

## North Yorkshire County Council

### Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on 12 July 2018 at 10.00 am.

**Present:-**

County Councillor Mike Jordan in the Chair.

County Councillors Karl Arthur, Paul Haslam, Robert Heseltine, David Jeffels, Stanley Lumley, Don Mackay, John McCartney, Andy Paraskos, Caroline Patmore, Clive Pearson, Roberta Swiers and Richard Welch.

Other Members present were:

Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie

County Councillor Caroline Goodrick

NYCC Officers attending: Fiona Ancell, Road Safety Officer (BES), David Bowe, Corporate Director (BES), Barrie Mason, Assistant Director - Highways & Transportation (BES), Allan McVeigh, Network Strategy Manager (BES), James Smith, Team Leader – Traffic, Engineering, Highways & Transportation and Jonathan Spencer, Principal Scrutiny Officer (Central Services).

Present by invitation: Chris Dunn, Service Delivery Manager (Highways England).

12 members of the public were in attendance.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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**32. Minutes**

**Resolved -**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**33. Declarations of Interest**

**Resolved -**

There were no declarations of interest to note.

**34. Public Questions or Statements**

There were no general public questions or statements from members of the public concerning issues not on the agenda.

**35. Corporate Director's Update**

Considered -

The verbal update of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services.

David Bowe provided the following update.

- Junction 47, A1M: The project funded through the YNYER LEP and the County Council to improve the junction remained underway. A baseline scheme had been produced but the hope was that an enhanced scheme could be introduced at the same time. However the enhanced scheme would be reliant on the developer providing the required additional funding. The County Council and LEP were working hard to get the baseline scheme in place but they could not continue to wait much longer for the developer to commit the funding to enable the enhanced scheme to go ahead.
- Kex Gill, A59: A deep tear in the carriageway had appeared in May 2018 resulting from the land beneath the road moving following a period of prolonged wet weather. Regrettably there had been no option but to close the road to investigate the problem and come up with an interim solution. As a temporary solution, the crack in the road had been sealed; traffic lights put in place on a short section of the hill to create a single line of traffic; the retaining wall shotcreted with a concrete membrane; and the carriageway widened in one section so that the line of traffic could run closer to the hillside. NYCC Highways had constantly monitored the movement of the land and would continue to do so before both lanes were re-opened. Attention was now focused on a medium term solution to construct a new reinforced concrete wall in front of the existing wall. The work was expected to take about eight weeks and could result in the road closing again. The long-term solution would be to move the carriageway alignment. The hope was that the scheme would be able to be funded through a government funding opportunity for essential maintenance and network resilience. A lot of work had already been done by the County Council in a much shorter space of time than normal to get the scheme finalised ready for submission to government. A report would be presented to the Executive on 24 July 2018 to ask for approval of the proposed route following the public consultation that has been undertaken.
- General Maintenance: A report would be submitted to the Executive on 24 July 2018 to request an additional £3m funding for carriageway maintenance in the county. The road condition had deteriorated over the winter and had highlighted the importance of the County Council's asset management based approach including keeping on top of surface dressing and patching. Without such preventative measures being put in place the rural network would quickly be lost.

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member called for the A59 Harrogate to York to be upgraded to a dual carriageway. He commented that if the existing single carriageway remained, the ever-increasing amount of traffic in the area and the proposed Green Hammerton development would result in stationary traffic backing up from Junction 47 of the A1. David Bowe replied that there were a number of improvements planned but the proposed Green Hammerton development would clearly change the situation. NYCC Highways inputted into the Local Plans to look at what improvements were necessary, advising the Planning Teams in City of York Council and Harrogate Borough Council about the long term implications of such housing developments. Harrogate and York were seen as a key corridor for development and so at some point there would be a

need to dual the road. The question was how to facilitate this for the future and to get around the impasses.

- A Member commented on the recent road closure of the A59 through Kex Gill. He said that it was a sad fact that temporary solutions over the years had cost several millions of pounds when the right thing to have done would have been to divert the route away from Kex Gill. The prospect of eight weeks further closure would have an adverse impact upon local businesses which had already been badly impacted. He said that he hoped the road could be kept open whilst the repairs were undertaken. Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie said that he agreed about the urgency of the situation and priority was focused on getting the planning application submitted and the preparatory work undertaken straightaway.
- A Member said that his concern was that there did not appear to be an overall plan for the network. He questioned where the extra traffic would come from to cause the A59 to be dualled from York to Harrogate and why the A59 at Kex Gill had not been realigned sooner. David Bowe replied that looking forward 50 years hence it was envisaged that the A59 would be dualled from York to Harrogate and that this should inform the Local Plans. There would be a requirement to upgrade the road because otherwise further development would result in it becoming very congested. This state of affairs was not expected to change unless a different mode of transport was developed but as yet there was no indication that that would be the case. With regards to realigning the A59 away from Kex Gill, the County Council had been trying for three decades to secure funding for the realignment but until recently it had not been possible to access the required funding for such a scheme. This was because a range of governments had not seen the realignment as being necessary. Now that it was apparent that there was greater urgency to pursue the realignment due to the instability of Kex Gill, the County Council was able to make use of government funding. The County Council was working to deliver a proposal in half the normal timescale in order to access the funding. Keeping the A59 open to ensure east-west connectivity was paramount and so there was no choice but to realign the A59 at Kex Gill.
- A Member said that she was concerned that in some areas surface dressing was taking place over unrepaired potholes and crumbling road edges especially on rural roads. This was then a danger to some road users in particular cyclists. She said that she also felt that this state of affairs was not good value for money and asked how the situation could be addressed. David Bowe said that the highways repair and maintenance teams were instructed not to surface dress over potholes but there were occasions when there was no opportunity to repair the pothole before the surface dressing took place. A balance had to be struck between fixing the potholes versus the time and resources left before a team had to move on to a new area. He acknowledged that surface dressing over potholes was a failing and wherever possible NYCC Highways tried to prevent this from happening. In relation to road edges the problem was more difficult to fix due to the vast rural road network in the county. The problem was two-fold; the first was where the carriageway had eroded and the second was where the verge had collapsed, typically due to wide vehicles running over the verge and damaging drainage 'grips'. Difficult decisions had to be taken with regards to available resources.
- A Member asked if it would be helpful if by the end of July each year Members reported to NYCC Highways the location of the potholes in their division to allow time for them to be repaired before the surface dressing was undertaken

in the following Spring. David Bowe replied that whilst it would be helpful, there were occasions of in-year failure, which meant that not all potholes could be repaired beforehand. NYCC Highways were then faced with having to tackle surface dressing and patching at the same time, whilst balancing this against limited resources.

- A Member said that whilst communities within his Division were appreciative of the surface dressing in his area, tar had been used that had not been fit for purpose in two areas – Darley and Menwith Hill. Consequently the surface dressing had left the road in a worse state than before. He had been advised that replacement surface dressing would be done this year but to date this had not happened and no further assurances had been given. He asked if there was a guarantee for the quality of the works undertaken. David Bowe replied that there was a two year guarantee in place and he would check that the work would be carried out this year. He noted that overall the contractor's performance had improved significantly but historically the causes of surface dressing failures had sometimes been due to the quality of the product used and weather conditions.
- A Member noted the ongoing need for considerable investment of road surfacing and improvements. He asked whether it would be possible to stipulate that developers provided larger contributions to fund improvements in the road infrastructure. David Bowe replied that there were several factors that the County Council had to balance. There were national pressures for affordable housing growth but inevitably developers when deciding whether to build on a site weighed up the viability of the site and land values. Developers have stated that they cannot afford to fund the building of infrastructure such as schools and highway development whilst still providing affordable homes. The greatest investment outcome to enable the required infrastructure to be built was where housing was built on sites with lower land values and on larger scale developments. The practicalities of that linked back to the district's Local Plan. Consequently the County Council's focus was to work with the district councils to try to ensure that the right scale of development took place. Incremental development caused the biggest challenge in trying to lever in funding to improve infrastructure.

#### **Resolved -**

That the update be noted.

### **36. Highways England**

Considered -

The verbal report of the Service Delivery Manager, Highways England.

Chris Dunn referred to the improvements carried out on the A64 in 2017/18 and scheduled improvements being carried out in 2018/19, as detailed in the report. He explained that with regards to resurfacing activity there had been a substantial increase on any year. The improvement works to the Barton Hill junction had been completed.

- Chris Dunn went on to announce a number of scheduled works including weekend closures of the Malton Bypass on the weekends commencing Friday 5 October to Monday 8 October, Friday 12 October to Monday 15 October and Friday 19 October to Friday 22 October 2018.

He noted the inconvenience that the closure would cause but explained that there was a narrow window of opportunity to undertake the work between the lockdown period over the summer months when Highways England avoided carrying out planned works and the onset of winter. He explained that there would be information produced prior to the closure on those dates including through social media and an 11 weeks public engagement period was set to commence.

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member said that the A64 section around Tadcaster was littered with sand bags, cones and direction signs. Highways England's direction signs appeared to lead to nowhere and at the same time the County Council had got diversion signs in place for works relating to the cable network. This was leading to a confusing situation for motorists. Chris Dunn explained that in the Tadcaster safety works would be undertaken soon and so the opportunity would be taken to renew the signs to make the diversions clearer to motorists and to de-clutter.
- A Member asked for progress on the Welburn crossroads following the pedestrian fatalities in 2017. Chris Dunn replied that safety colleagues in Highways England were currently doing the investigation work and looking at what the best solution was. He said that it was important to ensure that anything Highways England did in this regard resolved the issue and did not increase risk.
- A Member commented that money was being wasted spent on smart motorways when old fashioned signs for diversions or reduced speed limits were being used at times when traffic was light or no work to the carriageway was being carried out. Chris Dunn said that he appreciated that there were issues and Highways England was currently looking into using optimized signs. More traffic officer involvement would also be trialled on the route and conversations would be held with the regional control centre.

The Chairman invited non-Committee Members to speak.

- A Member explained that the A64 was the key arterial route running through her division. She thanked Highways England for undertaking improvements to the Barton Hill crossroads. However she said that the Scotchman Lane junction connecting Flaxton to the A64 was not working for drivers as they were taking a different route. She understood that the improvements to the Welburn and Crambeck junctions would take time and there was a need to ensure that any works undertaken did not create more of a problem. However that stretch of the A64 would be a major pinch point if the road was dualled and improvements were not made to those junctions. The local community was very upset that it had now been over a year since the four pedestrian deaths and yet improvement plans were still not in place. Meanwhile some motorists continued to visibly speed on that section of the A64.

**Resolved -**

That the report be noted.

### **37. Road Casualties - North Yorkshire**

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Business and Environmental Services advising

of the road casualty statistics and activity for 2017 in North Yorkshire. The statistics are monitored against the previous year. The report also provided a summary of road safety issues and activities and data for 2018 together with a look forward for future road safety delivery.

Barrie Mason introduced the report.

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member commented that whilst she welcomed cyclists using the roads she wanted to know what could be done to address instances of anti-social behaviour and to raise the awareness of cyclists that country lanes were not necessarily safe. Barrie Mason said that there were lots of aspects involved but it essentially came down to the fact that cyclists were no different to any other road user and so ranged from those who were courteous road users to those who were careless. As with other road users, different methods were necessary to encourage people into applying more appropriate forms of behaviour and to think differently how they behaved. Consequently the 95 Alive Partnership was working with cycling groups to highlight the locations where it was not advisable to ride side by side and to advise building in more stops so that cyclists were less tired. The 95 Alive Partnership had produced videos and interactive maps on its website of the high risk routes in the county to allow users to virtually see the dangers on those routes. The 95 Alive Partnership had also launched a campaign, to educate drivers in regard to the amount of room they should allow when overtaking a cyclist. The 95 Alive Partnership was keen to encourage and welcome cycling on the road network in North Yorkshire as it brought lots of benefits but at the same time there was a need to make sure that cycling did not encourage road rage episodes, resulting in injuries or worse.
- A Member said that the figures in the report were encouraging in light of the downward trend in the number of killed and seriously injured on North Yorkshire's roads despite the increasing number of vehicles on the road network. He asked if there were national figures available on vehicle ownership. Barrie Mason confirmed that the reduction in casualty figures and the increase traffic flow implied a reduced risk. He explained that there were national figures available on car ownership and in the county there was a road traffic survey network so the 95 Alive Partnership could look to bring those figures with the road safety figures in future reports.
- A Member noted that it was important to not label cyclists as the same as there were extremes in any walk of life. He went on to note the economic benefits that the rising number of cyclists on the roads in the county brought and that the Way of the Roses bike ride had helped to boost the economy of Pateley Bridge. He was very encouraged by the progress made by the 95 Alive Partnership in reducing casualties especially motorcyclists. The signs that had been placed on sharp bends warning of the hazards helped to focus the mind. Now that a number of warning signs had been placed on the descent of Greenhow Hill there was now no excuse for road users including cyclists and motorcyclists to not be aware of the dangers of travelling at excess speed down that hill.

Executive Member Don MacKenzie said that he was encouraged by the long term graphs, showing that fatalities had reduced by over 90 in 1990 to fewer than half that in 2017. Every casualty was a tragedy but the trend was downwards. Whilst there had been a spike in 2017, after a particularly low number of casualties in 2016, five of the

casualties were on Highways England's roads, four of whom were killed close by on the same stretch of the A64.

### **Resolved -**

That the figures for collisions and casualties on the roads in North Yorkshire and the actions being taken to improve safety be noted.

### **38. 20's Plenty for Us**

Considered -

The verbal report of the 20's Plenty Campaign Group.

Anna Semlyn said that it was unacceptable that in the region of 2000 people were killed on roads each year in Great Britain. The number of fatalities could be reduced with lower speed limits put in place. The main reason why accidents happened was due to speed, causing motorists to then fail to stop in time. If a vehicle hit a pedestrian at 30mph there was a 50/50 chance of the pedestrian dying. There was no other situation in life where people were exposed to so much risk. She noted the advantages that the 20's Plenty Campaign Group saw in having 20mph speed limits in North Yorkshire, including: safer roads for all; promoting active health for residents; environmental benefits through reduced emissions; better community life and a positive image of North Yorkshire; strengthening the local economy; and positioning North Yorkshire as a leader in Public Health. She went on to mention that Calderdale Council had recently announced that its introduction of 20mph speed limits had led to a 30% casualty reduction over a three year period and later schemes indicated a 40% reduction. Introducing 20mph speed limits was not expensive; the introduction of 20mph speed limits in Bristol had paid for itself in two months arising from the reduction in accidents.

Members made the following key comments:

- A Member said that in principle he was in favour of 20 mph speed limits but they had got to be in the right place. He was not confident that motorists would adhere to 20mph speed limits as that would require behavioural change in the absence of enforcement as the Police could not be in all places at all times to enforce the speed limit. Anna Semlyn replied that behavioural change had happened already in areas where 20mph speed limits were in place. When the speed limit was reduced it had resulted in motorists reducing their speed by on average two to three miles per hour. This had in turn reduced the number of casualties by six per mile. She went on to pose the question about whether there was enforcement in areas where 30mph speed limits were in place. She noted that speed limits could be self-enforced by the community through driver education and by drivers of 'pacer vehicles' such as taxis and buses enforcing 20mph by slowing down the motorists travelling behind. With regards to Police enforcement, the Police and Crime Commissioner could be asked to enforce 20mph speed limits but it was her choice whether or not to do so.
- A Member noted that in Burton-in-Lonsdale there was a 20 mph speed zone through the village and asked whether it was enforceable because there were road markings on the highway. Anna Semlyn replied that there were limits regarding the enforcement of 20mph speed zones. Speed zones were also relatively expensive to implement because they required physical measures to be put in place to reduce vehicle speeds. 20mph speed limits only required 20mph repeater signs. She went on to comment that it was illegal to drive over

20mph where an official sign was in place and the ACPO guidance stated that 20mph speed limits were enforceable. Compliance was not just about enforcement; some of it was also about education.

- A Member expressed the view that North Yorkshire Police did not enforce 30 mph speed limits. Consequently putting up signs would therefore not slow vehicles down, only heavily congested traffic would do so. He commented that attempts to try to change society would not happen. However he noted that in Scotland outside schools at school drop-off and collection times 20mph speed limits were in place and seemed to work. Schools within his Division were meant to have 20mph speed limits outside but motorists still speeded in those areas unless there was police enforcement, which did not happen. Anna Semlyn replied that having 20mph speed limits solely around the vicinity of schools did not encourage walking or cycling to school and the associated public health benefits that they could bring. 20mph speed limits outside of schools represented the old version of road safety. Only 20% of casualties involved cases of children walking to and from school. There was a need instead to have 20mph speed limits covering a larger built-up area. The World Health Organisation and OECD had stated that 20mph was the maximum survivable limit. In most big cities 20mph speed limits were normal in Germany and in Paris and London.
- A Member said that in his Division the Police did enforce speed limits in most of the villages. A 20 mph speed limit was better than having a 30mph speed limit but the issue was that there were always motorists who would travel at excessive speed regardless of the speed limit. Pateley Bridge had a 20 mph section and whilst on the whole motorists heeded the limit some motorists did not. The issue was how far 20mph speed limits should be rolled out across the county. Anna Semlyn replied that 20mph speed limits should be rolled out across a wide geographic area so that they became normalized. It would also work out cheaper by putting in the signs from the start, as every change required a change in signs.

Executive Member Don MacKenzie said that before the County Council could consider a change in policy, there would need to be an officer report. The County Council's current policy was informed by DfT guidelines that 20mph speed limits should be self-enforcing. If the average speed on a road was over 20mph there was a need for other measures. Further guidance from the DfT would be required as a change in council policy would need to be backed up by with facts. The UK remained one of the safest countries in Europe for road safety and North Yorkshire remained a safe place in that regard. The County Council had invested in areas where there were road safety problems such as speeding motorcyclists, cycling and drink-driving. He said that whilst he supported 20mph zones in some places such as beside schools or where there was a history of accidents, more targeted safety measures would represent better value for money for taxpayers. This was because it would not be possible to enforce 20mph speed limits in a comprehensive manner and at present there was not a recognised problem of pedestrians being killed in residential areas. The County Council was awaiting additional guidelines from the DfT to inform the Council about the evidence of the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits.

#### **Resolved -**

That the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee convenes a task group to review the County Council's current 20 mph Speed Limit Policy, once the National Research project by the DfT examining 20 mph speed limits has been published.

### 39. Vehicle Activated Signs Review

Considered -

The report of the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task Group asking the Committee to discuss and note the information in the report of the Task Group's Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) review, attached at Annex A to the report and consider the recommendations to the Executive as set out on page 16 of the Task Group's report.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore, Chairman of the Task Group, introduced the report. She noted that Members were aware from their meetings with parish councils and other local residents that the number one issue in towns and villages was speeding. The task group had been set up to respond to those concerns and look at local authority practice elsewhere. The research had shown that there was a range of approaches that local authorities' took, with a number allowing parishes to purchase and maintain VAS. The public were seeing that when they travelled on roads outside North Yorkshire, VAS were present and yet in North Yorkshire VAS were rarely seen. The public believed that VAS slowed down traffic and there was only one way to find out if that was the case and that was by trying it. In North Yorkshire 30mph speed limits in towns did not appear to be enforced. Whilst the Police had become more proactive in enforcing speed limits in certain areas these were usually on roads where they were easily visible. She was aware that the temporary VAS loan scheme in the county was expensive, having had first-hand knowledge of that from a parish council in her division that was part of the scheme. Despite the expense the parish council still believed that having the VAS in place was helping to reduce speeds. Speedwatch was an excellent initiative to take forward but one of the villages participating in the scheme in her division found that whilst it was effective to begin with the question was then what to do when Speedwatch had ended.

The Committee Chairman invited the members of the public who had registered to speak to come forward to make their contribution.

#### *Public questions and statements*

Parish Councillor Howard West, Chairman of Pannal and Burn Bridge Parish Council read out the statement below:

"Our reason for addressing this meeting is because of our concerns for safety in our village and consequently the lives of our parishioners, especially our older citizens and those with limited spatial awareness – our children.

Two roads running through our parish are rat-runs to and from the A61 and western and central Harrogate. In an effort to get to their destinations as quickly as possible, motorists choose to speed through our parish even though we have 20 and 30 mph fixed signs. The old chestnut about needing a serious accident or death before police will deploy laser speed devices or NYCC Highways will react does not hold water. We are proactive and do not want that death before measures are put in place.

To this end, Pannal was the first village in North Yorkshire to employ Community Speedwatch. We have seen a remarkable reduction in speeding as a result of CSW but unless we're out there with our high-viz jackets, motorists continue to attain speeds of 50mph in 30mph limits and almost double the 20mph limit. However, volunteers are

usually pensioners and are not allowed to operate when it rains and need to take a rest occasionally. Flashing signs work all day without rest in all weather conditions.

What has proven effective throughout our country is permanent vehicle activated speed signs. We were told that NYCC Highways must approve any signs on “their” street furniture. We disagree: it’s “our” parish, ergo we must have a say on use of “our” street furniture. NYCC seem to allow all sorts of signs to be affixed to street furniture without any problem, so let us have some realism here.

We strongly believe that the line “once vehicle activated signs are permanent, they lose their effectiveness” is a fairy tale and has been disproved time and time again. Why do so many other counties not just permit, but encourage permanent signs? When was the last time you exceeded the 30mph limit in Collingham near Wetherby in West Yorkshire? Rarely does anyone do so. The same applies in Pannal Ash in Harrogate. The same applies throughout continental Europe. Those signs are permanent and there for proven benefit.

However, the crux of the issue is that with the decrease in costs of commercially available signs, we as a parish council can provide a constant reminder of vehicle speed 24/365 for a fraction of the cost of NYCC’s current offering. On top of that, these devices now monitor traffic flow in two directions giving far better statistics than data loggers placed for a week, sometimes during school holidays or even when it has been snowing and roads almost impassable. Did I miss that part in the long-winded report?

We are a very new parish council and are still learning the ropes but we are undaunted by blanket refusals to help save lives. Even the invitation letter to this meeting cited figures purporting a 50/50 split on whether flashing speed signs are required. What those figures really mean is that of those parishes that do want signs, they are desperate for them to help make their roads safer and the others either do not have a speeding problem or don’t have a precept high enough to support VAS.

Question: We need to know when our clerk can sign the purchase order that has already been approved by our parish council for two signs for our parish. It will cost NYCC nothing, so where’s the hang-up?”

Parish Councillor Gordon Davies, Chairman of Middleton Tyas Parish Council made the following statement:

“The road through Middleton Tyas is often used by motorists as a rat run. We have got 20 mph zones road signage but it spoils the village. The village has not got an effective way to slow people down. It is terrifying to see how fast some people drive through the village. The parish council would welcome a VAS which flashed up a warning to slow down because the 30mph signs made no difference. Middleton Tyas Parish Council is keen to save people lives before a person gets hit.”

Parish Councillor Christine Skaife Mayor of Pateley Bridge made the following statement:

“I live in an area popular with cyclists. I feel that the area would benefit from preventative work. A VAS sign before the High Street indicating the speed limit or a message to slow down would be appreciated. The preference would be for a VAS though I sympathise with other parish councils not able to get the funds available. Does a VAS or a SID register the speed of cyclists?”

In responding to Parish Councillor Christine Skaife’s question, James Smith confirmed that this would be the case if the cyclist was going as fast as the speed trigger limit.

Parish Councillor Rachel Glynn of Ulleskelf Parish Council made the following statement:

“I find it frustrating that a lot of time is being spent in parish council discussions on the same issue of speeding. The current temporary VAS scheme operated by the County Council is too expensive for the parish council to take part and parishes can purchase signs that are much cheaper.”

Parish Councillor John Waterhouse of Carelton-in-Craven Parish Council made the following statement:

“The village has a 20mph speed limit in place with speed humps in the vicinity of the school but residents still raise concerns about speeding. Four wheel drive vehicles in particular are not impacted by the speed humps. A survey carried out by North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service found that five per cent of motorists were travelling well over the speed limit. The parish council had held a meeting with NYCC Highways to discuss the speeding concerns but had been told that the village was not eligible for VAS. The parish council had then offered to pay for one but had been told by NYCC Highways that if it did and the sign was erected it would be taken down. This is not democracy.”

Kevin Clark a representative of Weeton Parish Council made the following statement:

“The data collected by the Police van showed that from January to May this year there had been over 1091 speeding offences through the village. 73 of the speeding motorists were travelling at a speed too high to qualify for a speed awareness course and six had been referred straight to court. During the six hourly slots that the Police van was present there was a speeding offence committed every four minutes. We feel strongly that it is wrong that because the Police van is operating there we cannot do Community Speedwatch. This is despite the fact that we are offering to work in conjunction with the Police. The Parish Council had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner about this but had had no response.”

Steve Plews a representative of Langton Parish Council made the following statement:

“The village comprises of 50 houses and a school. The parish council would love to have a VAS but the problem is that the speed limit of 60mph through the village is too fast.”

James Smith explained that he had inputted into the task group review on behalf of NYCC Highways. NYCC Highways remained of the view that whilst the current system had its detractors it was working well. However if the recommendations were approved, NYCC Highways would revise the policy. NYCC Highways remained convinced of certain key factors. Firstly there would need to be consistency in the type of sign used; secondly NYCC Highways would need to be involved in discussions about where the VAS would be sited; and thirdly VAS lost their effectiveness if they were left in the same place for any length of time, this was borne out of national research that showed that. He appreciated that some parishes were not able to afford to loan or buy a VAS. However the County Council’s budget was already heavily committed and so any VAS purchase scheme would need to be cost neutral to the County Council. The current temporary VAS scheme was cost neutral. The County Council would not be looking to take on any further responsibilities apart from where a need was evidenced and so recommendation three would continue by default. The County Council only put in permanent VAS where all other possible road safety measures had been exhausted.

Executive County Councillor Don MacKenzie commented that it was important to note that the parish survey had only had a 22% response rate and so by default 78% of parishes had not responded, though he acknowledged that the response rate was relatively high for a parish consultation. He went on to note that Cllr Howard West had referred to the VAS at Pannal Ash road as being effective in ensuring that nearly all motorists obeyed the speed limit there as a result. He said that from his experience, due to the sign having been there for many years, few motorists were aware of it and few motorists kept to the speed limit there. A key concern remained the problem of proliferation, though he accepted that the task group's research had shown that not all parishes would want to take up the offer of purchasing and maintaining a VAS. However there was a concern that an increase in the number of VAS in the county could have a negative effect on areas where there were permanent VAS in place. Permanent VAS were put in place where perceptions of speeding were backed up by casualty figures. Casualty figures remained concrete evidence about whether taxpayers' money was being invested wisely in relation to putting in place VAS, and not just to make the County Council feel good; parishes also needed to bear this in mind as they too were responsible for spending taxpayers' money wisely. Another concern was what would happen if a parish no longer could afford to maintain the sign.

Members made the following comments:

- A Member said that he did not see why parishes should be refused a sign if they could raise the funding through their precept. In his experience the majority of people did not mind their money being spent if it was spent in their village. Parish councillors would get voted out if they were not prepared to no longer maintain the sign. James Smith replied that he had communicated closely with the task group and was committed to take the policy away if and when agreed by the Executive and come up with a system that worked for parishes and the County Council.
- A Member said that VAS should be seen as a critical part in promoting road safety and speed enforcement in the county. Consequently the County Council and its road safety partners should move to a position of the signs being funded from the road safety education and training budget. He said that whilst he was supportive of recommendations one and three in the report, he did not support recommendation 2 as he felt that parishes should still be given the option of loaning the signs from the County Council.
- A Member said that the reason why there was a discussion about VAS was because the real answer to tackle speeding was not available in North Yorkshire: fixed speed cameras. He noted that on the A66 the only village that was not bypassed had an average speed camera installed; this worked in reducing vehicle speeds through that village. However in North Yorkshire in the absence of fixed speed cameras he was supportive of the VAS scheme being expanded by the County Council by working with parishes where they were prepared to purchase the signs, as that was where the problems were. Where parishes wanted to put up a sign, the County Council should work with those parishes to locate them where they were needed. The County Council would need to retain overall control for the scheme.
- A Member said the matter boiled down to local democracy and local perception. At most parish meetings that he attended, speeding was a commonly-raised problem. Speed checks usually showed that most motorists did not speed but in the region of 10 per cent did. He could not see a negative reason in allowing parishes to purchase and maintain VAS. There was a concern from smaller

parishes about not being able to afford to do so but in his experience if it was something that was needed parishes would raise the funding required. The County Council should site the locations but it was essential that the County Council worked in consultation with parishes in this regard. James Smith explained that under the current temporary VAS scheme there was close dialogue between the County Council and the parish council regarding the siting of the VAS, and speed surveys were used to inform the location.

- A Member said that the message from parishes was that there was support for them to purchase and maintain VAS and so the County Council should acknowledge that.

The Chairman invited further comments from the members of the public who had registered to speak to come forward to make their contribution.

- Kevin Clark, representative of Weeton Parish, said that he did not agree with the current approach that an accident had to occur before action was taken. James Smith clarified that in relation to the temporary VAS scheme, a road fatality or seriously injured casualty was not required in order for a parish to be eligible to take part; it was only with regards to permanent VAS where such evidenced based road problems were necessary.

The Chairman invited the Committee to consider the task group's recommendations to be presented to the Executive, as set out on page 16 of the task group's report.

**Resolved -**

- a) That the report with recommendations one and recommendation three be presented to the Executive.
- b) That recommendation two be removed from the report to be presented to the Executive.

**40. Work Programme**

Considered -

The report of the Principal Scrutiny Officer asking the Committee to confirm, amend or add to the areas of the work listed in the Work Programme schedule (Appendix 1 to the report).

Jonathan Spencer introduced the report.

**Resolved -**

That the annual YNYER LEP report be added to the work programme.

The meeting concluded at 1.19pm

JS