

North Yorkshire County Council

Executive

25 May 2021

Area Constituency Committee Feedback

1.0 Purpose of the Report

To bring to the attention of the Executive key issues considered at recent meetings of the Area Constituency Committees.

2.0 Skipton and Ripon Area Constituency Committee on 11 March 2021

- 2.1 The Rt Hon Julian Smith MP attended the meeting and provided updates on progress with the national vaccination programme; the support being put in place for the hospitality sector; the economic challenges ahead; and the funding that has been secured for the work on the A59 at Kex Gill.
- 2.2 The committee received the final update on the development of the Castleberg Hospital, which was temporarily closed on 13 April 2017 due to significant problems with the building structure. Following a public consultation in 2017 a decision was taken to re-open the hospital, and work commenced on the site, before it formally re-opened on 26 November 2019. The committee noted the investment of time, effort and money into the hospital all of which has ensured that it will continue to play a key role in the provision of health and social care in Craven.
- 2.4 The committee considered the operation of the Council's permit scheme for highways works and the quality of work undertaken by utilities companies. Concerns were raised that the work of utilities companies was not co-ordinated and so the same area was often dug up multiple times. Also, that the quality of some the work undertaken, both visually and structurally, could be improved. The Committee will receive an update on this in September 2021.
- 2.5 The committee received an annual update on the work of the Stronger Communities Team and what they had done to support the establishment and operation of the Community Support Organisations across the County. The committee members noted the speed at which the Community Support Organisations were created and how successful that they have been in supporting vulnerable people in the community during the pandemic
- 2.6 County Councillor Carl Les provided an update on the work being done by the Council in response to the pandemic. He also provided the committee with an update on Local Government Review.

3.0 Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee on 18 March 2021

- 3.1 The committee noted, with sadness, the death of County Councillor Geoff Webber on 11 March 2021. The Chairman, on behalf of Members, paid tribute to the valuable contribution that County Councillor Geoff Webber had made to the committee's work and expressed condolences to his family.

- 3.2 Andrew Jones MP attended the meeting and provided updates on:
- the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on ways of working and changes in the volume, and the nature, of work undertaken;
 - the community efforts being made to help others who needed support during the pandemic;
 - the ways in which he had represented his constituency in Parliament, including taking forward a request for a policy change regarding alcohol duty on hand sanitiser;
 - the very helpful weekly calls between all MPs for North Yorkshire, the Local Resilience Forum and senior county councillors and officers;
 - the continuation of non-Covid work, such as the seeking of permission and funds for the A59 Kex Gill; and
 - his thanks to county councillors and officers for their work during a challenging year.
- 3.3 County Councillor Carl Les (Leader of the County Council) provided an update on:
- the 2021/22 budget set by the County Council which included the retention of Locality Budgets and a budget for Climate Change;
 - the Fairer Funding Review and the Adult Social Care Funding Review, both of which he looked forward to;
 - the invaluable weekly calls with all MPs for North Yorkshire;
 - the Regional Climate Commission launched on 17 March 2021 whose work would impact the County Council;
 - the North Yorkshire Rural Commission which was due to produce its report in the summer of 2021; and
 - his encouragement to members of the public to participate in the consultation currently underway concerning local government reform.
- 3.4 County Councillor Michael Harrison (Executive Member, and Chair of North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board) provided updates on the Covid-19 pandemic in North Yorkshire in relation to: infection rates; care home infections; hospitals and hospital discharges; testing; and vaccinations.
- 3.5 The committee received an annual update on the work of the Stronger Communities Team and what they had done to support the establishment and operation of the Community Support Organisations across the County. Committee members paid tribute to the scale of support which had been delivered, praised the Community Support Organisations for their work, and highlighted the need to work alongside the NHS to provide support for mental health problems going forward.
- 3.6 The committee received updates from BES officers and County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member) concerning:-
- Active Travel Schemes in Harrogate and Knaresborough, namely, Active Travel Fund schemes, Beech Grove Low Traffic Neighbourhood, and Otley Road cycle scheme.
 - A forthcoming public consultation on a detailed design for a cycle facility on Oatlands Drive, Harrogate.
 - Transforming Cities Fund proposals for Harrogate.
 - Significant Investment Schemes by the County Council, namely, the Harrogate York railway project, A59 Kex Gill, and Junction 47 on the A1(M).

4.0 Thirsk & Malton Area Constituency Committee on 26 March 2021

- 4.1 Kevin Hollinrake MP attended the meeting and provided an overview of issues affecting his constituency which included:
- The effect of the pandemic on local businesses, particularly in the hospitality industry and tourism, and his weekly/monthly business calls with local companies;

- The support offered to businesses e.g. the job retention scheme and business rate grants. He also suggested business rates needed reforming in response to the increase in online purchasing;
- The rise in consumer savings available to boost the economy going forward;
- An increase in staycations in 2021 – a boost for the hospitality industry;
- The successful delivery of the vaccination programme;
- Other central Government initiatives e.g. the clamp down on illegal immigration, longer sentences for criminals and more Police on the streets;
- His current concerns about the agricultural industry i.e. problems with cross channel export and deliveries. He also suggested an increase in the consumption of seasonal UK-grown produce was needed;
- The need for greater Adult Social Care funding;
- The size of the task ahead in regard to Levelling Up – he welcomed the moves towards a fairer deal for the north, which included the relocation of jobs into the area particularly in the public sector;
- The need for rural proofing of energy supplies, in order to move away from a reliance on fossil fuels and to prevent an increase in fuel poverty;

4.2 The MP also welcomed the introduction of the Local Resilience Forum, recognising the opportunities it provided for bringing the right people together for collaborative working and the sharing of information.

4.3 The committee also received an annual update on the work of the Stronger Communities Team. The Committee were pleased to note the ongoing independent evaluation of the impact of the CSOs, in part to support an independent review but also as part of Stronger Communities' wider strategic goal of better understanding the role of a community anchor organisation in delivering local place-based initiatives. The Committee paid tribute to the work of the Stronger Communities team and the volunteer groups, and concern was raised about the long-term viability of some of the smaller charities/voluntary organisations supporting the area, and the emergence of fuel poverty for some residents.

4.4 Finally, the Committee received an update from Highways England which focussed on ongoing schemes across the constituency area. The update highlighted:

- The steps taken to make road-sweeping work easier and more effective, including the removal of hardened material from along the side of key roads;
- A road safety audit recently carried out for the recent A64 Scotchman Lane works, with another due to take place at Barton Hill;
- A number of other schemes recently completed in the area, and a number of overnight closures still required in coming weeks to address some residual works associated with those schemes;
- The Plans being developed for the Hopgrove junction and the stretch of the A64 up to Barton-le-Willow;
- The A64 village gateway scheme – The Committee raised some concerns about the speed of traffic coming off the A64 into villages, and agreed a more co-ordinated approach with the local highways team in regard to speed signage would have been preferable;
- The challenge of litter picking on all-purpose trunk roads - It was confirmed that HE was responsible for the A64 but the environmental obligations were the responsibility of District Councils;

5.0 Scarborough & Whitby Area Constituency Committee on 26 March 2021

5.1 Rt Hon. Robert Goodwill MP attended the meeting, and thanked Members for their work throughout the pandemic and for keeping him updated on issues affecting his constituency. He confirmed he had been involved in weekly meetings with NYCC's Leader, other North Yorkshire MPs, and representatives from Partner organisations, from which he had been

able to feedback information into central Government. He also acknowledged the impact of the pandemic on every aspect of life within his constituency, which included:

- The potential disadvantage to year one Sixth Formers at exam time;
- The reducing levels of infection;
- The high number of visitors expected to the county during the coming summer, with more people holidaying in the UK this year, and the boost that would give to local businesses, particularly those in tourism;
- The problems associated with mobile home owners i.e. the debris and waste they leave behind, and the likely increase of that as a result of more staycations.
- The likely high demand for the hospitality industry once businesses re-opened;
- The possible need for more Park and Ride over the summer in Scarborough;
- The closure of some local schools due to a Covid case being identified.
- The bureaucracy around fishing– it was noted there had been long periods where the fishing fleet had not been able to go out and Members thanked the MP for his support in getting them grants throughout the pandemic.

5.2 The Committee questioned the appropriateness of the Government decision that local Authorities would return to holding decision-making meetings in person as from 7th May 2021, The MP confirmed his view that it was not possible to get the same levels of engagement and debate in meetings held remotely as those held in person, and therefore he welcomed the planned return to in-person meetings. However, he asked that the Council write to him with lots of signatures attached so that he could raise the issue with the relevant minister.

5.3 Finally, the MP was made aware of the ongoing problems associated with maintaining/upgrading the facilities at Bewlay Park and East Barmby Recreational Centres and the consequential decision to mothball both. Assurance was sought that he would take the matter up with the relevant Minister and it was agreed the Committee would formally write to him regarding the matter so that he may take up the issue as requested.

5.4 The Committee also received an update from the Stronger Communities team which provide an overview of their work in the constituency throughout the pandemic. It also confirmed the work underway by all the CSOs to identify how and when to deliver transition activity, and summarised a range of activities to be undertaken in the coming six months. Particularly in regard to financial hardship and mental health, it was confirmed the Team would continue to react to what was needed in their communities and that some additional funding had been sought by MIND, CAB and Age UK to continue to provide specific support in those areas.

5.5 On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked the Team for their achievements throughout the pandemic and for going above and beyond for local residents.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That the Executive notes the report and considers any matters arising from the work of the Area Constituency Committees detailed above, that merits further scrutiny, review or investigation at a county-level.

Barry Khan
Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services)
County Hall
Northallerton

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