

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Selby and Ainsty Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Selby and Ainsty Area Constituency Committee held at Selby District Council Offices, Selby on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 2pm.

### Present:-

### Members:-

County Councillors Karl Arthur, John Cattanach, Melanie Davis (Chair), Stephanie Duckett, Tim Grogan, Andrew Lee, John McCartney, Bob Packham, Andy Paraskos, Kirsty Poskitt, Jack Proud, and Arnold Warneken

County Councillor Carl Les – Leader of the Council – at the invite of the Committee

### Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Mark Crane, Mike Jordan, Cliff Lunn and Steve Shaw-Wright.

### Officers:-

Michael Leah (Assistant Director – Environmental and Countryside, Transport, Waste and Countryside Services), Mark Kibblewhite (Senior Policy Officer, Economic Growth), Danielle Daglan (Cultural Services Manager – Craven District Council), Hannah Benson (Area Highways Manager); Sharon Fox (Area Highways) and Steve Loach (Democratic Services).

There were two Members of the public present.

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

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### 14. Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

### 15. Minutes

#### Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 17. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

Further to the previous meeting of the Committee there were a number of appointments to Outside Bodies and the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) provided details.

### Resolved –

that the following decisions in respect of Category 3 Outside Bodies were agreed :-

Oglethorpe and Dawson Educational Foundation – County Councillor Kirsty Poskitt (It was subsequently clarified that the Foundation had been the subject of acadamisation therefore representation from NYCC was no longer required.)

St John's Catholic School for the Deaf, Boston Spa – Mr J Snowball

## 18. Public Questions or Statements

Councillor John White, representing Whitley Parish Council, submitted the following:-

Withdrawal of 405 Bus Service - Selby to Doncaster via Whitley

Why was there no public consultation on the withdrawal of this service. NYCC were notified by Arriva on 24th July that the service would be withdrawn. No contact was made with anyone from our community. The community only found out mid-September when the news was leaked on a Community Facebook page. This withdrawal has and continues to cause severe hardship and stress to those residents who rely on public transport. People have lost jobs and investigate moving home. I ask NYCC Councillors to investigate this breakdown in communications and restore a service to Doncaster for Whitley Residents.

Councillor Gillian Ivey – Chair, Little Smeaton Parish Council

Clearly you have placed this item on the agenda today as you have concerns regarding the bus services in our area; thank you. I understand from Cllr Les that there are between 73 and 79 services lost, amended, or at risk throughout North Yorkshire. As the Chairman of Little Smeaton Parish Council, I will speak from local knowledge and therefore will concentrate on giving you information regarding services such as the 405 which has been removed and the 409 which has changed.

Now that the 405 has been axed, I am informed that residents in Whitley can no longer travel either north or south on the A19 by public transport. How are those without access to a car supposed to reach either Selby or Doncaster or any point in between?

The 409 previously ran through our villages of Stapleton, Womersley, Little Smeaton and Kirk Smeaton – the end points of the journey being Pontefract and Doncaster. We have for many years been reliant on goodwill from West and South Yorkshire in arranging for their buses to travel from one to the other across our little corner of North Yorkshire – this since any County subsidy ceased many years ago.

In September we learned that the 409 was to be taken off, but thanks to the efforts of Mary Welch at North Yorkshire Passenger Transport, there has been a 6 month reprieve with an amended service which runs in a loop from Pontefract, through our villages and back to Pontefract. Lovely, and thank you Mary and North Yorkshire Council who have agreed a small subsidy; but clearly the service is still in danger and what about those with no transport who can no longer travel over the border to the southern destinations of Askern and Doncaster?

I'd like to paint a picture for councillors around the table who may be unfamiliar with our area - the 'deep south' of Selby District / North Yorkshire, below the M62. I used to represent it once and sit on your side of the table. The border with South Yorkshire runs immediately behind the houses comprising the edge of Kirk Smeaton. The border with West Yorkshire lies approx 4 miles to the west of Little Smeaton. The nearest supermarket in North Yorkshire is in Selby some 14 miles north. Likewise GP surgeries and Dentists; and Leisure facilities for that matter. So we are not exactly 'remote' but actually we are.

Residents from the villages I have already mentioned have to go to West Yorkshire [Pontefract] or South Yorkshire [Askern] for Health provision and to buy food. Until October 3rd these could both be accessed by bus, now Askern cannot be and Pontefract is more difficult. Access to Selby is impossible. What is going to happen to young people hoping to attend Selby College? They will go elsewhere.

Can I also point out that it is utterly pointless sending the Rural Housing Enabler to carry out surveys of need/promote building of affordable housing in the villages – as has happened over the last year – for obvious reasons. Like NO BUSES.

I am here today representing the southern villages of Little Smeaton, Kirk Smeaton, Stapleton, Womersley, Whitley and Cridling Stubbs. Councillors from all six are currently working together; seeking solutions to help their residents. I fully appreciate that NY council will be unable to grant a large subsidy to help what will be quite a small percentage of the whole population, however, in 6 months' time our residents will be paying their entire council tax to North Yorkshire Council, so I think that it is not unreasonable to ask....

What else can North Yorkshire Council do, to look after those of our residents who have now become isolated and unable to access Health Care Provision and basic needs such as food.

The Chair stated that, as the questions related to cuts in local bus services, she would bring forward that item on the agenda, enabling the issues raised in the public questions to be considered at this stage.

## **19. Local Bus Services – Reductions in Service – Discussion**

Michael Leah – Assistant Director – Travel Environmental and Countryside, Transport, Waste and Countryside Services, provided a presentation, highlighting the following:-

Members discussed the issues raised and the response provided, highlighting the following:-

### **Context**

- Over the past decade plus, bus use has been in steady decline (use of car has increased in that period).
- Commercial bus services are provided by private companies, those companies make decision on their services. In other words bus operators can unilaterally decide to withdraw a service; NYCC have no responsibility to provide public transport.
- It is relatively common place for services to be reduced or cease entirely (in the past 5 years, 11 services have been withdrawn).
- Covid saw passenger numbers drop significantly and patronage is at about 80% of pre-covid levels. Concessions users are the ones not returning to bus.

- Government and NYCC supported operators financially through Covid. Government will fund to March 2023. Likely more services will reduce or be lost at that time (and some prior to).

## **Challenges**

- Bus operators are feeling pain from both ends: reduced income as a result of fewer passengers; and higher costs due to inflation on fuel and pressures on pay. Added to that recruitment and retention of drivers is a national concern.
- People changed habits through Covid with fewer journeys are being made, e.g. some working from home. Concessions the particular areas where people are not returning to bus.
- Rural areas a particular challenge for bus service provision.

## **Action**

- The recent bus network review with operators flagged a number of routes at risk (amber and red) which could mean reduced timetable or cease entirely when funding concludes in March 2023. NYCC issued press statements encouraging people back on to their local bus (a 'use it or lose it' message.)
- Working with operators, through the Enhanced Partnership, to explore ways to improve the appeal of bus and encourage passengers back on, e.g. marketing, reduced fares, etc...
- Challenging DfT on their own support to rural bus provision – a lot of funding has been weighted to urban areas.
- Continue to develop NYCC Bus Service Improvement Plan to be ready for next round of funding. Feedback from DfT is NYCC need to be more "decisive" in its plan, i.e. commit to deliver schemes.

## **Selby Issues - Arriva's decision to withdraw service 405**

- NYCC notified July (70 day notice), the IPT team then followed the usual process in terms of seeking mitigation or alternate solutions, for example working with Arriva and other operators to retain service or change other service to compensate.
- NYCC undertook procurement to seek costs from other operators to step in as Arriva would not continue (even with funding). No other operator wanted to provide a service due to lack of drivers and this route not being a commercial priority.
- In August DfT announced additional funding but it was too late for Arriva's decision on this route.
- NYCC confirm route would be lost to community based on what solution could be found (re-routing the 476). Acknowledge that earlier confirmation would have been helpful to residents but need to balance that against being alarmist if a solution could be found.

## **408/409 – No longer goes to Doncaster**

- The service 408/409 was identified by Arriva as being no longer commercially viable. The previous service was not financially supported by North Yorkshire County Council, however a contribution was made by West Yorkshire Combined Authority as most passengers were travelling from the WYCA area. The new 408/409 timetable was commissioned by WYCA who felt the focus on Pontefract met the needs of the majority of passengers and retaining the full previous service would not be affordable. Discussions with the operator indicated that in order to continue the previous level of service funding of over £200,000 per annum would be required. The numbers of passengers using the service in North Yorkshire was very low (on average less than 7 passengers a day) and the revised 408/ 409 timetable retained a regular link to a nearby town which meets NYCCs policy on supporting services.

#### **415 – No longer drops off at Selby College – students now must change in Selby**

- This was a commercial decision by Arriva to improve the viability of service 415, they advise that there are a number of services running between Selby College and Selby to connect with 415 and tickets are fully interchangeable.

#### **476 Service – while this service has been extended since the initial announcement the extension is only a partial solution. The extension of the early service to include Beal has been funded by NYCC and the loop down to the George and Dragon in Whitley means a walk from the southern end of the village.**

- Significant work was done by NYCC officers to find a safe location to turn the 476 at the southern end of Whitley but there was no suitable place to turn a large passenger carrying vehicle safely. Options to loop the bus via side roads near the mushroom farm were also considered but Arriva, NYCC officers and the local councillor agreed this was not a safe and reliable option for a bus in service.

#### **412 Service York to Wetherby – Residents are concerned that Connexions plan to withdraw the service**

- NYCC were made aware of this earlier in October (5th), with the service due to come off on 10th December. Data from Connexions has been requested to understand where people are travelling to and work is taking place with neighbouring authorities, City of York Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, to explore what options are available to maintain some level of service for passengers. NYCC updated parishes on 7th October and will do so again when further information is available.

Members discussed the issues raised in the public questions and the subsequent presentation, and highlighted the following:-

- The loss of the 412 Service would be a great loss to the communities it served but there appeared to be different reasons as to why it was to be withdrawn, with both lack of drivers and not being viable having been cited, and it was asked whether this was because the company just did not want to operate the service. In response it was stated that the reasons provided for the cessation of the service were a lack of drivers and funding, but if further funding could be obtained the service may be able to be retained. It was noted that Connexions was a small operator and NYCC were working hard with them to recognise their specific issues in relation to the operation of this route. A Member pointed out that the operator's busses would be travelling empty along the road to deliver their schools' service, therefore, there must be sufficient drivers and viability for this to continue. The position outlined was noted.
- A Member outlined other communities that would be affected by the withdrawal of the 412 service, particularly as it assisted people getting to other areas outside of North Yorkshire, and he noted that some of the other Local Authority areas served by the route were providing particularly low returns from concessionary fares. He suggested that all the various Local Authorities affected should be working together to develop an appropriate solution. It was recognised that the service was under used and there was a need to encourage people to use the service to ensure it could be retained. A Member highlighted that the cost of fuel and the low returns on concessions was making many routes unviable.
- In terms of the services that had been withdrawn (11) recently every effort was being made to try and get these reinstated. Work was taking place with other Local Authorities to undertake a co-ordinated approach.
- In relation to the concessionary rates, the Department of Transport were to carry out a review, but that was unlikely to take place until next year.
- A Member referred to the 45, 476 and 49 services, and noted that many people within his local division, obtained their services, particularly NHS related, outside of the area,

as the division was uniquely placed in having borders with all of the Yorkshire counties. Access to those services would now be very difficult, if not impossible, for those people without their own transport, particularly as funding from the other Passenger Transport Authorities was being removed, leading to services not operating in North Yorkshire.

- Members were pleased that the Passenger Transport Team had been effective in ensuring that pupils at Selby College had been provided with bus services.
- It was recognised that the bus service provision was costly but a solution had to be found in respect of the removed services as local communities were being disenfranchised. With the possible availability of funding from the rural prosperity fund, it was asked whether communities could come together to develop community transport schemes through the use of that funding. The Leader of the Council, present at the meeting, stated that he totally accepted all the points raised, but noted that this was an issue that was affecting rural areas across England. In terms of the prosperity fund he noted that the bidding process was complex and was not guaranteed to be available. He emphasised that issues such as bus services had to be discussed by the whole of North Yorkshire, with a community forum being the most appropriate method, to determine where such services should be reinstated. He noted that even if funding had been available there were services that the operators were no longer willing to run. He stated that he held regular discussions with the Leaders of other Local Authorities and would raise these issues with them.
- Advice on developing community transport schemes was available to Members from the NYCC Passenger Transport Service and from Stronger Communities.
- A Member highlighted the problem around language in terms of providing bus services, with a car park development described as an investment whereas bus service funding was described as a subsidy. He considered that a different mind-set was required for bus service provision, which would encourage people to use them more readily.
- It was further suggested that co-operation between the various Passenger Transport Authorities would be the best way forward for developing a solution. Devolution may also provide additional funding to assist that process.
- Noting comments made by a Member earlier in the meeting it was asked why he had considered it unsafe to travel on a particular bus service, as well as describing these as unreliable and dirty. It was stated that targets for reliability were monitored but safety was not a matter that could be monitored. There had been no recent complaints with regards to cleanliness.
- It was suggested that the most appropriate solution to replacing disappearing bus services were community operated services. Another possibility could be the use of 8 seater taxis operating routes requested by the local communities affected by bus service reductions. Issues around bureaucracy and regulations require consideration to ensure that as many barriers to the provision of services were removed. In response it was stated that support was provided for local communities wishing to establish a community transport scheme, with a budget in place to assist with the purchase an appropriate vehicle, which would then be operated by a community organisation. The issue of deregulating taxis was a much more complex issue and would require further investigation. Another possible solution would be the development of car share schemes.
- A Member highlighted how he had taken additional bus journeys, previously, to ensure services were being used, and encouragement from the local community had assisted in getting some service reinstated. Subsequently, unfortunately the pandemic had resulted in services not being used which had resulted in the current issues. He noted that funding was required for the reintroduction of the bus services and suggested that Members could assist through the use of their locality budgets. He also suggested that Parish Councils should be approached to determine whether they could contribute.
- It was emphasised that urban areas were also affected by bus service reductions, with access to local schools and colleges suffering as a result.
- Members highlighted how the local economy would suffer with the bus services no longer stopping in Selby.

## **Resolved –**

That Michael Leah be thanked for his presentation, the contents of which, along with the issues raised, be noted and bus services be made a standing item on future agendas.

### **20. Future Role of ACCs and other issues of interest to the ACC**

The Leader of the County Council, County Councillor Carl Les, attended the meeting to discuss the future of ACCs, and any other issues of interest, with Members of the Committee.

The following issues were discussed:

- Information regarding potential Investment Zones was requested. The Leader stated that, at this stage, expressions of interest had been requested for areas that could seek Investment Zone status, and 11 bids had been submitted by the various Local Authorities in North Yorkshire. These bids had been quickly put together as expressions of interest were required to ensure that bids progressed to the next stage. These would be subject to the due process. Details of the bids were available from the District Councils involved. Members who were aware of some of the details of the potential bids discussion highlighted that there was little information available as to the process, determination and designation of the Zones at this stage. A Member expressed concern that the new Investment Zones could be detrimental to some recent developments at Kellingley and Eggborough, and the push for better paid jobs in the District could be destabilised. There was also a potential environmental impact from the development of the Zones. The Leader emphasised that everything had yet to be decided in terms of the development of the Zones and how they interact with existing facilities, and foresaw a role for the ACCs in determining this and the overall economic development co-ordination for the area.
- The development of Olympia Park was discussed in the context of the Investment Zones. It was noted that substantial funding was required to clean the site with employment development required there. The Leader noted that Olympia Park had been earmarked for development for a number of years but had yet to fulfil those plans.
- Members discussed the future role of ACCs with the Leader. It was noted that the Locality Working Group was considering how these would develop, going forward, and was taking account of the important role that ACCs would play as outlined in the submission for Unitary status. The Committee were able to feed into the Working Group, through the representatives sitting on that, to outline the issues they believe should be included within the remit of ACCs. The Chair highlighted Planning and Licensing as being major issues to determine how the ACCs would be involved, and stated that the Committee would like to be given appropriate information on a variety of issues to allow informed decisions to be made.
- A discussion took place on the development of the Planning Function and the role of ACCs. It was stated that consideration had been undertaken within the Planning Working Group, with extensive discussions on the future development of Local Plans and the nature of Planning Committees. In terms of the role of ACCs the Executive had been given a choice of having six Planning Committees based on the current ACCs, or three Committees, through the combination of neighbouring ACCs. There was a level of concern around combining the ACCs for this purpose, as some of the combined areas also contained National Park Authorities, which would result in them undertaking far less Planning work than the other combined Committees. A Member also considered that the combined Committees would be required to

oversee far too large of an area, with local views being eradicated due to this, and emphasised the need to provide the Planning Committees through the existing ACCs. Other Members echoed this view, as it was considered that the public would wish for their applications to be determined by a local Committee, with local knowledge. A Member stated that, although he agreed with the local determination of applications, the new Unitary Authority would be for the whole of North Yorkshire and Members would be responsible for everyone in North Yorkshire, not just their local area. It was stated that Planning decisions were determined on Policy grounds, and where, and by whom, they were determined was irrelevant. Overall, however, Members considered that there was a need to retain local accountability on Planning issues. It was also noted that a Strategic Planning Committee would be created to take account of major applications and multi-boundary crossing matters. The issue of site visits for Planning were also discussed and it was considered that the combined Committees would require too much travel for the members involved. A Member emphasised that moving the decision making process for planning applications to a central location, with a single Committee, would be seen as undemocratic and highlighted the need to retain a locally based decision making process. The Leader stated that there was no intention of reducing local accountability by centralising the decision making process, with the aim being to provide ACCs with appropriate decision making powers, following consultation with Members via the Working Groups.

- In respect of Licensing it was stated that statutorily only one Committee could make decisions, however, it was expected that a series of locally based Sub-Groups would be developed to feed the details into the Committee.

#### **Resolved –**

That the Leader be thanked for his attendance at the Committee, the issues and points raised be noted, and updates on the future roles of ACCs continue to be fed into subsequent meeting of the Committee.

#### **21. North Yorkshire Cultural Framework**

Considered –

A report and presentation from Mark Kibblewhite - Senior Policy Officer (Economic Growth) and Danielle Daglan – Cultural Services Manager, Craven District Council, on the development of a cultural Framework for North Yorkshire.

Members discussed the report and presentation and the following issues were raised:-

- A Member suggested that much of the funding identified was top down and should be addressed, going forward.
- The Chair considered the details to be out of date and incomplete in respect of the Selby District. Details appeared to be missing, particularly in relation to the offers from the smaller towns and villages in the District. Enhanced aspirations for development were not detailed with no information in respect of current services provided and resources required. Financial implications were not detailed. Details of collaborative work with smaller venues was not included. Reference to the night-time economy and access to venues via public transport and personal transport was not detailed. Other issues not outlined in the report included the availability of cheap workshops for artists, details of the work and budgets for libraries, funding available that could be match funded, Arts Council funding and a number of other issues. She stated that she would submit



comprehensive feedback on the report following the meeting. In response it was stated that the report had been through an extensive consultation process with responses obtained from over 600 individuals and 100 organisations. Selby District were developing their own Arts Strategy whereas the framework presented sought to provide influence from a higher level and highlighted the structure that would be in place for strategy development and funding following LGR. It was acknowledged that the report had been developed during the pandemic and therefore under challenging circumstances. It was emphasised that the report did not provide the complete picture, but set a destination in terms of the cultural strategy for the new Council. There was a clear cultural Plan for the Selby District which was being developed alongside this framework. It was clarified that the Strategy was that of North Yorkshire County Council and was being fed into the District and Borough Councils to assist with the development of their Strategies, with a view to this being used as a template for the cultural strategy of the amalgamated Council.

- In terms of timescales it was expected that over the next two years a Strategy and delivery plan for Selby would be developed to work to, which would take account of the agreement between the Arts Council and the Council.
- A Member highlighted the high level of accolade achieved by Selby DC in respect of its cultural services delivery and wanted to ensure that this was not lost when the unitary came into place. In response it was emphasised that this work would not be lost, but would be enhanced to develop the service and move it forward.
- A Member considered the report to be heavily based on Selby town, with little mention of the efforts being made in the outlying towns and villages, which were very important to those communities. Other Members outlined the events taking place within their Divisions, and considered that these should be highlighted within the report. It was suggested that the missing details required inclusion to assist the Framework, as this went forward.
- Details were outlined in terms of the tendering process carried out to appoint the consultants that had developed the Framework.
- Members considered that Arts and Culture were items that should be considered by the ACCs in their future work programmes.

#### **Resolved –**

That the officers be thanked for their report and presentations the contents of which be noted and that the issues raised be acted upon, accordingly.

#### **22. North Yorkshire Fire Service - Potential closure of back-up Contact Centre**

The following response had been submitted to all County Councillors, from the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Zoe Metcalfe, in respect of the concerns raised on this matter:-

“I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you about recent concerns raised by the press concerning the future of Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service’s Control Room (the function for taking fire and rescue 999 calls and mobilising fire engines to emergencies) and the potential impact on our Control Room at North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service has a Partnership Agreement with North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, to enable the handling of each other's calls during spate circumstances and to provide resilience should there be software mobilisation issues.

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service is currently exploring options for the future handling of their fire and rescue calls, but no decision has yet been taken and our Partnership Agreement with Cornwall remains in place with no change.

My Chief Fire Officer, Jonathan Dyson, has provided assurance of the current and future resilience of our Control Room in North Yorkshire. Jonathan is in regular contact with the Chief Fire Officer of Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service and the timescales for any decision and potential change to their Control Room allows North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to explore future resilience opportunities. As such, there is no current impact on our Control Room's ability to handle 999 calls and to effectively mobilise our fire engines to emergencies.

I will provide a further update in due course, once more information becomes available."

**Resolved –**

That the response be noted.

**23. Report of Local Constituency MP, Nigel Adams**

Considered –

The report of the Local Constituency MP, Nigel Adams, highlighting the following:-

The York and North Yorkshire Devolution Deal

MP Inbox – The issues my constituents are raising

1. The cost of energy and the cost of living
2. Reduction of bus services in Selby District and in Ainsty
3. The emerging Selby District Local Plan
4. Planning applications for solar farms
5. Rail services
6. Flooding

**Resolved –**

That the MP be thanked for his report, the contents of which be noted.

**24. Work Programme**

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) providing a Work Programme for Members to consider, develop and adapt.

Members discussed the following issues:-

- It was proposed that a number of Working Groups were set up to discuss individual topics and then fed back into the main meeting. There was a difference of opinion amongst Members in relation to this, with some supporting the proposal and other being against, as they considered that issues should be fully discussed at the scheduled meetings as they were held in public. Members in favour of Workshops suggested that this be trialled with arrangements made for a meeting to be held to discuss Road Safety and Civil Enforcement.

- It was suggested that the Work Programme as detailed within an appendix to the report be trimmed down to ensure that there was a focus on the important issues for local communities, going forward.
- Members agreed to keep bus services on subsequent agendas as a standing item, to allow any progress made on providing services to be fed back as soon as possible.
- It was requested that issues around addressing the cost of living crisis within local communities be placed on the agenda for a subsequent meeting.

**Resolved –**

- (i) That the issues highlighted above be included in the future work programme and the work programme be adapted accordingly
- (ii) That a special meeting of the ACC be called as a Workshop, rather than an additional Meeting, to discuss Road Safety and Civil Enforcement, with details discussed fed back into the next ordinary meeting of the ACC, to allow any action required to be dealt with appropriately.
- (iii) That a review of the Work Programme be undertaken to ensure that there is a focus on current issues relevant to local communities.

**25. Next Meeting**

**Resolved -**

That the next meeting of the Committee be held at 10am on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

The meeting concluded at 16.25pm.

SML