

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Scarborough and Whitby Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Friday, 3rd December 2021 commencing at 10.30 am.

County Councillor Joe Plant in the Chair. plus County Councillors Clive Pearson, Derek Bastiman, Eric Broadbent, David Chance, Liz Colling, David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson, Tony Randerson and Roberta Swiers.

In attendance: County Councillor Carl Les.

Officers present: Richard Marr, Andrew Dixon, Jane Le Sage, Rebekah Taylor and Phillip Richardson.

Other Attendees: Naomi Lonergan and PCSO Simon Clapcott.

Apologies: County Councillor Andrew Jenkinson.

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

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#### **102 Introductions & Apologies for Absence**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and Members introduced themselves. Apologies were received from Cllr David Chance & Cllr David Jeffels.

#### **103 Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2021**

##### **Resolved –**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **104 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **105 Public Questions & Statements**

There were no public questions or statements.

#### **106 Briefing on Temporary Closure of Esk Ward at Cross Lane Hospital, Scarborough**

Considered: A briefing paper provided by Naomi Lonergan, Director of Operations North Yorkshire and York at Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, covering the areas of York and Selby. The briefing provided an update position regarding Esk Ward (a 13-bed female ward for patients requiring acute assessment and treatment for mental health), and the service ability to sustain the safety of the ward remaining open.

At the meeting Naomi Lonergan confirmed the ward closed on 12 November 2021 and that

patient care and treatment episodes were completed for the majority of patients prior to the closure to prevent the need for those patients to be moved to a different provision. Only one out of area patient was required to move which was planned to happen anyway.

She also confirmed that the significant gaps in the senior roles delivering care and treatment across across nursing, medical and psychology, were a key element in the decision to temporarily close the ward - ward care was delivered on a multi-disciplinary team basis so consideration was not only given to nursing levels. She also drew attention to the different options explored e.g. reducing the number of beds.

It was noted that daily meetings were taking place to look at all of the patients who would ordinarily receive their care from Esk Ward, to ensure they remained connected to their local community, with the intention of discharging them safely back home as soon as possible with adequate support.

Naomi Lonergan went on to confirm that the ability to retain and recruit staff into the adult wards at Cross Lane Hospital had been a revolving issue for several years, and she provide details on:

- The actions previously taken to try and address their staffing issues
- Their ongoing programme of focussed recruitment activity in Scarborough. This included information on an ongoing international recruitment project, which was expected to deliver results by Spring 2022, with five new qualified members of staff to date and several more scheduled to be interviewed.
- The development of senior nurse roles, with a proposal to introduce a nurse consultant type role, which it was hoped would deliver a better infrastructure to maintain care and treatment across the area. It was noted it would also provide a career pathway and progression for nursing staff.
- A new recruitment and retention premium, introduced in September 2021 as a pilot to attract people into Esk Ward and Danby Ward
- The exploration of alternative ways of working with partners in the voluntary sector to improve the delivery of mental health care

County Councillor Liz Colling queried the long-term prognosis for the Ward and whether there were similar issues in other areas served by the Trust. In response, the Trust's medium to long term plans to ensure a sustainable workforce were outlined. For example, whilst there were currently challenges around qualified staff and key professionals for the ward, the Trust had been successful in recent years in encouraging less senior staff to undertake degrees and upskill, thereby creating a pipeline of staff for the future. Coventry University was also now delivering nurse training for the area, as was York St John University. In addition, it was confirmed that the workforce issues outlined were also being experienced nationally, and that the Trust were dealing with similar recruitment concerns in the Harrogate area.

In response to other questions from Members, Naomi Lonergan confirmed:

- There were currently five patients who would ordinarily have been in Esk Ward, who were now being supported elsewhere.
- The closest alternative provision was in York, followed by Middlesbrough, and by exception in Durham and Darlington.
- Bed occupancy in mental health wards was much higher now nationally than previously seen pre-Covid. At times in recent months, 100% bed occupancy had been exceeded and the mental health forecast for the next five years was a continued increase in inpatient need.
- From mid 2021, the situation with the Ward was being constantly reviewed, and mitigations and contingency plans were put in place, until eventually in October 2021

the decision being reached to temporarily close the Ward for six months.

- Six months was considered an adequate length of time to address the recruitment issues across the multi disciplinary team.
- A communications plan was in place to keep stakeholders, partners and the public updated.

The Chairman thanked Naomi Lonergan for attending the meeting and the recorded his thanks to the Chairman of the Scrutiny of Health Committee for bringing the issue to the Committee's attention.

**Resolved:** That the update be noted.

## 107 Rural Policing Update

Considered - A presentation from PCSO Simon Clapcott of North Yorkshire Police (NYP) on the work of the Rural Taskforce in the Scarborough, Filey and Whitby area, which highlighted the current issues across the constituency area and provided a breakdown of the statistics for the different types of crime recorded.

As part of PCSO Simon Clapcott's presentation he confirmed:

- North Yorkshire was the worst region for raptor persecution and NYCC worked closely with organisations to monitor the bird numbers and their habitat;
- The Scarborough & Whitby constituency area was at the lower end of rural crime figures compared to other areas across North Yorkshire;
- In regard to burglary and theft, there was now a better level of confidence within the rural community to report, resulting in an improved level of understanding and a better focus of resources;
- Poaching season had now started leading to an increase in the number of reports of damage to crops and gates, and harassment of landowners;
- Opportunistic crime was commonplace;
- Theft of power tools and quad bikes regularly reported – quad bike thefts were an issue nationally;

PCSO Simon Clapcott also provided a detailed overview of the North Yorkshire Police's ongoing Operations – Checkpoint and Figaro. It was confirmed that Operation Checkpoint was intelligence led, focussed on tackling cross-border criminality, and jointly run by forces across the north of England.

In regard to Operation Figaro, NYP's civil action approach to poaching i.e. the issuing of community protection warnings and Notices, He confirmed that a lack of compliance with the associated conditions would result in criminal charges and Criminal Behaviour Orders being made – the equivalent of an Anti-social Behaviour Order.

PCSO Simon Clapcott went on to provide an overview of NYP's Rural Watch Scheme, facilitated through social media, allowing rural communities to contact and receive feedback from NYP to report suspicious behaviour in their communities. It was noted that other forces were now choosing to take up NYP's successful approach. It was also noted that a number of the committee members were involved in the Rural Watch Scheme in their area.

Finally, PCSO Simon Clapcott confirmed the continuation of Operation Owl – a multi-agency approach aimed at disrupting offenders, in response to the high level of raptor persecution across the County. It was noted there were a number of wildlife-trained officers in place, who had continued their work throughout the pandemic. Members

recognised the complex and forensically challenging nature of their work, and were pleased to note there had been an increase in the reporting of incidents. PCSO Simon Clapcott confirmed that without evidence from the public it is difficult to reach prosecution stage.

Members thanked Inspector PCSO Simon Clapcott for his attendance and it was:

**Resolved** – That the presentation be noted.

## **108 Schools, Educational Achievement & Finance**

Considered -

A detailed report introduced by Andrew Dixon, CYPS Strategic Planning Manager. The wide-ranging report provided information on:

- The no of schools across the area and their status;
- School Standards and Attainment;
- Exclusions;
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities;
- Elective Home Education
- Schools Finance;
- Local School Place Planning Issues;

They also noted the increase in the number of primary and secondary schools becoming academies and the number of schools with out of date OSTED ratings that required a new inspection.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed:

- The vast majority of NYCC schools with an OFSTED 'require improvement' rating were from inspection in 2014;
- OFSTED had recently confirmed that over the course of the next three years all schools across the country would be re-inspected;
- In the meantime, considerable work had taken place within schools with support from NYCC's, School Improvement team and Inclusion team. In addition the Improvement Team, Opportunities Area and the Locality Board for the Scarborough, Whitby & Ryedale were working effectively together to support school improvement and to provide for pupils with Special Educational Needs
- The number of fixed term exclusions was decreasing, but the number of permanent exclusions had increased. Jane Le Sage, Assistant Director for Inclusion provide a brief overview of the review of the Pupil Referral Service in 2020 and the resulting changes to the how schools could access those services before it got to permanent exclusion stage. She also confirmed there were 40 early intervention places in the Scarborough area that could be accessed through the Service;
- A post implementation review of the revised model for the Pupil Referral Service would start in early 2022;
- There was a requirement on the Authority to complete an ECHP within 20 weeks. During Covid, a range of disruptors had resulted in an Education Psychologist resource issue, which in turn had adversely affected the Authority's ability to achieve the 20-week timeline. In response, the Authority had introduced a hybrid Model in August 2021 to build on its capacity to deliver those statutory assessments and whilst there was still a backlog of around 80, there had been some improvement in delivery times.

- There had been a higher increase in the number of families choose elective home education in North Yorkshire compared to the national picture, with Covid being cited as the main deciding factor. In response the Authority had provided some additional resource to introduce four new EHE advisors who acted as a bridge between a parent, a school and the Local Authority, and provided an improved level of support and challenge. The result of that improved level of contact was now being evidenced through an increase in the number of EHE pupils returning to school.

County Councillor Liz Colling requested an update in six months times on the backlog in ECHPs and the number of pupils in Elective Home Education across the constituency area.

The Committee expressed their thanks to all those involved in supporting young people and vulnerable families, and for the comprehensive report and it was

**Resolved – That:**

- i. The annual report be noted and;
- ii. A six-monthly update be added to the Committee's work plan on the backlog in ECHPs and the number of pupils in Elective Home Education across the constituency area.

## **109 Whitby Swing Bridge Update**

Considered –

An update on Whitby Swing Bridge maintenance issues provided by Phillip Richardson, the County Council's Senior Bridge Engineer, which included an overview of the history of the bridge maintenance, the long-term plan for the bridge and longer term issues.

It was noted that it in 2012 a formal agreement was introduced that North Yorkshire County Council would carry out most of the maintenance functions and Scarborough Borough Council would operate it and carry out day to day maintenance.

Phillip Richardson provided an overview of the major maintenance works carried out of the bridge since that time and confirmed that the remaining lifespan of the 112-year-old bridge would be in the region of 75 years subject to a high standard of maintenance during that time. He went on to outline the planned maintenance scheduled, which included a re-surfacing scheme, and noted there were currently some VMS signs in place around the bridge set up by Area 3 colleagues.

Members paid tribute to work of John Smith, the previous bridge engineer who had recently retired. They also acknowledged the strategic importance of the swing bridge and the work that had been done to improve the resilience of the structure to minimise the number of breakdowns and the length of time that there was disruption when it did breakdown. They also accepted the bridge had many years of life left in it and that the maintenance regime in place would ensure the performance of the bridge remained good.

However, the Chairman expressed some concern about the public's perception about the bridge and the major impact it had on the town when it broke down. In response officers confirmed:

- Feedback from the recent consultations on the experimental closures had suggested the introduction of railings on the bridge. It was noted this had not been pursued, as there was concern about the additional weight on the bridge and what the railings would be attached to, given that the kerbing currently in place were not suitable, and would make the pathways too narrow.

- The procedure in place for when the bridge broke down, which included:
  - The contractor informing NYCC of a problem that cannot be fixed immediately (most were quick fixes). Sometimes this was delayed due to the Contractor needing time to work out whether it was a problem that could be fixed remotely, or whether a site visit was required to identify the problem;
  - NYCC informing Passenger Transport, who would try to arrange an additional bus through a local provider – Again, there were occasions when this was delayed whilst the Contractor identified the nature of the problem and therefore the time required to carry out the repair;

The Chairman suggested an arrangement was required for the provision of an additional bus service when a repair was going to take up to 2+ hours, to mitigate the impact on the town. Phillip Richardson confirmed this would require a new contract to be put in place with a bus provider.

The Chairman also queried the likelihood of the bridge lasting another 75 years and what plan was in place should the bridge unexpectedly breakdown and not be repairable. In response it was confirmed there were no designs in place that would allow the County Council to replace the bridge in 20yrs time, as any such designs would quickly become out of date. It was suggested that the initiation of temporary solutions such as the introduction of a temporary footbridge would be required whilst plans were drawn up for a replacement bridge. The timeframe from design to completion for a new bridge would be approximately 2.5 years, at a cost of £10m+.

Outside of a catastrophic disaster, any increase in the deterioration of the bridge would be identified through the condition scoring undertaken regularly, which would initiate the commencement of a new design being drawn up at the appropriate time.

The Chairman thanked Phillip Richardson for his attendance and it was

**Resolved** – That the update be noted.

## **110 Scarborough & Whitby Area Constituency Committee Work Programme 2020/21**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) asking Members to review the Work Programme, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the area.

**Resolved** - That the Democracy Officer update the work programme to reflect the decisions made during the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12.22 pm.