

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Thursday, 6th January, 2022 commencing at 10.00 am.

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

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

Officers present: Melisa Burnham, Andrew Dixon, Sally Dunn, Gary Fielding, Daniel Harry, Helen Ingle, Chris Reynolds, Ruth Stacey, Louise Wilson and Ruth Gladstone.

Other Attendees: Lucy Gardiner (petition organiser).

Apologies: County Councillor Zoe Metcalfe

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

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### **108 Chairmanship**

Considered -

County Councillor John Mann (Chairman) advised that he needed to leave this meeting at around 1pm, to attend a meeting of the Borough Council's Planning Committee. He also advised that County Councillor Zoe Metcalfe (Vice-Chairman) had tendered her apologies for absence for this Area Constituency Committee meeting. County Councillor John Mann reported that this Area Constituency Committee meeting was unlikely to conclude before the time when he had to leave and asked the Committee to elect a Member to serve as Chairman in the absence of himself and the Vice-Chairman.

County Councillors Jim Clark and Robert Windass reported that they also had to attend that afternoon's meeting of the Borough Council's Planning Committee and therefore would need to leave this Area Constituency Committee meeting before the end.

#### **Resolved –**

That County Councillor Michael Harrison be elected Chairman during the consideration of any business at this meeting when County Councillors John Mann and Zoe Metcalfe are absent.

### **109 Minutes of the Informal Meeting of the Committee held on 16th September 2021**

#### **Resolved –**

That the Minutes of the informal meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **110 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

## 111 County Council Budget 2022/23

Considered -

Gary Fielding (Corporate Director - Strategic Resources) gave a presentation regarding the Council's budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast. The presentation also picked up Council Tax issues, risks, and some financial issues relating to the Harrogate and Knaresborough Constituency area.

In response to Members' questions, Gary Fielding provided the following further information:-

- Within reserves, a general working balance of £27million was available for emergencies, such as dealing with COVID and finding capacity to deal with local government reorganisation. Gary Fielding commented that such reserves were a sensible approach going forwards because they provided a buffer so that councils did not need to rush into knee jerk decisions, cutting services, to make ends meet. County Councillor Gareth Dadd (Deputy Leader of the Council) commented that the very difficult early decisions that Members had made, regarding raising Council Tax and cutting spending, had put the Council in a far better position than most other authorities in the country.
- An increase in inflation had been factored into the Council's budget figures. The broader inflation pressures applied to lots of areas. However, in some areas, eg gas prices, a 55.8% increase in gas prices had been factored in. An increase in inflation would have a positive impact in terms of the Council's investments. The Council had no capital debt on variable interest rates so an increase in inflation would have no impact on such debt.
- Transdev had been the only bus company to express an interest in being involved with the Council in a scheme to provide electric buses in the Harrogate and Knaresborough Constituency area.

Gary Fielding undertook to forward a copy of his presentation slides to Committee Members.

### **Resolved –**

That Gary Fielding be thanked for attending this meeting and for his presentation.

## 112 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 Carl Les (Leader of the Council):-

- Omicron and the huge pressure on the NHS and the care sector including staff shortages due to illness, and the need to encourage residents to have the vaccinations and booster. He also applauded volunteers who had kept vaccination

- stations open, including on Christmas Day.
- The “Make Care Matter” recruitment campaign to encourage people to consider the care sector as a good employment opportunity and career.
- Climate change and steps being taken to decarbonise the Council’s estate and the encouragement being given to others to follow that route too.
- Local Government Reform:- the positive progress which was being made, including the setting up of a number of workstreams with a view to achieving the smoothest possible transition from eight authorities to one single authority; and Devolution, in respect of which councillors were awaiting the opportunity to enter into talks with civil servants.
- Council Tax and the budget to be set by full Council in February 2022, to allow the Council to do the things it needed to do, especially for vulnerable people, and other things that needed to be done for everybody eg winter gritting of roads to keep the County moving. However, the Council also needed to be mindful of the ability of people to pay.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd (Deputy Leader of the Council):-

- Council finances, in respect of which he or Gary Fielding would be happy to respond to any Member’s questions of fact (but not policy). He advised that he was disappointed at some recent media coverage about investments made by the County Council in the Harrogate area.

County Councillor David Chance (Executive Member for Stronger Communities):-

- The support, including a range of new services, which continued to be offered to communities during Covid through the 23 Community Support Organisations (CSOs). The Council was proposing to retain the support of the CSOs for a minimum of a further 12 months.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Access):-

- The Head of Highways had sent out an up-to-date report on the situation regarding winter gritting. In addition, a further ten weather stations and roadside cameras had now been put online on the County Council’s website.
- The frequency of trains between Harrogate and York doubled with effect from 12 December 2021 thanks to a £10million investment led by the County Council which improved track and signalling in the Cattal area.
- A Bus Services Improvement Plan had gone out to public consultation.
- Free public access WiFi had recently been launched in Knaresborough, in addition to Ripon, and would be made available in Harrogate later in 2022.

County Councillor Michael Harrison (Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration, including Health and Wellbeing Board and Extra Care):-

- Many of the challenges in the Health and Adult Services Directorate, and across social care, had been more widely, well communicated. Figures to add to Members’ understanding were:- NYCC staff absence for Covid related reasons was approximately 15% ie about 3 times more than it had been throughout the pandemic.
- Daily meetings with all care settings across the County had been reactivated to focus any support which might be needed as any crises unfolded.
- A number of care homes had “hot” Covid outbreaks and there were others for which confirmation of results was awaited following positive Lateral Flow Tests. The challenge was that, if a care home had an outbreak, it was prevented from accepting new admissions. This further reduced the amount of availability of care home beds across the county. The Council was opening up additional beds wherever it could. A challenge was that, if people needed to be discharged from hospital because they no longer needed to be there, but they could not go home without support, or if they needed to go into a care home bed, the restriction on care home admissions was impacting on hospitals.

- The majority of the Council's Reablement Teams were being redirected to provide routine home care. In addition, hospital VCS services were being expanded to try to assist with discharges. One impact of diverting resources to address more critical need was that many Respite Services etc were being scaled down, which impacted on relatives and friends who relied on respite.

**Resolved –**

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

**113 Schools, Educational Achievement and Finance**

**Considered –**

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Services which provided information on:-

- The number of schools across the Constituency area and their status.
- School standards, attainment and Ofsted judgements.
- The number of young people not in education, employment or training.
- The numbers of fixed-term exclusion incidents, and permanent exclusions.
- The reshaping of targeted mainstream SEN provision and SEN statistics.
- Elective home education.
- The number of schools in financial difficulty across North Yorkshire and in the Constituency area.
- The planning of school places.

The report was introduced by Andrew Dixon (Strategic Planning Manager, Children and Young People's Services) who, together with Chris Reynolds (Head of SEND Strategic Planning Resource), Sally Dunn (Head of Finance for Schools, Early Years and High Needs) and Louise Wilson (Principal Adviser Monitoring), responded to Members' questions.

In response to questions from Members, the following information was provided:-

- North Yorkshire secondary schools were placed 138 out of 150 local authorities in terms of receiving national funding. Such funding was calculated in accordance with a DfE funding formula and took into account a number of factors such as deprivation and prior attainment. The County Council, as Local Education Authority, continued to lobby, as far as secondary schools' funding position was concerned and, in particular, in relation to small rural secondary schools which were facing significant financial pressures. In response to a request from Members, Officers undertook to provide Members with background information about funding rates and DfE policy in case Members wished to raise the issue with Andrew Jones MP. County Councillor Carl Les (Leader of the County Council) undertook to raise the issue at one of his fortnightly meetings with all North Yorkshire MPs, but this would be additional to the Committee having a dialogue with Andrew Jones MP at a forthcoming Committee meeting.
- With regard to the reshaping of SEN provision, it was proposed that there would be six targeted mainstream provisions within the Constituency area and it was likely that such provision at Grove Road Community Primary School in Harrogate would expand beyond the current provision of 8 places. Covid had impacted on the development and implementation of targeted mainstream provision as school leaders and governors had concentrated on the various changes they had had to implement to make sure that education continued. Some Head teachers who might have been interested, in pre-Covid times, might now start coming back to

‘the table’ for conversations about developing further provisions.

- Schools could become an Academy either by taking the decision themselves to progress a decision around academisation, or through a Directive Academy Order resulting from an Ofsted judgement of ‘inadquate’. The Council provided support to schools that needed to improve from either a ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ judgement, or through the academisation process.
- Across North Yorkshire, schools which had the right ethos and the right skill set, were being encouraged to come forward to host a targeted mainstream provision to help meet demand for full time education provision for children and young people who were able to access mainstream education but with additional support for their special educational needs. Any such provision, once established, would receive additional support and finance from the Council. The Council had made plans, and had allocated resource, for 31 targeted mainstream provisions across the county. This was based on a forecast of demand. Currently seven of such provisions were operational and another three were going through the application process.
- School-level performance (league) tables, previously published annually, were likely to be reinstated during 2022.
- Regarding assessment and exam arrangements for the current year, the Government firmly intended to go ahead with public examinations. However, contingency arrangements were in place, which included adjustments to some course content both at GCSE and A level, and providing advanced information eg formula sheets for science and maths. All schools nationally had been asked to consider undertaking three key assessment points during the year to ensure that all schools had robust evidence to support teacher assessed grades should the Covid pandemic mean that it was necessary to move again to a context of teacher assessed grades.
- There had been a significant increase in the number of children taken out school to be home educated, reflecting both the regional and national situations. Members commented that they were unsurprised by this due to the Covid pandemic. This Council, in response to the situation, had put together a team of elective home education advisors to satisfy itself that both the safety and the education provision for the young person was right. In addition, at the time when a parent was considering elective home education, and the child was on a school roll, the opportunity was taken to see if there were any issues that could be resolved so that the parent could then look to maintain the child in mainstream school, or special school if that was the case. However, it was recognised that ultimately it was the right of the parent to make the elective home education decision.

Members thanked the officers for their very detailed report and for providing full and clear replies to questions.

#### **Resolved –**

That the report, and the educational factors in the Harrogate and Knaresborough Constituency area, be noted.

## **114 Healthy Eating**

Considered –

The report of the Healthy Schools Programme Manager and Public Health's Health Improvement Manager which outlined :-

- The work being done to promote healthy eating; to target children from deprived backgrounds; and in the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency area; and other work that the County Council could do.
- How local elected Members, as community leaders, could assist.

The report was introduced by Ruth Stacey (Healthy Schools Programme Manager) and Helen Ingle (Health Improvement Manager, Public Health). Ruth Stacey and Helen Ingle also responded to Members' questions.

In response to questions from Members, the following information was provided:-

- Officers considered it to be very helpful if Members could take with them, on their visits to schools, copies of the new Healthy Packed Lunch leaflet to discuss with teachers. It was agreed that, once the new leaflet was finalised, copies would be forwarded to elected Members.
- Very useful summary data was available, arising from the Growing Up in North Yorkshire survey, about the issues (eg healthy eating, physical activity, mental health) relevant to each school. Members might find such data helpful if visiting schools in their local areas. The Officers offered to share links to the reports.
- No change in trend regarding children's dental health had been picked up yet following changes in obesity levels. However, Helen Ingle undertook to question colleagues in Public Health about this and to inform County Councillor John Ennis of the outcome.
- No information was held about the reasons why a concerning number of pupils in years 8/10 had nothing to eat or drink for breakfast. The Officers advised they would consider this when preparing for the next survey in summer 2022.
- Members welcomed the idea of schools appointing a governor to oversee school food.
- Members expressed support for including nutrition in the curriculum.
- County Councillor Paul Haslam offered to send the Officers the link to a company called Pro Veg who were currently working with Leeds Education Council and could help to get more healthy and interesting diets into schools. He also highlighted that there were at least two national companies, Greggs and Kellogg's, which had breakfast in school trusts and he felt it would be very helpful to enter into partnership with such trusts. He also encouraged greater ambition in order to attract grants from other organisations, eg Public Health England, to improve education about diet and lifestyle. The Officers thanked County Councillor Paul Haslam for these suggestions.
- Herbie the carrot mascot was still used but had been decommissioned during the Covid pandemic because he attracted close contact between children.

The Chairman thanked County Councillor Paul Haslam for making the suggestion that this topic should be considered by the Committee.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the report, which Members describe as "excellent", be welcomed.

- (b) That Ruth Stacey and Helen Ingle be thanked for attending this meeting.
- (c) That the suggested action which local elected Members can take, to assist the promotion of healthy eating and healthy weight, as set out in section (e) of the report, be noted.
- (d) That the relevant Executive Members be thanked, on behalf of this Committee, for all the work being done by the Public Health and Health Schools teams to improve nutrition and promote a healthy weight in children.

**115 Receipt of Petition "Stop The Station Gateway Project and the Pedestrianisation of Harrogate's Town Centre"**

Considered –

The petition entitled "STOP The Station Gateway Project and the Pedestrianisation of Harrogate's Town Centre". The petition included the various reasons why the petitioners wanted such action to be stopped. The petition was brought before the Committee in accordance with the County Council's Petitions Scheme.

The petition was presented at the meeting by Anna McIntee of Harrogate Residents' Association who spoke for 5 minutes.

A statement by Harrogate and District Cycle Action was read out at the meeting on their behalf. The statement advised that Harrogate and District Cycle Action strongly supported Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme.

A written report submitted to the meeting included the comments of Officers from the Business and Environmental Services Directorate concerning the content of the petition.

Members thanked Anna McIntee for her presentation and debated the petition. Points raised during Members' debate were as follows:-

- The wording of petition was considered by Members to be unfair and biased. In addition, there were factual inaccuracies within the petition and the presentation by the petition organiser, namely:-
  - The Harrogate Congestion Study public engagement was not a survey about a bypass, as claimed by the petition organiser. It was a public engagement about curing the problem with congestion in Harrogate. A relief road, or "bypass", was simply one of the options put forward. The overwhelming response, of the 15,500 persons who had responded at that time, was to call on North Yorkshire to introduce better facilities for walking and cycling and to boost public transport and that was exactly what the Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme sought to do. It represented an investment of some £11 million in a part of the Harrogate town centre which needed an uplift. The Scheme was not simply about highways changes, but included fundamental changes to improve the public realm and that area which most visitors to Harrogate, who arrived by bus and train, saw when they first stepped off their transport.
  - The petition said that the Gateway Scheme would "adversely affect everyone in Harrogate". Members advised that they personally would not be adversely affected by the Scheme. Harrogate Cycle Action felt the same, as did contributors on social media who had reacted to stories about this subject.

Members described the phrase “adversely affect everyone in Harrogate” as “a grand sweeping statement which was demonstrably false”.

- The petition stated that the Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme would pedestrianize James Street and this was untrue. Under the Scheme, there would be a partial pedestrianisation at the top portion of James Street. When asked by the Bid, 2/3rds of businesses on James Street supported partial pedestrianisation.
- The petition said that 60%-70% of visitors arrived by car. However, no one was suggesting stopping them, and statistics showed there was ample car parking in car parks to make up for the small number of spaces lost.
- The petition said that businesses would not be able to receive deliveries. Members described this as “a scare story” because only a small amount of pedestrianisation was proposed. For example, Marks and Spencer had pedestrian areas both front and back, deliveries had not been a problem, and delivery areas were marked out on the plans in the Station Gateway Scheme.
- The petition referred to the “wholesale introduction of cycle lanes”. Members described this as “a great misrepresentation”. Under the Gateway Scheme, there would be more and better cycle lanes. Members acknowledged that, assuming nobody stopped using their car, motorists might have to wait a few more seconds to get through town in order that buses could connect more quickly at the bus station. However, they felt that the assumption that nobody would stop using their cars was unrealistic. The Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme was about ensuring that those who wished to use a mode of transport other than the private car had an opportunity to do so. The Scheme was not about banning cars or replacing roads wholesale with cycle lanes.
- This was the second petition from the Harrogate Resident’s Association to be considered by this Committee. The action requested in the first petition, which had been rejected by the Committee, had aimed to stop a Low Traffic Neighbourhood Scheme on Beech Grove. The petitioners had also opposed the Council’s Active Travel Fund scheme on Oatlands Drive. As such, the petition organisers had a history of opposing any schemes which the Council brought forward which aimed to encourage people out of their motor cars and to use sustainable means of transport or to use public transport.
- 10% of the signatories to this petition lived outside North Yorkshire.
- The Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme was due to be considered by the Council’s Executive on 25 January 2022 when a final decision would be made on whether to take the Scheme forward.

County Councillor Michael Harrison advised that, as a member of the Executive, he would find it very useful to know if any Harrogate Member, or any political group, was not supportive of proceeding with the Harrogate Station Gateway Scheme. In response, County Councillors Richard Cooper, Paul Haslam, Jim Clark, Cliff Trotter and John Mann each expressed full support for the Scheme. County Councillor Philip Broadbank advised that he broadly welcomed the Gateway Scheme, although there were other things that he would have liked to have been looked at eg an option of having a two-way scheme on West Park. County Councillor Richard Cooper advised that he believed that a two-way scheme on West Park was outside the parameters of what could be funded through the Transforming Cities Fund so therefore could not be part of this Scheme.



**Resolved –**

That the action requested by the petition be not taken for the reasons put forward during the debate, but this Committee requests that the petition be taken into consideration as part of the analysis of the results of the second round of consultation on the Harrogate Station Gateway proposals and before a decision is taken on implementation of the Scheme.

*Note: Immediately following consideration of this item of business, County Councillor John Mann left the meeting to attend another commitment. County Councillor Michael Harrison took the chair, having been so elected at the beginning of this meeting.*

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**County Councillor Michael Harrison in the Chair**

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**116 Public Questions or Statements**

There were no questions or statements from members of the public, with the exception of a statement from Harrogate and District Cycle Action which had been put to the meeting during consideration of the previous item of business.

**117 Footway and Lighting - Kingsley Road/Bogs Lane**

Considered –

The verbal request from County Councillor Philip Broadbank in which he asked the Committee to commission a report from Highways Officers, to include a proposal for speedy action to provide a footpath and street lighting, and how traffic signals could be realigned to improve safety, at Kingsley Road/Bogs Lane because the current situation was dangerous and needed to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

County Councillor Philip Broadbank explained that the location was within his Division and adjoined the Central Division. Over the previous three years, major developments had started around the railway bridge and many of the homes in those developments were now occupied and consequently there was an urgent need to get the footpath and highway lighting in place. He reported that Officers were aware of the issue, and there was a Section 278 agreement in place to construct a footway at the location. Some works had been undertaken, and more were due to be undertaken in the near future. However, a comprehensive approach was now needed as a matter of urgency. Over the previous few years, councillors had had discussions, meetings, and exchanged correspondence with Highway Officers. Whilst some work was planned, there was a lot to do to make this area safe for the increasing number of residents to use for walking and cycling.

Melisa Burnham (Area 6 Highways Manager) reported that the County Council had received, and responded to, correspondence from residents, councillors and the Constituency MP throughout 2021 regarding the lack of footway link on Kingsley Road. There was a planning obligation on one of the developers to design and deliver the said footway link between the Barratts development site and the railway bridge as part of a Section 278 agreement. Unfortunately, a review of the footway design had identified that the proposal put forward was not deliverable due to site constraints. North Yorkshire Highways team had reviewed alternative design options and identified that the solution required third-party land. Land negotiations had taken place and continued. In addition, Highways Officers were seeking further traffic modelling in relation to the footpath and

signals and had recently commissioned a transport consultant to undertake this task. In conclusion, the County Council's Highways could offer reassurances that progress was being made to bring about a satisfactory solution, but the process is very much time constrained by processes which were not directly in the control of the County Council, mainly to do with the third-party land requirements. Therefore a commencement date for the works could not be given at this meeting.

County Councillor Richard Cooper advised that he shared County Councillor Philip Broadbank's concerns and that the bridge was partly located in his Ward.

Members discussed how the Committee might proceed in relation to this matter and thanked County Councillor Philip Broadbank for bringing this "log-jam" to the Committee's attention. It was agreed that the matter should be referred for urgent discussions between the Area 6 Highways Manager and the County Councillors and Borough Councillors representing the Kingsley Road/Bogs Lane area.

**Resolved –**

That the actions required to provide a footpath and street lighting at Kingsley Road/Bogs Lane be referred for urgent discussions between the Area 6 Highways Manager and the County Councillors and Borough Councillors representing the Kingsley Road/Bogs Lane area.

**118 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 –**

That the Work Programme, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved.

The meeting concluded at 1.15 pm.