

North Yorkshire Council

Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 14th December 2023, commencing at 10.00am.

Councillor Richard Foster in the Chair and Councillors Philip Barrett, Barbara Brodigan, Andy Brown, Nick Brown, Felicity Cunliffe-Lister, Robert Heseltine, Nathan Hull, David Ireton, Andrew Murday, Simon Myers, David Noland, Andy Solloway, David Staveley and Andrew Williams (remote).

Officers present: David Smith, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer; Steven Crutchley, Strategic Development Manager in Health and Adult Services; Michael Rudd, Head of Housing, Market Development and Accommodation; Daniel Harry, Head of Democratic Services; Alice Fox, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager and Vicky Davies, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

In attendance: Rt Hon Julian Smith MP; Jessie Lamb, Chair of Nidderdale Youth Council; Lizzie Boyes, Local System Planning Engineer for Northern Powergrid; Francesca Hewitt, Senior Programme Manager for Airedale Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; Katie Lister, Head of Communications for Airedale Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

85 Apologies for Absence

None.

86 Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 September 2023

Considered –

The minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 7 September 2023.

Resolved –

(a) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 7 September 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

87 Declarations of Interest

None.

88 Public Participation

A public question was submitted by Tony Serjeant regarding the 72 Skipton – Grassington bus service. The question was as follows:

In the light of publicity that indicates that northern councils will be given increased funding for public transport priorities due to the cancellation of the northern leg of HS2, will the Council confirm that it is going to seek funding to improve rural bus services in North Yorkshire? If it is the case that the authority will seek new funding for public transport, how much will it bid for and upon what will the money be spent? Will the area committee

undertake to explore what it can do to restore the No 72 bus service so that it runs as least as many daily buses between Skipton, Grassington and intervening villages as it did prior to cuts to the timetable that came into force in May 2023?

The following response was provided by Andrew Clarke, Public and Community Transport Manager, North Yorkshire Council:

The government has published indicative funding allocations for 2024/25 only from the redirected HS2 budget and North Yorkshire Council has been given an indicative allocation of £3.5M. The Department for Transport (DfT) expects us to use the funding to maintain existing bus service levels and also on other measures to improve public transport consistent with our published Bus Service Improvement Plan. These have to be agreed through the statutory Enhanced Partnership that each council has in place with bus operators and passenger representatives after which DfT will confirm the final allocation to be made by the end of the financial year. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan includes measures to maintain and improve bus services in rural areas but with only one year of funding currently being made available, and at very short notice, it will be difficult to introduce wholly new bus services and develop them to the point of longer term sustainability in a single year. This is something we, and other councils, have raised with DfT as longer term funding is needed to deliver the improvements to public transport we want to see.

Regarding Service 72, the changes to the timetable earlier this year were in reaction to commercial bus service withdrawals across the Skipton network and part of a plan to ensure that services could be retained on all routes, albeit at a lower frequency. The contract for Service 72 is currently out to tender and we have included options to increase the service frequency. Given the additional funding likely to be available next year we would hope to be able to introduce a more frequent timetable from Easter 2024.

Members requested that an item on this be added to the work programme before the subsidy runs out in November 2024.

A public question was submitted by Ashley Gatecliffe regarding the leadership of the Upper Nidderdale Federation. The question was as follows:

I'm here to formally request an independent investigation into the leadership of the Upper Nidderdale Federation.

Fountains Earth School is part of the Upper Nidderdale Federation. My son attended the school and we had planned for his brother to join in September. However, last summer we, along with other parents in the school, took the difficult decision to remove our children. The decision was difficult because we knew that closure of the school was inevitable, and we knew the consequence of this on the upper dale community.

I am not here today in the hope that the school remains open. I'm here because it is not clear how North Yorkshire County Council is effectively monitoring its school Governing Boards, and, in particular, the Governing Board and Leadership team for the Upper Nidderdale Federation.

I first wrote to the Council in Autumn 2022 with concerns after a string of events led me to raise a formal complaint. My concerns centred around the decision making of the Governors and Leadership team, including recruitment practices and accountability. Despite requesting one, I was NOT given an impartial hearing and my complaint was heard and dismissed by members of the very Board that my concerns were addressed towards.

Over the last year parents tried to work with the school for the best interests of our children, but the leadership was not engaged. Instead - it chose to silence or take an opaque stance to our questions and concerns.

Those children who have moved from Fountains Earth, including my own, have been deemed 'behind where they should be' and, despite requests, there has been NO documentation sent to their new schools. Our fears have been proven - the educational provision was not consistently good enough at Fountains Earth, and the school was made the 'poor relation' with a conscious intention to close it.

It is my belief that the Governing Board of the Upper Nidderdale Federation is not doing its job in holding the leadership team to account and from what I am aware of, there have been serious conflicts of interest in relation to recruitment of both governors and staff as well as questionable practices in relation to the process by which governors are appointed.

A petition requesting an independent investigation now has over 1000 signatures, 570 of which are from the local area and 3 of which are from current and former Federation governors.

What brings me here today is that since the petition has been circulating, a number of former federation staff have contacted me with information about their personal experiences that should raise serious questions and warrant a full investigation.

It is my sincere hope that you will now take these matters forward, act appropriately and see that a thorough investigation does take place.

The following response was provided by Children and Young People's Service Officers, North Yorkshire Council:

With regard to an independent investigation:

The governing board hold strategic responsibility for the performance and quality of education in their schools and this includes holding leaders to account for performance. The Local Management of Schools (LMS) Scheme sets out the relationship between the Council and the maintained schools it funds, and this is approved by the North Yorkshire Schools Forum. Headteachers and Governors of locally maintained schools must determine – at school or federation level – how to achieve effective management of resources and value for money, to optimise the use of their resources, and to invest in teaching and learning. Under LMS, the costs of operating a school, or schools, are borne by the school from a delegated budget. This includes all staffing, premises and resources costs. Governors are responsible for recruitment within their schools.

The education system is complex. The Council retains many duties and responsibilities with regard to its maintained schools and for example, its role alongside all schools in relation to safeguarding of children. Diocesan bodies have a distinct role in church schools. There is overlap with all of these parties and the Department for Education's (DfE) Regional Directors who take key decisions delegated to them by the Secretary of State for education, and therefore it is unclear who would conduct an 'independent investigation' and what authority it would hold.

With regard to complaints raised about the school:

In accordance with [Section 29\(1\) of the Education Act 2002](#), all maintained schools must have and publish procedures to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides, for which there are no separate (statutory) procedures. The duty to establish procedures for dealing with complaints lies with the governing body and not the council. Only complaints outside of the scope of the school's policy would be considered elsewhere by either the DfE or Ofsted.

About one year ago North Yorkshire Children's Services did receive correspondence about the school and signposted the writer towards the school's complaints policy. The council also provided information at that time about how to escalate the concerns to other

organisations if required.

If parents, staff or community members have new concerns about the school, officers would advise them to raise these using the appropriate schools complaints procedure. As stated, it is rare that a complaint involving a school falls upon the Council to investigate it.

With regard to the query about pupil information being passed from school to school:

Schools hold detailed information about pupil progress and schools involved in pupil transfers work together, with parents and other agencies as required, to pass required and relevant information on as part of the transfer process.

With regard to school performance:

Ofsted inspected the school in June 2022 and reported that the school continues to be a good school. The report provides more information about leadership, curriculum and safeguarding.

The Council is currently undertaking the required process regarding the proposal that Fountains Earth School should close. Unless advised otherwise by the writer, both today's public statement and the response of the council officers would be included in the consultation feedback which is scheduled to be reported to the Council's Executive on 23 January, following the end of the consultation period.

Members suggested that the speaker asks for a written response from North Yorkshire Council, saying that the complaints procedure has been exhausted. The speaker may then approach the ombudsman.

Resolved –

- a) That an item looking into the 72 Skipton – Grassington bus service be added to the work programme.

Councillor Felicity Cunliffe-Lister joined the meeting at 10.34am.

89 Update from RT Hon Julian Smith MP

Considered –

A verbal update from the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP, provided remotely using MS Teams.

The Chair invited the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP to provide an update on his areas of work, concerns and priorities before there was a discussion with Members. The key points are as summarised below:

- Grants from DEFRA to support farmers have recently been given out.
- Campaigning to reduce the speed limit on the A61 is underway. Members suggested that fixed speed cameras across North Yorkshire may reduce accidents.
- Roughly £1.1 million has come in locally to support the NHS through Winter. Members reported that some York and North Yorkshire Hospices require additional money and Mr Smith asked that these hospices contact him.

- Funding that had been allocated for HS2 has now gone to extending the bus fare cap until the end of 2024.
- Over £300 million over the next 10 years will come into North Yorkshire Council for road maintenance. £3.5 million will help to support North Yorkshire Council bus services.
- Some Members raised that there were overspends for adult social care and that North Yorkshire Council required additional funding.
- Members informed Mr Smith that SEND provisions require more funding to avoid having to send children far distances to receive education. Members suggested that, in a similar way to the deprivation of an area, the size of a council should be taken into account more when allocating funding.
- Members raised their concerns that Settle Area Swimming Pool, in addition to a number of other organisations across North Yorkshire, had been unsuccessful in their bid for financial support to assist with energy costs. Mr Smith was also concerned and reported that he had a meeting with Settle Area Swimming Pool in the near future.
- 7000 local households have been supported by cost-of-living payments. Some Members expressed concerns about high fuel costs, especially those with oil heaters.
- Members expressed their concerns that the Skipton branch of Barclays Bank was closing and Mr Smith reported that government legislation on banking hubs would not be in place before this branch closed.

Members thanked the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP for attending the meeting.

Resolved –

- a) That North Yorkshire Council Officers provide North Yorkshire MPs with details of the departments that are struggling with funding.

90 Updates from Youth Councils

Considered –

A written report by James Neill, Chair of Skipton Youth Council and a verbal update from Jessie Lamb, Chair of Nidderdale Youth Council.

The updates and subsequent discussion are summarised below:

- Nidderdale Youth Council are developing a survey to investigate how areas can become more accessible.
- Nidderdale Youth Council hope to investigate sexual harassment against young people and how it can be stopped.
- Members discussed the work that is being done to establish two new Youth Councils in Ripon and North Craven.

Resolved –

- a) That the local Youth Councils be invited to provide an update at the 7th March 2024

ACC meeting.

91 Northern Powergrid

Considered –

A presentation and verbal update from Lizzie Boyes, Local System Planning Engineer for Northern Powergrid.

Lizzie Boyes introduced herself and went through the presentation slides attached at Item 7 of the papers. The update and subsequent discussion are summarised below:

- Members described the delays that Craven Leisure Centre in Skipton has seen. Lizzie Boyes informed Members how the connection queue was changing to reduce delays and informed Members that third parties are sometimes the cause of project delays. It was reported that the National Grid creates a significant number of delays due to projects that are in the queue but won't get implemented.
- Lizzie Boyes described the Community Distribution System Operator project, explaining that this project would work with communities trying to decarbonise themselves.
- Members raised concerns surrounding the slow connection of street lighting and Lizzie Boyes asked that specific details of each delayed case are sent to her so that the situations can get back on track.
- The Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund helps Councils to put infrastructure such as solar panels and heat pumps into public sector buildings.
- Members suggested that more should be done to incentivise people to avoid using electricity during peak times.
- Members asked how the Council could assist Northern Powergrid. Lizzie Boyes suggested that whilst most substations have enough capacity, developments should be phased so that there is not a rush for electricity all at once.
- It was agreed that more needs to be done to educate people on why projects are delayed so that smaller projects aren't held back. This could be done through Members, or Northern Powergrid could attend meetings of local groups and councils. Members should send details of these groups and councils to Lizzie Boyes. It was also reported that Community Energy Advisors are being employed to carry out this role.
- It was reported that vulnerable people can register as a priority customer via the Northern Powergrid website or by calling their contact centre. Details on this to be circulated after the meeting.
- Members asked about the lead time for installing parts that will improve Northern Powergrid's infrastructure. Details on this to be circulated to Members after the meeting.
- Members asked whether there is a service level agreement that energy providers must

work to. They were particularly interested in the time a provider has to react to an issue after receiving a complaint. Lizzie Boyes to circulate this information after the meeting.

- Members were keen that Northern Powergrid involve them where it would be useful.

Resolved –

- a) That Lizzie Boyes will circulate the following information after the meeting:
 - i. How to register as a priority customer and whether individual providers inform Northern Powergrid if someone has registered with them.
 - ii. The lead times for installing new infrastructure.
 - iii. The service level agreements and timelines that providers must adhere to when a complaint about infrastructure is received.
- b) That Lizzie Boyes will contact Members if Northern Powergrid require their assistance.
- c) That Members will contact Lizzie Boyes when they hear that a complaint or project is being delayed.
- d) That Members will contact Lizzie Boyes with details of groups or councils that they would like Northern Powergrid to speak to.
- e) That a biannual update on the progress of projects in the area be added to the Committee's work programme.

Councillor Andrew Williams left the meeting at 11.22am.
Councillor David Ireton left the meeting at 12.01pm.

92 Airedale NHS Foundation Trust: A new hospital for Airedale

Considered –

A briefing note and verbal update from Francesca Hewitt, Senior Programme Manager for Airedale Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Katie Lister, Head of Communications for Airedale Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

The update and following discussion are summarised below:

- Councillor Richard Foster declared at this point that he was appointed by the Council as a Trustee of the Airedale Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.
- Francesca Hewitt described the current situation of Airedale Hospital, reporting that 30% of the RAAC present is damaged and that the hospital has already replaced 30% of this. It was reported that three wards are completely fixed and have re-opened.
- Regarding the rebuild of the hospital, Francesca Hewitt reported that a Programme Director was being appointed in Spring 2024 but that, planning for the new hospital is already underway. It is estimated that the rebuild will be complete in 2030. Whilst Members understood that it takes a long time, they were concerned about the amount of money that would be spent on damaged RAAC between now and 2030. Francesca Hewitt clarified that the RAAC funding is separate to the new hospital funding.

- Members made several comments on the construction of the new hospital. These included: being wary not to use innovative materials so as to avoid being in a similar situation in the future; creating a smaller footprint by building more floors so land could be sold; making sure that the building was sustainable and will keep up to date in future years.
- Members discussed whether this programme would be a good opportunity to look at other NHS buildings in the area. Francesca Hewitt informed Members that any Airedale NHS Trust buildings could also be investigated over the upcoming years.
- Members raised concerns regarding transport links to the hospital and suggested that the project investigate how the hospital and train station can be more closely linked.
- Members asked that plain English is used throughout the project so that all residents can easily understand the process.
- Members asked that the NHS Foundation Trust provide a written update at future ACC meetings. It was also suggested that they contact the Parish Councils with information.

Resolved –

- a) That a written update be provided to the ACC on a regular basis.
- b) That Democratic Services send details of the Parish Council Clerks to Francesca Hewitt and Katie Lister.

93 Local Care Home Intelligence Report

Considered –

An intelligence report by Steven Crutchley, Strategic Development Manager in Health and Adult Services and Michael Rudd, Head of Housing, Market Development and Accommodation.

The Officers introduced themselves and went through the report. The subsequent discussion is summarised below:

- This information is provided to the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a regular, county-wide basis. Members requested that a report including local information goes to the ACC on a regular basis because it is important for the information to be made public and useful for Councillors to know the situation in their area.
- Members asked for more information on the care homes that require improvement. This included when they were distinguished as requiring improvement; whether they accept the ACOC; and what has been done to improve the homes. Officers reported that a Council quality team uses a risk profile to determine whether the care home needs urgent support or whether there are other homes that are of a higher risk.
- Members asked for more information on estimated future requirements. This might include: how many people will be in Skipton and Ripon care homes; how many homes will there be; and where there might be gaps.
- Members suggested that opportunities to improve the sustainability of care homes may be overlooked.

Resolved –

a) That a report comes back to the ACC with the following information:

- i. Those care homes that are designated as requiring improvement – when were they designated; do they accept ACOC; and what has been done to improve them.
- ii. The opportunities to improve care home sustainability.
- iii. The estimated future situation of Skipton and Ripon care homes – the number of people requiring care homes; the number of care homes and their capacity; and the gaps that there will be.

This should be a written report, with Officers only attending at Member request.

Councillor Simon Myers left the meeting at 12.58pm.

94 Appointments to Outside Bodies

Considered –

A report by David Smith, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer, inviting the Committee to make appointments, on behalf of the Council, to the Gouthwaite Reservoir Board of Management.

The Committee discussed the review of appointments to Category 3 outside bodies. Some Members suggested that a review into the removal of Category 3 outside bodies might be required in the future.

Resolved –

a) That the appointments laid out in the report are approved.

95 Appointments to Committees

Considered –

A report by Daniel Harry, Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny, inviting the Committee to make appointments to the Development Plan Committee.

Resolved –

- a) That Councillor Felicity Cunliffe-Lister is appointed as the Liberal Democrat and Liberal member.
- b) That the two Conservative and Independent positions be decided after the meeting and that the Committee delegate the power to approve the positions to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

96 Committee Work Programme

Considered –

A report by David Smith, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer, inviting Members to consider, amend and add to the Committee's work programme.

Members made the following amendments to the work programme:

7th March 2024 –

- A report on Care Homes, as detailed in Minute 93.
- An item on Modality and issues surrounding making appointments over their phone line.
- An item looking at the report going to the Nidderdale Greenway Extension Steering Group.
- An item looking at the closure of local bank branches.

Future Items –

- A regular report from the Airedale NHS Foundation Trust detailing how the new Airedale Hospital project is going.
- The Youth Councils to continue receiving invites to ACC meetings.
- A biannual report from Northern Powergrid as detailed in Minute 91.

Resolved –

- a) That the above items be added to the work programme.

Councillor Robert Heseltine left the meeting at 1.17pm.

97 Any Other Items

There were none.

98 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 7 March 2024 at 10.00am.

The meeting concluded at 1.22 pm.