

North Yorkshire County Council

Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2021, commencing at 10am – held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Present:-

Members: County Councillors Angus Thompson (Chairman), David Blades, Caroline Dickinson, Helen Grant, Bryn Griffiths, David Hugill, Carl Les, Heather Moorhouse, Yvonne Peacock, Karin Sedgewick, John Weighell OBE, and co-opted member Malcolm Warne.

Other Cllrs Present: County Councillors David Chance and Gareth Dadd

NYCC Officers: Adele Wilson-Hope (Stronger Communities Delivery Manager), Lucy Moss-Blundell (Stronger Communities Delivery Manager), David Kirkpatrick (Team Leader, Traffic Engineering, Highways and Transportation), Richard Benstead (Children and Young Peoples Services), Steve Loach and Ruth Gladstone (Democratic Services), David Edwardes (Technology and Change) and Liz Simpson (Communications).

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

115. Chairman's Welcome, introductions and apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson submitted her apologies.

116. Minutes

Further to Minute 110 from the previous Meeting (Melsonby Flood Risks and Drainage Issues – Briefing), James Copeland of the NFU was in attendance, at the invitation of the Chairman, to provide details of how the NFU, and the farming community, worked together to address flooding issues. He outlined the following:-

- He noted that the NFU had received a significant amount of contact in relation to how the issue discussed at the previous meeting in terms of how the farming community dealt with flooding.
- It was considered appropriate, therefore, to request engagement on this.
- The NFU and its members work closely with the Council, the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies on water management.
- Documents relating to how farmers address water management were provided prior to the meeting and circulated to Members.
- The NFU undertook a pro-active approach to water issues, not just flooding, with resources and infrastructure on farms taken account of, and representations through the Planning System.

Members discussed the issues highlighted and the following points were raised:-

- A Member referred to contact he had received from the national press following the previous meeting regarding how farmers were being dealt with by NYCC on flooding issues in terms of the responsibilities of landowners. He emphasised that the matter had been falsely reported at the time as it had not been stated that would be charged for work undertaken by NYCC following flooding issues emanating from their land, but it had been stated that they may be charged for highways issues, depending upon the circumstances. He considered that the issue should not have returned to the ACC, but should have been referred to the relevant Executive Member.
- A Member emphasised the need to have a co-ordinated approach to flooding events with all relevant bodies, including the NFU, as the prevalence of such events was likely to increase.
- A Member welcomed the attendance of the NFU and the information provided as farmers were often at the forefront of issues in rural areas and the NFU were good at communicating their concerns.

Resolved -

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

117. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

118. Public Questions and Statements

Mrs Georgiana Sale provided the following statement and questions:-

I do not know what your powers are or what representations you can make. I do know that you represent a rural county and do fight for what is a different type of community to more urban landscapes.

I have recently been disappointed by another bank chain, the HSBC, closing in both Richmond and Northallerton. I live in Croft on Tees and like many in North Yorkshire villages use NY towns rather than Darlington. So now the HSBC has closed in the towns that I use for shopping and personal finance. Perhaps some action could be taken, not specifically about HSBC , but more generally about loss of banking facilities in rural locations.

Here are some points I would like to make:-

1. This is another cut in the facilities rural communities can use. The closure reflects a lack of understanding of how rural communities actually work.
2. The cut is in two local rural hub towns.
3. Not everyone wants to use on- line banking. Even some people who have professional knowledge about IT, will not use on-line banking. They think it is too risky. So we are not just talking about people who may find IT difficult to use.
4. Some people changed to the HSBC when the Nat West closed in Richmond; most people like to keep a more stable arrangement with their bank. Most people would not want to be changing their bank every couple of years.
5. Many people who use 'live' banks are more mature people who do not want to, or cannot do a half hour drive to conduct a face to face transaction at a HSBC.
6. Both towns have a large tourist footfall in 'normal' times. Although we are increasingly cashless society, all of us use ATM units when we are on holiday.
7. Both towns have a thriving town centre. Where are businesses going to take their cash takings at the end of a working day?
8. We also have substantial market traders in both communities who are dependent on paying in cash takings.
9. The alternative in dealing with cash transactions at a Post Office to pay into a bank account is not easy - you need a special Post Office cash card and lots of patience in

- the long queues. Privacy and security are also issues in Post Offices which are now located in shops.
10. Rural people have many small societies, which use cash - just look at the number fund raising events, coffee mornings, clubs, local shows etc.
 11. However, it's more than just cash. It's the paying in of cheques to business accounts, e.g. by local tradesmen; dealing with bankers orders, etc., as well as sorting out issues face to face with a bank employee, e.g. security issues when scams take place; and the myriad of other local services that take place at the bank counters.
 12. If people do decide to go to Darlington they have to drive, perhaps do a 30 miles or more, round trip and then pay for parking. But what if you live up one of the Dales? What if you haven't a car? Bus journeys are very long.
 13. Some banks like "First Direct" who are a direct internet bank with no branch structure use HSBC for the occasions when their customers HAVE TO go into a branch. This is usually for security reasons.

Responding to the questions/statement the Clerk highlighted the following:-

The Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of the issues outlined in the statement/questions in 2019 and the following recommendations following that review were agreed by the Executive:-

The Scrutiny Committee's views in regard to the impact of bank branch closures on local business and rural communities be endorsed.

Highlight the concerns identified by the review to members of the Local Government York & North Yorkshire Partnership Group.

Request all County Councillors to consider and identify where within their own electoral division an additional ATM might be of benefit to residents, and identify a possible site location (council owned or otherwise) for submission via LINK's online tool.

That the Stronger Communities Team support all submissions of possible site locations submitted by County Councillors via the LINK's online tool, by encouraging the relevant community to support a proposal and provide evidence of need.

A copy of the review would be sent to Ms Sale.

NYCC had previously expressed its concern regarding the issues raised by the statement/questions, and could do that again - for this and any future closures - but unfortunately NYCC (or the indeed the government) has no power to stop bank closures.

Members discussed the statement/questions and the following issues were highlighted:-

- A major factor in providing banking services in smaller towns and villages is security, when local businesses need to bank large amounts of cash, and are forced to travel large distances to unfamiliar surroundings, sometimes on public transport, to do this. There was also an issue in respect of the lack of private facilities for the public to discuss their banking requirements. It was suggested that consideration should be given to the provision of "one-stop" banking facilities in smaller towns and villages, through a co-ordinated approach from the various banking providers.
- A Member noted that Barclays Bank in Hawes had closed but following discussions with local community leaders, the ATM with the Barclays Bank label had been retained, giving reassurance to those requiring to use it.
- It was stated that for many communities banking facilities were now provided through the Post Office, which, in many instances, had been relocated to the rear of local shops, leading to concerns regarding security and privacy, for those requiring banking services.

- Members considered that a co-ordinated approach between the banks and the Post Office was required to address the issues raised, however, it was acknowledged that there was little that Local Authorities could do in relation to ensuring this happened.
- The questioner outlined her own experiences of having to queue through a shop to use the Post Office provided banking facilities and feeling anxious as she was carrying a large amount of cash. She considered that the provision of co-ordinated banking services in a single building would be an appropriate solution to this issue.
- Members emphasised the need to find local solutions to address this issue. A Member considered that providing a “one-stop” solution was not as simple as it sounded, particularly when taking account of the cost of premises in towns and villages, and the only option could be to locate within existing shops, bringing the same issues encountered with Post Offices.
- A Member suggested, as a way forward, that MPs should be contacted by the County Council requesting that they consider the development of a “one-stop” solution to the issues raised in relation to banking services disappearing in local communities, and as an initiative for keeping local high streets viable and vibrant.

119. NYCC Response to COVID 19 Pandemic – Executive Members’ Update

The Leader of the Council, County Councillor Carl Les, highlighted the following:-

- The infection rates in North Yorkshire were showing a downward trend and were significantly lower than some of the Local Authority areas bordering the County. However, due to the relatively small populations in the Districts small outbreaks could create large fluctuations in the figures.
- The overall number of deaths attributed to COVID was 1192, and those who had died were remembered during the recent “Day of Reflection”. This week had seen the first occasion since September 2020 that no attributable deaths had been reported in the County.
- The reduction in the infection had seen the closure of the Nightingale Hospital in Harrogate and the temporary mortuary at Leeming Bar, with neither having to be utilised at any stage.
- The number of outbreaks in Care Homes in the County had substantially reduced with 25 out of 300 homes currently reporting any cases.
- The roll out of the vaccination programme had been incredibly successful and, in North Yorkshire –
 - 373000 had now received at least one dose of the vaccine
 - 97% of Care Home residents had received at least one dose
 - Cohorts 1 to 6 – 90% had received at least one dose
 - The clinically vulnerable – 86%% had received at least one dose
- A number of countries were now experiencing 3rd waves of the pandemic and every effort was being made to ensure that this would not occur in the UK, therefore, the re-opening after lockdown was being undertaken extremely carefully.
- The relevant authorities and bodies continued to meet on a weekly basis, including the Police, local MPs, the NHS, etc.
- Last week 108 people were issued with fixed penalty notices for contravening the COVID regulations.
- 23 Community Support organisations had been developed and had been of vital assistance to local communities throughout the County through their coordinated approach and partnership working.
- In terms of other pressures facing the County Council the leader stated that a budget for 2021/22 had just been agreed which took account of the need to maintain services that are currently in high demand while recognising the difficult financial position of many people due to the pandemic. He considered that the promised fairer funding review, by the Government, would hopefully address the inequality of the current

funding position for Local Authorities. He also called for the funding position for Adult Social Care to be addressed as soon as possible.

- He noted that infrastructure continued to be prioritised by the County Council with work on broadband provision being targeted at the final areas and east to west County connectivity being boosted by the recent planning approval for the re-routing of the A59 at Kex Gill.
- The economy in North Yorkshire was currently fragile due to the pandemic and every effort was being undertaken to ensure that an effective economic recovery could be made.
- Ongoing issues include addressing climate change and Local Government Reorganisation.

County Councillor Caroline Dickinson, the Executive Member whose portfolio includes Public Health, highlighted the following –

- The COVID infection rates continued to fluctuate, therefore, people needed to avoid becoming complacent and remember – hands, face, space and fresh air – to ensure the “Road Map” out of lock-down could continue to be met.
- She outlined details of the vaccine roll out in the Constituency area.
- Testing Sites were available in all the main towns in each District and further sites continued to be added.
- Schools have undertaken mass testing and pupils and staff are now carrying out home testing and, where necessary, isolation is then being undertaken.
- Details of how healthy living programmes were being delivered were outlined, including the “Smoke Free” and “Adult Weight Management” initiatives.

Members discussed the update and the following issue was raised:-

- A Member noted that Stokesley Town Council were looking to reopen the Library facilities in the Town Hall, and would like to provide lateral flow tests for the Library staff. He asked whether there was any funding available from NYCC to purchase these. In response it was stated that an approach would be made to the Director of Public Health to determine whether any assistance was available.

County Councillor Gareth Dadd, Deputy Leader and Executive Member whose portfolio includes Finance, highlighted the following –

- He noted that some concern had been expressed regarding details of how the County Council’s budget had been determined not having been outlined in Council Tax bills when they had been sent out. He emphasised that full details had been provided on the County Council’s website, therefore, a printed version was not necessary.
- He noted that the increase in the Social Care budget was not 1.5% as had been widely reported, but had been boosted by an additional 1.5% levy on the Council Tax, which would provide additional funding to those services.
- The budget set took account of the need for economic recovery following the departure from lockdown and the need to protect the medium term financial strategy while meeting priorities for services.
- The current financial position made the requirement for Local Government Reorganisation imperative. He raised concern that the proposal for the East/West split scenario would, potentially, lead to huge loss of jobs for North Yorkshire.

Resolved –

That the Executive Members be thanked for their updated the contents of which be noted.

120. **Stronger Communities: COVID19 Social Isolation and Approach to Community Efforts.**

County Councillor David Chance, the Executive member whose portfolio includes Stronger Communities, introduced the report. He noted that it had been a year since the first lockdown began and it was appropriate to provide a report to all ACCs highlighting the tremendous work undertaken by Stronger Communities during that period. He outlined how the Stronger Communities Team had established 23 Community Support Organisations, to assist with supporting local communities through the pandemic, in only 4 days.

Adele Wilson-Hope (Stronger Communities Delivery Manager), Lucy Moss-Blundell (Stronger Communities Delivery Manager) outlined the report, highlighting the following:-

- The Stronger Communities Team developing and mobilising the community support infrastructure in response to the COVID19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

Community Support Organisation Performance (2020/21)

- Since the mobilisation of the community support model in March 2020, the following activity had been recorded via the 23 CSOs across North Yorkshire, primarily facilitated by approximately 95,000 volunteer hours:
 - Approximately 82,000 contacts;
 - 17,214 prescriptions delivered;
 - 24,724 shopping deliveries made;
 - 32,559 befriending calls and 22,083 phone check ins made;
 - Administered and allocated 1,132 Covid19 Self Isolation Grants totalling £108,775;
 - 4,402 transport requests fulfilled; and
 - 31,876 meals delivered.

Covid19 Related Work

- Defra's Local Authority Emergency Assistance Fund for Food and Essential Supplies
- Support for the NHS Covid19 Vaccination Programme
- North Yorkshire Together Activity Packs
- Capacity Building

Planning for 2021/22

- Independent Evaluation
- Holiday Activities and Food Programme
- Reboot North Yorkshire

Local Area Information

- Details of local initiatives within the Constituency area were outlined.

County Councillor Chance provided details of applications that had been made to the Local Assistance Fund, which had been developed from the emergency funding provided by Central Government. He noted that the funding had been a great help to a large number of people. He also stated that Members had utilised their Locality Budgets to assist with the development of a wide range of COVID related projects.

(County Councillor Helen Grant declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Director of the Colburn CIC, having received assistance from Stronger Communities)

A Member thanked the Stronger Communities Delivery Managers for their support and assistance in Colburn.

Members stated that the recommendation for the report was for it to be noted but suggested that the recognition of the marvellous work undertaken by the Stronger Communities Team during the COVID 19 pandemic should be recorded.

Resolved –

That the report be noted and the Committee places on record their thanks in recognition of the marvellous work undertaken by the Stronger Communities Team during the COVID 19 pandemic.

121. Supplying schools, children and young people with digital devices during the pandemic

Richard Benstead (Children and Young Peoples Services) provided a report informing Members of the work undertaken to provide schools, children and young people with digital devices during the pandemic. He highlighted the following:-

- From April 2020 Children and Young Peoples Services commenced providing appropriate devices to vulnerable young people.
- Work took place alongside Social Services, Schools and ICT to identify those most in need and deliver the equipment. Over 1000 pieces of equipment were distributed.
- Other organisations were also providing devices where these were required.
- Devices continued to be distributed in this way until the Summer of 2020, and then the DfE altered the distribution method from September 2020, with the devices being sent to schools for them to allocate, which was acknowledged as being more appropriate.
- As of March 2021 around 4000 devices had been distributed throughout North Yorkshire to vulnerable children in maintained schools, there would also be other provision, from other sources, in addition to this.
- Schools had stated that the provision had been essential in supporting learning during the lockdowns.
- Reboot North Yorkshire has recently been launched to encourage businesses to donate their no longer used ICT, for this to be cleaned and distributed to children and young people who require this technology.

Following the presentation of the report Members undertook a discussion and the following issues and points were highlighted:-

- A Member noted that a number of Primary Schools were facing financial difficulties and would find it difficult to support children leaning remotely. She noted that she had provided £6k of her locality budget to support such a school with this. She asked whether Primary Schools were also being provided with devices through the initiatives. In response it was stated that the DfE were providing additional support to Year 3 and 4 children, however, infant schools were not eligible for support.
- Members welcomed the initiatives that had been developed. It was noted that a number of Community Groups were also providing schools with ICT, directly, in a number of local communities in the Constituency area.

Resolved –

That the initiatives outlined be welcomed and the report be noted.

122. North Northallerton Bridge – update

Pam Johnson, the project co-ordinator for NYCC, had circulated a report prior to the meeting updating Members on the progress of the project.

A Member noted the report referred to January 2022, but it was not clear whether this referred to the completion of the bridge, or to the flooding problems regularly occurring on the A684 Stokesley Road. He considered that the flooding issues required a resolution well before that date. The Clerk stated that he would seek clarification on this matter and inform Members accordingly.

Resolved –

That the update report be noted

123. HGV overnight parking on NYCC Highway Network - update

David Kirkpatrick (Team Leader – Traffic Engineering, Highways and Transportation) presented the report, highlighting the following issues:-

- This issue, which had previously been discussed at the ACC, had an impact on the road network, and was carefully monitored and addressed where appropriate.
- The issue had become more prevalent in recent years leading to an upturn in complaints.
- In response to this the District Council had issued a Public Space Protection Order around the Leeming Bar Industrial Estate, which had been working well and had significantly reduced this practice in that area.
- Due to the transient nature of the problem it was addressed by merit, rather than a County-wide approach, to ensure that the problem was not simply moved to another location.

The following issues were raised by Members during a discussion of the report:-

- A Member noted that there were issues in her area with HGVs parked up overnight, and she asked whether the Public Space Protection Orders would be rolled out to other areas experiencing these problems. In response it was emphasised that for the implementation of an Order it had to be ensured that this did not move the issue to another area, therefore, careful checks and monitoring would be required, however, concerns would be investigated to consider the possibility of a PSPO.
- A Member suggested that additional dedicated facilities were required to accommodate HGV drivers, when they required rest periods and/or overnight. In response it was stated that work continued with various partner agencies to provide appropriate facilities where they were required.
- Clarification was provided in respect of the penalties imposed for contravening the PSPO.
- A Member praised the joint work undertaken between the District and County Council in respect of this issue

Resolved –

That the update report be noted.

124. 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.

It was noted that Members were invited to identify issues for inclusion in the Work Programme outside of the meeting and inform the Clerk accordingly.

The following issues were requested for consideration at the subsequent meetings:-

- Further consideration of flooding issues in the Constituency area with invites extended to the NFU, the Environment Agency and the relevant Internal Drainage Boards to assist with the discussion;
- Highways and the further development of the Teckal – It was noted that this issue was to be the subject of a forthcoming All Member Seminar, therefore, it was suggested that this issue be followed up by the ACC subsequent to that.

Resolved -

That the Work Programme be noted and updated to reflect the additional items requested.

125. Next Meeting

Resolved -

That the next scheduled meeting of the Area Constituency Committee would take place on Wednesday 9th June 2021 at 10am to be held remotely via Microsoft TEAMS.

The meeting concluded at 11:35am.

SML