

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 7 January 2021 remotely using MS Teams, commencing at 10am.

This meeting was live broadcast on the North Yorkshire County Council YouTube site and a recording is available using the following link - <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/live-meetings>

### Present:

County Councillors Margaret Atkinson, Mike Chambers MBE (Chairman), Michael Harrison, Robert Heseltine, David Ireton, Stanley Lumley, Stuart Martin MBE, Gill Quinn and Andy Solloway.

County Council Officers: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Karl Battersby (Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services), Allan McVeigh (Highways and Transportation, BES), Rebecca Gibson (Highways and Transportation, BES), Gary Fielding (Corporate Director, Strategic Resources).

Other County Councillors present: David Chance, Gareth Dadd, Carl Les and Don Mackenzie.

Guest speaker: the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP.

### 87. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Philip Barrett, Patrick Mulligan, Richard Welch and Robert Windass.

### 88. Minutes

Considered the minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 17 December 2020.

### Resolved -

- a. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee held on 17 December 2020, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 89. Any Declarations of Interest

There was none.

### 90. Public Questions or Statements

There was a public statement from Mr Rod Beardshall, Chair of Zero Carbon Harrogate transport working group.

The statement was read out by Daniel Harry as Mr Beardshall was unable to attend the meeting. The statement was as follows:

I would like to make some observations on behalf of Zero Carbon Harrogate about the update on the Harrogate Transport Improvement Programme (HTIP). Whilst the report arose from a consideration of local traffic congestion, I hope we can all agree

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that transport policy is a key lever in addressing issues of climate change. If you have not already done so, I advise you to study the report published on 9th December, 2020, by the Climate Change Committee (CCC) entitled "Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget". Although the report recognises that the current lack of national coordination and funding constraints limits the effectiveness of local authorities to tackle climate change, it concludes that around 33% of emissions can be influenced by local authority "place-shaping leadership". We should do everything within our power to influence what we can.

There is much to commend about the HTIP report, especially the emphasis on prioritising active travel and the willingness to consider low traffic neighbourhoods. I would like to congratulate the council for their achievements to date such as securing funding through the Transforming Cities Fund and the roll out of superfast broadband which will influence working and therefore travel behaviours for the better. Notwithstanding these successes and the limitations mentioned above, we now need a significant acceleration of the rate at which considerations, discussions and reports translate into actions on the ground.

The HTIP report talks about improvements at five key junctions. Given that improvements to promote traffic flow alone will inevitably lead to more traffic flowing, I am very pleased to note that paragraph 5.22 emphasises the need to focus on reducing traffic volumes to ensure that junction improvements do not have unintended negative consequences.

Unfortunately these aims appear to have been ignored in the decision mentioned in paragraph 6.7 that a standalone Killinghall bypass be added to the county council's existing major schemes development list. Residents of Killinghall would understandably love to see less traffic on the A61 through the village, but a bypass would induce more traffic overall, encourage more development, destroy more countryside and could damage the Nidderdale Greenway and probably the Nidd Gorge. All other non-road solutions to Killinghall traffic should be considered before a bypass, including lower speed limits, vehicle weight limits, and narrowing the road where possible which would also make space potentially for a safe cycle link from Killinghall to the Greenway. In the long term I would like to see non residents pay for the right to drive through villages such as Killinghall, but this would need new legislation. It would be an incomparably more environmentally beneficial solution to the traffic problem than a bypass. It would also be a flexible solution unlike a bypass which would be permanent, even when rendered irrelevant by progress.

The Department for Transport's Decarbonising Transport document of March 2020 calculates that between 2018 and 2050, with current policies, car kilometres travelled will increase by more than 35% and car greenhouse gas emission will fall by 52%. However, it is now generally accepted that we need to be much more ambitious. This acceptance comes from a wide range of sources from the CCC (which concluded that a 70% reduction in transport emissions is needed by 2035), to UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon to UK Business Secretary Alok Sharma. Consider also that any increase in traffic in the Killinghall area will go somewhere, much of it into Harrogate. This will make it much harder to meet the stated aim of traffic reduction at key junctions in town. We need a consistent coordinated approach to traffic management. A Killinghall bypass does not fit with this. ZCH opposes it and asks that you do the same.

The response to the public statement was read out by Allan McVeigh, Highways and Transportation, BES, North Yorkshire County Council. It was as follows:

We thank Mr. Beardshall for his comments on behalf of Zero Carbon Harrogate and note:

The Council recognises the important role that active travel and sustainable transport solutions will play as part of a low carbon future. At the same time, the council has a duty to consider all viable options, including measures to remove through traffic from Killinghall, a village which is growing very rapidly and whose residents (and local elected member) are concerned about the effects of increasing traffic flows on their daily lives, road safety and air quality. The recommendation is that the potential scheme is added to the County Council's list of reserve major schemes.

We recognise that there has been a shift in focus at a national level on carbon reduction and a renewed emphasis on walking and cycling from the government, and we are now considering how best to embed this into our policies and projects at a countywide level. As is also noted, where funding is available, schemes such as the Transforming Cities Fund and superfast broadband aim to support ongoing changes to travel and commuting behaviour and offer viable alternatives to daily commuting by car. For assurance, the Council will continue to take every opportunity to bid for grant funding, which seeks to promote sustainable transport and encourage a low carbon future.

In all cases, where any projects are taken forward for further development public and stakeholder engagement would form a key part of project development and would be undertaken at the appropriate stage.

After the response was read out, County Councillor Don Mackenzie said that the County Council had previously been in contact with the Zero Carbon Harrogate transport group. Also, that the Council has a duty to respond to the concerns raised about traffic volumes in Killinghall, the safety issues and the impact upon air quality. A by-pass has to be considered as an option when looking to address the local concerns raised.

The committee Chairman, County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE, then moved onto item 7 on the agenda, to enable to discussions that been started upon the Harrogate Transport Improvement Programme to be continued.

## **91. Harrogate Transport Improvement Programme**

Considered -

A report by Karl Battersby (Corporate Director, Business and Environmental Services).

Karl Battersby presented the report and the key points are as summarised below:

- The Council's Executive recommended in October 2019 that the Harrogate Congestion Study be progressed and that further option development work be undertaken on reducing congestion in Harrogate and Knaresborough
- The proposal for an inner northern relief road for Harrogate was rejected
- Work has taken place throughout 2020 to develop proposals on the following themes: cycling and walking, bus priority, park and ride, junctions, behaviour change and highways including a Killinghall bypass and a western area link road
- There are high levels of support for cycling and walking and Bilton may be considered as a potential area for implementation of a 'low traffic neighbourhood'
- Two bus corridors, the A61 and A59, were considered and whole route improvement plans developed
- A review of existing literature and previous Harrogate Park and Ride studies was undertaken and an assessment indicated that an area to the south of Harrogate, in the vicinity of the A61 could be suitable

- A Killinghall bypass option was researched and found to offer high value for money. The western area link road offered poor value for money due to the very high costs of construction
- Five junctions were identified as a priority for investment: Parliament Street / Kings Street / Ripon Road, Empress Roundabout, Gracious St / York St / Park Row, Wetherby Rd / Hookstone Corner (Woodlands Corner), Leeds Rd M&S Junction.

There followed a discussion, during the course of which County Councillors raised some specific queries.

County Councillor Michael Harrison asked who would make the decision as to whether a Killinghall bypass should be pursued.

Karl Battersby said that the next step would be to develop an Outline Strategic Business Case. Once completed the detailed proposal for a bypass would be added to the reserve list for highways projects.

County Councillor Andy Solloway said that none of the active travel schemes that had been applied for in the Skipton area had been successful. He said that he recognised the impact that high traffic volumes was having upon people living in Killinghall and so supported a bypass as it would significantly improve quality of life.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie said that the active travel schemes that had been put forward for Craven area were not sufficiently developed or advanced. Further funding had been identified, however, for active travel schemes in the committee area.

County Councillor Michael Harrison said there needed to be a greater focus upon efficient and effective transportation and vehicle movement. There needs to be greater balance as part of the overall discussions about and planning for sustainable transport.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and noted that there were opportunities to encourage active travel through such projects as the use of disused railway lines that still connect towns and villages. He also said that a bypass around Killing hall was long overdue.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE thanked officers for attending the meeting and answering questions from the committee members.

#### **Resolved –**

- a. To receive an update on progress with the Harrogate Transport Improvement Programme in the next 6 months.

The committee Chairman, County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE, then moved onto item 5 on the agenda.

## **92. Update from the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP**

The committee Chairman, County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE, invited the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP to give an overview to the committee some of his areas of work, concerns and priorities. The key points are as summarised below:

- In response to the increase in covid infections a lockdown has been implemented. The working assumption is that this will last until Easter, in some shape or form. Further restrictions are then likely to apply

- Local authorities across North Yorkshire have worked extremely hard to manage and respond to the pandemic
- It will be of paramount importance that the ability of school children to work remotely is supported by government, local authorities and schools
- There is extensive support already in place for businesses but it is recognised that even with this support some business will be forced to close. There is a key role for local authorities in working with businesses to mitigate this and help the local economy emerge from the pandemic. There will be a need to be creative and think about new business opportunities, markets and approaches rather than simply doing more of what worked pre-pandemic
- The Brexit deal that has been negotiated is better than no deal. The focus is now upon understanding how businesses are responding and what support they need to trade in this new economic environment.

There followed a discussion, during the course of which County Councillors made the following points:

County Councillor Michael Harrison asked whether the national lockdown was likely to be followed by a tiered approach to managing the spread of the virus.

In response, the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP said that the national priority was upon the implementation of the vaccination programme and once that had progressed looking at a gradual reduction in the restrictions that had been put in place.

County Councillor Andy Solloway asked whether teachers and police officers could be treated as a priority group for vaccinations.

In response, the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP said that the priority list for vaccination had been set nationally and that teachers and police officers had not been included.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE thanked the Rt Hon Julian Smith MP for attending the meeting and answering questions from the committee members.

The Rt Hon Julian Smith MP left the meeting at 10:50am.

### **93. Council Budget proposals**

Considered -

A presentation by Gary Fielding, Corporate Director, Strategic Resources.

Gary Fielding delivered the presentation, with key points as summarised below:

- There is an estimated £82m cash shortfall projected over next 3 years
- 2021/22 balanced mostly through one off Government funding and use of Reserves
- A key consideration is the setting of Council Tax
- The Locality Budgets will continue in 2021/22 and 2022/23, with £10,000 per member per year
- A £1m Carbon and Environmental Pump Priming Fund will be created
- There are risks inherent in trying to budget over the longer term during a period of such flux and uncertainty
- Work will need to be done to find sustainable ways of reducing the longer term budget shortfall
- The budget will go to the Executive on 26 January 2021 and then County Council on 17 February 2021

- Some primary and secondary schools in the committee area face significant financial challenges and these challenges are likely to get worse over time, with 29 schools projecting to be in deficit by March 2023
- There are significant budget pressures for adult social care services that relate to the pandemic. An additional pressure may emerge as lockdown restrictions are lifted and more people vaccinated as people who had previously been deterred from accessing services due to the pandemic access them
- The implementation of extra care facilities offers a flexible and cost effective way of supporting older and vulnerable people for longer in the community, particularly in the more remote and sparsely populated rural areas
- An unknown was the impact of 'long covid' and the long term impact of health problems experienced by people who had caught covid-19
- There is significant infrastructure investment in the area with the work on Junction 47 on the A1(M), the realignment of the A59 at Kex Gill and the Transforming Cities Fund and the improvements in Skipton mainly linking the railway station to bus station.

There followed a discussion, during the course of which County Councillors made the following points:

County Councillor Stanley Lumley noted that the extra care facilities for older people were working well and could be adopted more widely across the county. He asked whether it would make sense to have more Council led care places available in Harrogate and the surrounding area.

In response, Gary Fielding said that there was a commitment to continue to develop extra care and dementia care. In addition, that there was a need to consider targeted intervention in the care market to help ensure that there was sufficient supply available at the right price.

County Councillor Andy Solloway said that whilst the need to fund adult social care through increases in the local Council Tax precept was understandable, it was not right that a national funding problem was being resolved through local taxation.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE summed up and thanked Gary Fielding for attending the meeting.

**Resolved –**

- a. That Gary Fielding attend the committee meeting in January 2022 to provide an overview of the Council Budget proposals, with a particular focus upon the area covered by the committee.

**94. Committee Work Programme**

Considered -

A report by Daniel Harry, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, outlining the committee work programme.

Daniel Harry introduced the report and asked that Members review the committee's work programme, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous agenda items and any other developments taking place across the area.

**Resolved -**

- a. That the committee work programme be reviewed by members.

**95. Other business which the Chairman agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances.**

County Councillor Carl Les gave an update on some of the key issues facing the Council, as summarised below:

- The pandemic and the local response to it was the key concern for the Council. The prospect of mass vaccination offered hope that life would soon return to normal but there was a great deal to be done to support communities and businesses in the interim
- Volunteers have played a key role in the response of the Council. Many have been working as part of the community support organisations for the past 9 months and there are real concerns about volunteer fatigue
- Organisations have worked well together throughout and it is hoped that this will continue long after the pandemic has gone
- There are concerns about the long term impact of the lockdowns and restrictions and what this has meant for social isolation and people's mental health and wellbeing
- Much of the work of the Council continues as normal and with the budgetary pressures as they are there will be a need year on year to find new ways of working that are more efficient and help to save money
- The issue of Council Tax being used to fund adult social care is of concern and something that has been raised many times with MPs and Ministers. There is a need for all national leaders to come together and work through a sustainable solution to providing long term health and social care support for older people. This is not a political issue but simply an issue that needs to be addressed.

County Councillor Mike Chambers MBE thanked County Councillor Carl Les for his input and for taking the time to attend the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11.30 am.

DH