Commission report and recommendations - Report of the Assistant Director - Policy, Partnerships and Communities, NYCC**

Considered –

A report by Neil Irving, Assistant Director - Policy, Partnerships and Communities.

Neil Irving gave an overview of the report, as summarised below:

- The commission was chaired by the Very Revd. John Dobson, Dean of Ripon and consisted of 8 members
- It is independent with administrative support provided by the Council
- Not decision making
- Held a series of evidence sessions with 70 plus people contributing
- There were 7 themes and a total of 57 recommendations have been made for consideration by 17 agencies and organisations at a district, county, regional and national level
- A report went to the Executive on 21 September 2021 to consider how the Council responds to the report and recommendations
- The Council is broadly supportive of the recommendations and has been asked to

establish an Advisory Task Force to take forward the recommendations.

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

- Whilst many of the issues highlighted in the report are known, it has been helpful to have them all in one place and put into themes with clear recommendations
- There is a key role for the Advisory Taskforce in guiding the implementation of the recommendations
- Technology will have a key role to play in addressing many of the issues raised in the report of the commission
- There is a need to understand the long term impact of the pandemic and how this has changed how people live in rural areas
- Devolution and the levelling-up agenda may see some increased funding to rural areas
- There is a need to support young people and young adults in the county. Too many of them leave, once they are able to, as there are simply not enough well paid jobs or careers available
- There has been a strong focus upon the development of the tourist industry for many years and now may be the time to look more widely at what businesses can be supported in the more rural areas of the county, particularly those that pay well and offer career opportunities.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE asked what role the Council would have to play in ensuring that the rural electricity infrastructure was able to manage the increasing demands upon it over time as we move through a period of de-carbonisation. The recent Storm Arwen has demonstrated the vulnerability of the network to extreme weather events, which are more common place.

In response, Neil Irving said that this was the responsibility of Northern Powergrid. It was anticipated that the Government would review the electrical supply network and that more investment would be made in it over time.

County Councillor Andy Solloway said that more could be done to mitigate the negative impact of an increasing number of second homes upon the sustainability of rural communities. More affordable housing could be built and increased Council Tax levies upon second homes could be explored.

County Councillor David Ireton asked what could be done to support food producers and processors in the county, particularly around the decarbonisation agenda.

Neil Irving said that the Local Enterprise Partnership has a role to play in providing advice and guidance to rural businesses.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and thanked Neil Irving for attending and updating the committee.

#### **Resolved –**

- a. That Neil Irving comes back to a future meeting of the committee to provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Rural Commission.

#### **139 Youth Council verbal update to committee - Report of the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services, NYCC**

Considered –

A verbal update on the work of the Youth Council by Chloe Thwaites, Youth Voice and Creative Engagement Officer, CYPS, NYCC.

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.

Chloe Thwaites said that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Youth Council had hoped to be able to attend but were sitting their mock examinations and so had to give their apologies. Chloe Thwaites then gave an overview, as summarised below:

- Promoting good mental health and wellbeing remains a priority. There are concerns about how the pandemic has affected some young people, particularly in rural areas
- Access to help and support services is an issue of concern
- There is a need to engage with more young people (11 to 18 years of age) in the area as a number of long standing members of the Youth Council are moving on. In particular, there is a wish to expand activity out of the current base in Skipton
- Social media and remote meeting platforms have been helpful in raising awareness of the work of the Youth Council and enabling people to attend meetings but face to face engagement can work better in many cases
- There has been a lot of interest in doing more to protect the environment and promote awareness of environmental issues. A Youth Voice event with primary school children was held to coincide with the COP26 Climate Change Conference
- The Youth Council AGM will be held in March 2022
- In February 2022 there will be local elections for the Youth Parliament.

There followed a discussion about how the engagement of young people with the Youth Council could be supported across the area.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and thanked Chloe Thwaites 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.

**140 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.

**Resolved –**

- a. That the committee work programme be reviewed by members.

**141 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 11:40pm.