

North Yorkshire County Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 September 2019 at 9.30 am at the Cairn Hotel, Ripon Road, Harrogate

Present:-

Members:-

County Councillor John Mann (in the Chair); County Councillors Philip Broadbank, Jim Clark, John Ennis, David Goode, Paul Haslam, Don Mackenzie, Cliff Trotter and Geoff Webber

In Attendance:-

County Council Officers:- Robert Ling (NYCC Assistant Director - Technology and Change), Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Ruth Gladstone (Principal Democratic Services Officer) and Hannah Bowles (Business Support)

Two members of the public

Apologies for Absence:-

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Richard Cooper, Michael Harrison, Zoe Metcalfe and Robert Windass.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

40. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2019, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

41. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

42. Public Questions or Statements

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

43. NYCC Digital Strategy

Considered -

Presentation by Robert Ling (North Yorkshire County Council's Assistant Director - Technology and Change) which provided an update on the development of a range of

technologies that would improve connectivity, access to services and opportunities for business.

The key points within the presentation were as follows:-

- Digital technology could be used to support communities and enable people to live independently in their own homes.
- The work being done in Sleights by Technology and Change, Health and Adult Services and the Stronger Communities Team had demonstrated what could be achieved with the introduction of relatively cheap, simple and widely available technologies.
- The County Council and others needed to enable people to exploit the opportunities that new digital technologies provided.
- Investment in digital skills was low locally, regionally and nationally and could be addressed.
- The third sector had a key role to play in driving innovation but this role needed to be recognised and the sector supported.
- There were ethical issues relating to the management and use of data that needed to be addressed.
- There were great opportunities to use data to predict demand and target investment and activity.
- More services were being provided digitally and in a way which made previously bureaucratic administrative processes simpler and easier to access and use.
- The emphasis was firmly upon human-centred design and enabling people. 'Digital by default' did not mean digital only.
- There were opportunities to invest more time, money and effort in predictive technologies and also in research and innovation more generally.

Members questioned Robert Ling and discussed the issues within the presentation. The following points were raised:-

- Work to understand links between the Digital Strategy and Green strategies was being undertaken. For example:- whilst digital technologies could be of huge benefit to traffic management, significant infrastructure was required; and whilst home working might decrease travel, power usage would increase in order to heat and light homes. The Digital Strategy created good opportunities to consider, for example, why was it necessary for people to travel to a hospital for a medical check-up when no physical examination would be take place, and could places be provided within local community centres from which people could work?
- The national average download speed was 45 mbit/s, whilst North Yorkshire's average speed was 30.2 mbit/s. The County Council had not set a target to improve North Yorkshire's average speed because the key issue was - how much public resource should be put into this, and what should the private sector be relied on to provide? For example, new housing was currently being developed without broadband and consequently public resources would be required to rectify that situation because most homeowners expected

broadband to be available. The issue was - should public resources be used for such purpose?

- A change in individuals' behaviour was needed to get them to choose to use video conferencing or Skype rather than having a face-to-face meeting. (It was noted that formal meetings of the County Council and its committees could not legally be conducted by Skype. In England, the law stated that County Councillors must be physically present at a meeting in order to be able to participate in it.)
- Ethical debates were needed about the purpose and frequency for which new technologies should be used. A Member highlighted that contact with other people was essential. The Member also highlighted that social media had huge power to manipulate people's views. It was further highlighted that photographs on social media were not always what they appeared due to the availability of software which was capable of altering images.
- Robert Ling welcomed the opportunity to speak to town councils and parish councils to get them to work alongside the County Council's Digital Strategy.
- A re-examination was being undertaken of initiatives within the SMART Harrogate programme, in respect of which infrastructure was needed. Whilst access to free Wi-Fi would be of huge social benefit, work was being undertaken to understand the benefits and costs to the County Council.
- It was clarified that references to 'monitoring people's movement' referred, for example, to how many times a particular street corner had been passed, rather than following where an individual went. However, new technologies could offer opportunities, subject to satisfactory responses to ethical questions, to tag persons who were suffering from dementia and had a tendency to become lost.

Resolved -

That the comments which Members have made during this debate be forwarded to County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Access).

44. Update on Superfast Broadband

Considered -

The briefing note of the Principal Democratic Services Officer which set out information about the further progress made by NYnet Ltd, under the Superfast North Yorkshire (SFNY) project, in bringing superfast broadband to the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency area.

In summary, the report advised of the following:-

- The SFNY project recognised 53,779 premises in the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency area. This was an increase of 1,326 premises, which reflected house building over a 7 year period.
- 80% of current premises in the constituency area were either already covered by Openreach and Virgin Media, or Virgin Media planned to provide coverage in the near future. A further 12% of premises had been provided with connectivity by SFNY Phase 1 and Phase 2. The remaining 7% (around 4,000) of premises did not have access to superfast broadband and formed part of the wider 'North Yorkshire Intervention Area'. Of these premises, 565 (1%) were in the SFNY Phase 3 deployment plan, with 189 already delivered. The

remaining 6% (around 3,435) of premises remained 'under consideration', together with other properties in the North Yorkshire Intervention Area.

- After Phase 3 deployment had been completed, 97% of properties in the constituency area would be covered by superfast broadband, assuming no deviation from the 574 premises in the plan. This compared favourable to North Yorkshire in total and reflected the lower level of market failure in this constituency area compared to other areas of North Yorkshire.
- New data now available for North Yorkshire showed an increase in the number of premises due to house building, but a reduction in the number of premises to which BT had deployed commercially compared with their original forecast.
- In conclusion, SFNY delivery was on track in terms of absolute numbers, although there was a larger remaining population yet to receive delivery than previously forecast due to the changes as described in the previous bullet-point.

County Councillor Don Mackenzie (the County Council's representative on the Board of NYnet Ltd) responded to questions. Members debated the issues, during which the following points were raised:-

- Members congratulated NYnet Ltd on its achievements to date and its further plans which would result in 97% of properties in the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency area being covered by superfast broadband once Phase 3 had been completed. Phase 3 was scheduled to conclude in 2021.
- The County Council was committed to achieving 100% coverage. However, once coverage was in the high nineties, it would be necessary to question, on a case-by-case basis, whether it would be worth spending tax payers' money to connect some premises.
- SFNY was not relying on the receipt of further EU funding.

Resolved -

That the comments which Members have made during this debate be forwarded to County Councillor Don Mackenzie (Executive Member for Access).

Note: County Councillor Don Mackenzie abstained from voting.

45. Changes to Mental Health Services in Harrogate and the Surrounding Area - Update

Considered -

The briefing note of the Principal Democratic Services Officer concerning a recent community engagement about a proposal, from the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), to increase the level of community mental health care, and to fund this by reducing the number of mental health in-patient beds.

Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager) advised of the wider context in terms of what was happening across North Yorkshire and reported on discussions at meetings of the Scrutiny of Health Committee and at a joint meeting between elected Members from the City of York Council, Leeds City Council and North Yorkshire County Council's Scrutiny of Health Committee.

The key points reported were as follows:-

- The community engagement period had ended. However, the analysis would not be completed until November/December 2019 at the earliest. That analysis would then enable TEWV to better estimate the number of in-patient beds needed. Consequently, it was not currently known:- what the enhanced community model looked like; what conditions it would be able to cope with; and what the consequences of introducing it would be upon carers, relatives and social care services.
- Although the community engagement period had ended, follow-up engagement with key stakeholders and organisations, such as the Yorkshire Ambulance Service, still had to take place.
- There would always be a need for in-patient care for people who had serious mental health problems and who were either at a point of crisis or who could not be cared for anywhere else. The question was how much in-patient care would be needed and where it would be provided.
- The in-patient beds at the new hospital at Foss Park in York would be available to all those who needed them. The expectation was that this applied equally to people living in the greater Harrogate area. However, there was a question about whether there would be sufficient capacity at Foss Park (72 beds), in view of:- the closure of the Briary Wing at Harrogate Hospital (34 beds); the closure of the 2 mental health in-patient wards at the Friarage Hospital (21 beds); and not building a new in-patient unit at Cardale Park (36 beds).
- There was a lack of common ground between some elected Members and the provider in terms of level of need, with Members highlighting the increasing number of older people, including those with dementia and displaying levels of violence who could only be managed in hospital.
- Significant funding, in addition to the £500,000 per annum from closing in-patient beds, had been secured by TEWV for crisis care in the community.
- The Cardale Park site was owned by TEWV and had planning permission. The hope was that it would be used for some sort of health and social care development.

County Councillor John Ennis (Chairman of the Scrutiny of Health Committee) thanked Daniel Harry for his report and highlighted:- the great deal of uncertainty concerning the situation in Harrogate; that it would be naive to think that Harrogate could cope with only a community mental health service and without in-patient beds for those Harrogate residents who required them; and that a substantial drop in the number of in-patient beds was being proposed. He added that further information would be presented to the Scrutiny of Health Committee's meetings in December 2019 and March 2020. He also highlighted the level of uncertainty regarding the Cardale Park site.

Members discussed the situation, during which the following points were raised:-

- Many Members expressed support for the actions which the Scrutiny of Health Committee was taking, including joint meetings with elected members from York and Leeds Councils. Members asked to be contacted if they, as local Members, could do anything to assist the Scrutiny of Health Committee.
- Members expressed serious concern that no mental health in-patient beds would be available for Harrogate residents who needed them. Some Members

also supported the questioning about whether 72 mental health beds at the Foss Park hospital at York would be sufficient, bearing in mind the closures of the Briary Wing at Harrogate Hospital and the 2 mental health in-patient wards at the Friarage Hospital, together with the decision not to build a new in-patient unit at Cardale Park.

- Members expressed wide-spread concern about uncertainty regarding the site at Cardale Park. Several Members emphasised that Cardale Park must be used for some sort of health and social care development. They asked for reassurances about this and also to be kept fully informed. County Councillor Geoff Webber stressed that Cardale Park should not be used for employment or housing land.
- Concerns were expressed about travel and accessibility between the greater Harrogate area and the new hospital at Foss Park in York. Members highlighted that people having mental health difficulties relied on their families to help with recovery and that it would be difficult for families from some parts of the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency area to travel to Foss Park.
- Traditionally the effectiveness of services provided in the community was more difficult to monitor than services provided by in-patient care. Proper monitoring was required.

Members also expressed the wish for the Area Constituency Committee to keep this issue on its Work Programme, in particular:- the proportion of mental health services provided in the community; the future of the Cardale Park site; and the situation regarding in-patient services provided at Foss Park in York.

Resolved -

That the comments which Members have made during this debate be forwarded to County Councillor Michael Harrison (Executive Member for Health and Adult Services), County Councillor John Ennis (Chairman of the Scrutiny of Health Committee) and Councillor John Mann (Chair of Harrogate Borough Council's Planning Committee).

46. Committee Work Programme

Considered -

The Committee's Work Programme, for the Committee to consider, develop and adopt.

Members raised the following suggestions:-

- The NYCC's draft response to the Government's Adult Social Care Green Paper should be deferred to Spring or Summer 2020 because it was unlikely to be available for consideration at the earlier meeting at which it was currently scheduled.
- The Cycle Path Network item, currently scheduled for the Committee's meeting on 9 January 2020, should be expanded to include urban footpaths. This was due to the Committee's support for people to walk, cycle or take public transport, instead of taking private vehicles on short journeys, in order to decrease traffic congestion. Following discussion, it was decided that the Committee should not also consider rural footpaths and public rights of way across fields at the same time because that was likely to lead to detailed discussions about very local issues which would be best dealt with outside the Committee's formal meetings. A Member highlighted his interest in encouraging cycling to school.

- An update was requested about 'Open Harrogate' which was a project to promote and support sustainable travel initiatives in Harrogate. Ruth Gladstone (Principal Democratic Services Officer) advised that such information could be emailed to Members immediately following this meeting.

The Chairman asked Members to email him, the Vice-Chairman and Ruth Gladstone if they had any further suggestions.

Resolved -

- (a) That the Work Programme be approved, subject to the following amendments:-
 - (i) NYCC's draft response to the Government's Adult Social Care Green Paper be deferred to a meeting to be held in Spring or Summer of 2020.
 - (ii) The topic regarding the Cycle Path Network, currently scheduled for the Committee's meeting on 9 January 2020, be expanded to include urban footpaths.
- (b) That the Principal Democratic Services Officer email Members following this meeting with an update about the Open Harrogate Project.

The meeting concluded at 12pm.

RAG/JR