

North Yorkshire Council

Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 23rd October, 2024 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton

Councillors Yvonne Peacock (Chair), Alyson Baker (non-voting), Caroline Dickinson, Kevin Foster, Heather Moorhouse, Karin Sedgewick, David Webster, and Annabel Wilkinson.

Councillors David Hugill and Tom Jones attended remotely.

Steve Loach, Democratic Services Officer, Louisa Carolan - Principal Regeneration Officer: Richmond and Northallerton Area and Jayne Charlton - Area Manager Areas 1 and 2

Other Attendees: 1 member of the public and a representative of the press.

Apologies: Councillors Bryn Griffiths, Carl Les, Stuart Parsons, Angus Thompson, Steve Watson, John Weighell OBE and Peter Wilkinson; together with co-opted Member Malcom Warne

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

114 Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 16 September 2024

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 16 September 2024 having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

In response to Minute No. 107 - Subsidised Educational Transport – Discussion, Councillor Annabel Wilkinson, Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills, provided the following update:-

“Over the past few months councillors and officers have received correspondence from concerned individuals in the Richmond / Swaledale area. This follows the Home to School travel policy changes adopted in July. I agreed at the last meeting of this ACC committee to seek further dialogue with officers and to report back to you today.

With a genuine desire to help families, I have attempted to signpost, explain and clarify the issues being raised by residents, school representatives and parish councils and have responded to emails, sometimes after needing to seek details from officers, on an individual basis. However, as a number of matters are repeatedly referred to I wish to make the following four points in one response. I will ensure you have this in writing after this meeting.

1. Admissions and transport link

The council does not decide where children have to go to school - parents make preferences within the admissions process which is a prescribed process that North Yorkshire Council undertakes each year alongside all other admissions authorities, including all LAs, academy trusts and VA schools in England. The dates for this are set nationally. The process cannot be paused or amended as has been suggested to me. The admissions cycle takes us to the National Offer Days in March and April – this is when all children starting reception and year 7 in England find out the schools they have been allocated. Extremely high numbers of children in North Yorkshire have typically received

places at their preferred schools. It is only after this process that transport eligibility can be assessed as we do not know the outcome of admissions until the national offer day.

2. The distance calculator tool

The tool has been developed to support parents to understand which schools are nearest to their unique home address location so they can make informed decisions about admissions preferences. As the tool has accuracy to 1/1000 of a mile, there will be examples where neighbours have different results. The council is not aware of any individual that has a concern about the accuracy of the mapping tool. Some parents have contacted the council to query the response as they have schools which are outside of the county on their list of nearest schools. However, as North Yorkshire has so many neighbouring LAs, this is to also be expected. Parents can still choose to apply for places at any suitable school whether it is the nearest or not, however eligibility under the council's revised policy for home to school travel cannot be guaranteed.

3. New routes, safety, risk assessments, gritting, weight limits

We currently operate over 600 routes to mainstream schools. The routes cover different distances, different vehicle sizes and different passenger numbers including eligible and paid for seats. Each year these arrangements reflect the changing cohort as school leavers and starters come off and on the transport. There are established processes for this to be managed and the council has successfully transported thousands of children over hundreds of routes year after year.

This year, and in the next 4-5 years, we are likely to see some new routes as patterns of admissions may change as a result of the revised home to school travel policy. After the admissions process we will start to look at which new contracts are required for eligible children to be transported to their new schools. Until then we do not have any 'new routes'. When new contracts are established, risk assessments are carried out with operators. The routes that are arranged are not necessarily the shortest routes (eg those used to calculate the nearest school). Instead, routes will take account of the home locations of all passengers sharing the travel, the required vehicle size, local knowledge, time spent travelling.

Risk assessments will be carried out on new and changed routes later in the academic year and will be ongoing once contracts are established. This approach is currently in place and will continue. Risk assessments take account of the whole journey and will consider all factors that could affect a contracted route. The council will not use vehicles for transporting children where road restrictions would not allow this.

4. Savings forecast

The reports published in advance of the council's decision on the policy included a savings forecast of 'up to £4.2m' that would be dependent upon a number of variables including parental preferences for school admissions, school popularity and the availability of places year on year, as well as Free School Meals eligibility and other factors.

In order to provide this forecast, officers developed a model that was based on the cohort of pupils accessing home to school travel in the 2023-24 academic year and applying the 'proposed' 2024-25 policy to the pupil data, the type of contracts in place and the costs of operating the policy at that time. The savings range was provided to councillors rather than a specific figure due to fact that future admissions allocations are unknown (parental choice / popularity of school places / FSM eligibility etc) and so it would be impossible to determine an exact savings figure.

However, councillors are clear that savings are expected and that over time the impact of the policy will lead to a lower cost transport budget (on a like for like basis) than if the previous discretionary elements had remained in the policy.

Councillors will monitor the policy implementation including through a post implementation review of the first year in spring-summer 2026.

I cannot emphasise more strongly that safety is, and will continue to be, a high priority for children. The council will make sure it takes the necessary steps to ensure safety of children whilst making the required free-of-charge travel arrangements to facilitate the attendance at school of eligible children resident in North Yorkshire.”

115 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this stage of the meeting.

116 Public Participation

There were no questions or statements from Members of the Public.

117 Endorsement of the Scoped Projects for the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund

Considered –

The report of the Corporate Director – Community Development requesting Members to:

- consider the project scoping documents under the Economic, Regeneration, Tourism and Transport Project Development Fund;
- endorse the scoped projects to be put forward to the Executive Member for Open to Business for Final approval and sign-off by the Director of Community Development

The three projects proposed at the meeting held 16 September 2024 were:

- Parking Spaces for Private Hire Taxis at Hildyard Row (White Shops)
- Transport scheme to support individuals to get to places of work, study and health provision
- A684 Morton Flatts Responsive signage project

Details of each project, anticipated costs and the full scoping report for each were provided to assist Members with their deliberations.

The following issues were raised during the discussion of the reports:

- The access to work scheme was very important for the viability of businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector, in rural locations.
- The transport project would assist the constituency area to be at the forefront of the development of the forthcoming transport strategy.
- Access to services such as hospitals, doctors, leisure, shops, etc. should also be addressed through this project, and existing provisions taken account to link into the project.
- The electronic signage at Morton Flatts was important to the economic viability of the area and to anyone travelling through the area.
- Ensuring that advanced information of the road being flooded and, just as importantly, providing details of when the road had re-opened as soon as the flooding had subsided, would be of great benefit to the area.
- Work was taking place with the Environment Agency to address the flooding at that location but this would not be addressed in the short-term and the signage would assist with managing the situation in the interim.
- It was noted that similar signage elsewhere in the constituency area had proved to be of significant benefit.

- It was requested that traffic was diverted through Kirby Fleetham when the road was closed at Morton Flatts as a one-way bridge there created traffic issues. In response it was stated that Kirby Fleetham was not part of the diversion route but it was very difficult to prevent people from using this to by-pass the flooding if they decided to do so.

Members considered the three projects, in turn, and each was endorsed unanimously.

Resolved –

That Members endorse the scoped projects detailed above to be put forward to the Executive Member for Open to Business for Final approval and sign-off by the Director of Community Development.

117 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 highlighted the following issues:-

- A number of informal briefings were in the process of being arranged on a variety of subjects and details of Teams Meetings arranged for these would be provided to Members in due course.
- A Member noted that the A6316 had recently been designated part of the “key road network” by the Combined Authority, and he asked that details in relation to this be considered at the March 2025 meeting of the Area Committee to coincide with the attendance of the Elected Mayor.
- It was noted that a number of Electric Vehicle Charging (EVC) points put in place by the previous District Councils had not been connected to an electricity supply and it was requested that a report be provided to outline how this was being addressed. In the meantime could it be indicated that the various spaces can be utilised as additional parking rather than them remaining empty as people are unaware that these have no power supply and leave them free for use by electric vehicles.
- In terms of the report on Resilience and Emergency Plans to be considered at the November meeting of the Committee, it was asked that details of how the service was delivered and co-ordinated, on the ground, be provided, alongside the strategic provision of the service. It was also requested that details of liaison with Parish Councils also be provided.

Resolved –

- (i) That the Work Programme be noted;
- (ii) That the issues raised above be added to the Work Programme;
- (iii) That further consideration be given to the development of the work programme at forthcoming briefings and meetings.

118 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Resolved –

That it be noted that the next scheduled ordinary meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 18th November 2024 at 10am at County Hall, Northallerton.

The meeting concluded at 11.05pm