

North Yorkshire Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Harrogate Civic Centre on Friday 12 January 2024 commencing at 12:00pm.

Councillors Present: Councillor Pat Marsh in the Chair. Councillors Chris Aldred, Philip Broadbank, Sam Gibbs, Hannah Gostlow, Michael Harrison, Paul Haslam, Peter Lacey, John Mann, Pat Marsh and Robert Windass

Officers present: Mark Codman (Democratic Services Officer), Harriet Clarke (Democratic Services Officer), Harry Briggs (Head of Waste Operations and Streetscene), Michael Leah (Associate Director for Environmental Services)

In Attendance: Andrew Jones MP (MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough), Councillor Carl Les

Apologies: Councillors Mike Schofield and Matt Walker.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

40 Welcome by the Chairman, introductions and apologies for absence:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

41 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

42 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

43 Public Questions and Statements

There was one statement that had been submitted prior to the Committee:

The following statement concerned an item not on the agenda and was read out by Barry Adams on behalf of Harrogate Residents' Association, Granville Road Residents' Group and Independent Harrogate.

ELECTION OF A TOWN COUNCIL FOR HARROGATE

Following the demise of Harrogate Borough Council and the setting up of the new North Yorkshire Council in April of this year we the undersigned groups and organisations are extremely concerned that election of a Town Council for Harrogate

has been delayed further until May 2025.

This ongoing delay as voted on by North Yorkshire Council without consulting at the time with the population of our un-parished area is totally unacceptable to the residents and businesses of this Town, the largest in the new Authority's administrative area. This is despite the residents and businesses of this Town clearly demonstrating through previous consultations that there is a majority of the Town in full support of such a Council for which elections should have taken place in May 2024. Whether each ward on a new Town Council is represented by one or two councillors is not a major concern - we just simply want a Town Council and are fully aware of the implications and responsibilities involved.

We are extremely concerned since the formation of such a vast and disparate Council such as NYC that residents and businesses in Harrogate feel isolated and remote from proper local representation and decision making compared to the involvement enjoyed by existing smaller parished areas.

There is no benefit in delaying the process yet another year unless NYC consider people will be tired of any further consultations so will not vote again on this issue. Perhaps a case of consulting until you get the result you want?

We therefore call on the Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee at this meeting to support as a matter of urgency the election and setting up of a Town Council for Harrogate without any further delay and before 2025.

Barry Adams Chartered Architect (Retired) - Resident of Harrogate
on behalf of Harrogate Resident's Association - 1,000+ members
Granville Road Resident's Group - 300+ members
Independent Harrogate - 156 business members

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MP Attendance:

Considered: A verbal update from Andrew Jones MP regarding issues of key concern in the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency.

The key points within the update provided by Andrew Jones MP were as follows:-

- Since his previous update to the Committee in November 2022 significant progress had been made collecting data that would support a bid to achieve bathing water status for the River Nidd at the Knaresborough Lido. The team had received 30 supporting statements from bodies such as Town and Parish Councils and over 200 people had signed up to help with data collection and monitoring. He had personally delivered the bid to DEFRA and a decision was expected to be delivered by late spring, he would continue lobbying to make clear the supporting case for a positive decision on the bathing water status.
- He also wanted to highlight details regarding Devolution for North Yorkshire. He explained that the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority had now passed all Parliamentary procedures and was on its way to being ready for election of the Mayor in May. The set up of the new combined authority would unlock £540M of funding which is designated to be spent on local priorities that were determined here rather than in Westminster. He was in favour of decisions being made locally and he wanted to express the importance of deciding the precise responsibilities that the Town Council would hold and to

avoid duplication of work between the Town Council and the Area Committee.

Andrew Jones MP then responded to questions from Members:

- In response to a question from Councillor Broadbank on spending on education and where North Yorkshire Schools, sat in national school performance tables, particularly in relation to SEND. He explained that SEND was seeing significant growth and this was an issue that was being experienced across the Country. The national budget for this area had gone up by 60% since 2020 and for the next financial year the funding was £10.5B. North Yorkshire received 1500 EHCPs in 2014 but was expecting around 5000 in the current year. This was due in part to a change in the Children and Families Act 2014, that broadened the scope of SEND. This increase was viewed by NYC's Director of Finance as the primary financial challenge for the new Council. The Council was operating with a deficit in its yearly budget and this deficit was expected to rise with challenges such that this. He explained that it was his view that all children, regardless of ability or need, were fully educated and this was a critical part of public policy. The Council was investing well with education in mind, for example in the Harrogate and Knaresborough area Woodfield Primary School will open in April for 80 pupils and focus upon speech and language communication and other associated mental health needs. In terms of funding he explained that he had met with schools, families, the Council and the children's Minister to discuss funding needs and there were a few points to note. Firstly the national budget for education was increasing and it was critical that North Yorkshire received its share. The Government had produced a 'SEND Action Plan' and he would send a copy of this to all Members. There three main points to the action plan, training for teachers in mainstream schools, in schools' capital budgets and in the establishment of national standards. He had discussed the grant allocation for North Yorkshire with the Minister and NYC's grant would increase in the next year to £676 per head for students aged between two and eighteen.
- In response to a question from Councillor Mann on the fair funding formula, the MP explained that he had worked with local organisations such as the Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust and the Council. Public services across NY were high performing and there was work ongoing to continue and improve the high level of services provided. He was working with the other NY MPs to ensure that investments in NY's services worked to provide maximum benefits for the County and its services.
- In response to a question from Councillor Lacey on the delay to setting up a local Town Council, Andrew Jones MP advised that he agreed with the principle of local services delivered locally but that there was more groundwork to be done before a Town Council could be formally constituted. In response to a further question from Councillor Aldred he explained that it was key to understand what responsibilities and functions the Town Council would have before it was set up.
- In response to a question from Councillor Slater, the MP explained that he would support Knaresborough Town Council on any devolution related projects.
- In response to a question from Councillor Gostlow, he responded that a decision on the Nidd bathing water status was due in late spring. Work to

improve the water quality of the River Nidd was a lengthy and complex project but this was a hugely successful step that had brought people together and it had highlighted a fantastic part of Knaresborough. Councillor Gostlow followed up that the three designated river swimming areas in the country had subsequently found to be in poor quality and people that swam in them had a high chance of becoming ill from doing so, significant investment was required if improvements were to be seen. He explained that the Environment Agency were monitoring along the Nidd catchment and it would be a complex job to improve the water quality, that being said this was the first Government to attempt to tackle water quality in a significant way and the Government's action plan broadened the scope of the water quality question from solely a coastal issue to one that included inland waters.

- In response to a question from Councillor Aldred on whether the MP supported the amended Station Gateway plan that had now been submitted for approval, he explained that he was broadly in support of sustainable transport improvements but he was aware that there had been substantial questions regarding the viability of the Station Gateway Scheme. In particular there were concerns about the loss of loading areas and the reduction to one lane of traffic. Andrew explained that he had not seen the amended plan that had been submitted but following an outline provided by Cllr Aldred he was supportive of improvements.
- In response to a question from Councillor Broadbank on the funding of the HCC improvements he explained that the Council was seeking national funding support and he would support this work.
- In response to a question from Councillor Haslam on sustainable transport funding and specifically a plan to construct a train station on Claro Road, the MP explained that he was happy to meet and discuss this with Cllr Haslam but this would be a significantly complex project and would depend on the national budget.
- Councillor Windass asked a question about the River Nidd water quality, following a recent visit from the Environment Agency in which the EA representative had highlighted complex issues from old mine workings, farm slurry run off and Yorkshire Water's sewerage plants that all had an impact on the water quality. Councillor Windass asked what Government could do to help in light of all these issues. Andrew explained that achieving improvements would require a sustained multi-agency effort and significant funding. Until recently levels of monitoring the river water quality had been as low as 6%. Currently there were efforts to improve the level of monitoring in order that a holistic view and assessment can be made. Soon there would be live monitoring so that members of the public would be able to see in real time what the quality of the water was. Government was working, through DEFRA, with farmers and looking to make capital investments in sewerage works and storm overflows. The MP agreed to distribute the water quality action plan to Members following the meeting.
- In response to a question from Councillor Broadbank on the cost of food waste relating to confusing rules, Andrew explained that he was unable to provide a full answer on this but would look into it and get back to Cllr Broadbank.
- In response to a question from Councillor Aldred on whether the Country was getting value for money on money paid, or agreed to be paid, to the Rwandan

and French Governments to assist in remedying the migrant issue, the MP explained that the migrant situation was a significant issue in the Mediterranean. In 2022 2062 people lost their lives attempting to cross that body of water and there was a significant problem of people smuggling with vast amount of money being made at the expense of many people's lives. The principal aim of the Government was to regain control of our borders and for British people to feel that they, through their Government, are in control of who comes here. The Rwandan scheme was to be seen as a deterrent to reduce the numbers of people trying to enter the country illegally and the Albanian scheme had reduced number the number of people attempting to cross the Channel by 30% last year. In terms of value it was difficult to put a value on the lives of people and if you factored in the significant costs of housing illegal migrants in hostels, amounting to around £8.3M a day, the Government viewed this as a good investment.

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Waste and Street Scene Presentation:

Considered: a verbal presentation by the Head of Waste Operations and Streetscene and Associate Director for Environmental Services who delivered an update on the services' progress through LGR and now into the new authority.

Michael Leah (Associate Director for Environmental Services) began by explaining that the new structure was being implemented and had started by appointing Harry Briggs as the Head of Waste Operations and Streetscene. The service was currently working to implement the remaining parts of the finalised Waste and Street Scene structure but they were keen to maintain service delivery and day to day operations which included household collections and a range of other waste services. Performance stats had demonstrated that the service had been unaffected by LGR and as of summer 2023 the service had been taking steps to improve the service's delivery with some improvements in missed collections and a reduction in complaints.

Harry Briggs continued the presentation and explained that the service was prioritising services that directly affected members of the public such as waste collection, commercial waste services and street cleansing. Whilst maintaining frontline services the team were working to harmonise services across the county and ensure they could respond to the varying needs of the different areas. The service had also formulated costs for services as one team and had now provided one calendar that anyone in the county could use to see when their collection was. There was now an area manager for the Harrogate and Craven region who would be responsible for performance and improving services in the local area.

In terms of the litter bin project Harry explained that there were more than 1500 litter bins in the former Harrogate BC area and it was key to assess the number, location of these litter bins and also the condition over which some concern had been raised. The service was looking to provide a comprehensive service while also lowering operating costs and therefore litter bins were to be emptied in the regular rounds of household collections rather than a dedicated service. They had increased the size of the litter bins so that they had enough capacity to last between these collections. The service was soon to have completed roll-out of the new bins and officers would review the success of the project once it was complete.

In Discussion:

Members expressed concern about the placement of the new bins which were often closer to a road than where members of the public actually needed them. Another concern was raised about dog poo litter bins and whether there was a consistent policy and communications to advise members of the public. There was significant concern that if these litter bins are going to be emptied only once a fortnight then this could become a public health hazard. In responding to these points Harry explained that they were wheely bins and placed close to roads so that the collection teams could access them easily. As the project was near completion now was the right time to review the location and number of bins and officers would take the feedback from members into account during the review. Harry confirmed that officers would meet with Knaresborough Town Council for a site visit and consider any collection or enforcement issues.

Michael explained policies for the service were currently being reviewed and he was keen to look at littering, he would consult with Members and community groups to gauge what could be done to eliminate littering in their respective areas. In response to a question about street cleansing Harry explained that resources were not being reduced, it was just a case of assessing where best to use specific resources. In response to a question about the roll-out of the domestic blue bins, Michael advised that this was a policy of HBC and the new service was still looking at harmonising services one of which was household collections. The reasons some households had these new wheely bins and others did not was primarily down to the way the collections rounds were formulated, ultimately they were looking to have wheelie bins county wide as soon as funding was available. In response to a question about bin placement strategy aligning with major walking routes in and out of town it was confirmed that the service would be happy to consult on any such areas of concern. Michael also explained that he had discussed a text communication service with the Council's communications team and a county wide text service would require funding before it could be instituted. Councillor Aldred expressed his thanks to the service for its professional and reliable approach to collections regardless of the weather. In response to a question Michael confirmed that the service took the weather and safety of crews seriously, during the hot period in the summer the crews were permitted to wear sun hats and shorts and water had been provided.

- CCTV was standard in all new vehicles and was there for reasons such as welfare and to provide evidence in cases where it was claimed that a bin lorry had collided with someone or something. It was not there to monitor the behaviour or performance of the crews.
- In response to a question from Councillor Slater Michael explained that it would be mandatory for Councils to make weekly food waste collections from 2026. NYC, working in partnership with York Council, had received permission to delay the transition to food collection until 2043 to allow for the end of the contract with Allerton Waste Recovery Park. The Leader of the Council had written to DEFRA to see if the Council could achieve an earlier date, the Government had subsequently allotted £4.8m to each Council to be spent on setting up food collection services but they were withholding the money until a service was operational. The Council was appealing to the Government for these funds beforehand which would allow the Council to set the service up

Committee Work Programme:

Considered – The report of the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager that invited Members to consider, amend and add to the Committee's work programme.

Mark Codman (Democratic Services) provided an overview of the Committee's current work programme. Mark advised that the two statements that had been referred by the last committee meeting had been referred to the Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 18 January.

Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC - 14 March 2024 Items to be considered:

- School's education achievement and finance
- Local nature recovery strategy

Harrogate and Knaresborough ACC - £50k fund:

- Mark advised that he was in the process of finding an officer to support this meeting and there would be an in-person meeting in the next few weeks that would look at any submitted proposals based on the previously agreed criteria

Informal Sessions:

- Mark advised that there was to be a Commuted Sums briefing once it had been arranged with officers

Harrogate Station Gateway:

- Councillor Aldred advised that the station gateway working group had met and were beginning their formal monitoring of the project – the working group would report back to future meetings with its findings

Harrogate Town Council

- It was agreed that a working group to consider the progression of Harrogate Town Council would not be set up

47 Any other business which the Chair agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances:

There was no urgent business.

48 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 14 March 2024

The meeting concluded at 1.52 pm.