

Whitby Town Assembly – 22 March 2023

Present: 41 present; including 9 town councillors
Cllr Linda Wild Whitby Town Mayor, chairing
Cllr Jonathan Harston taking minutes.

Cllr Linda Wild, Whitby Town Mayor, opened the meeting and welcomed those attending, and clarified procedures.

1a: Minutes of the 20 April 2022 town assembly were noted and approved, with typos corrected.

1b: Minutes of the 12 May 2022 town assembly were noted and approved, with typos corrected.

2: Discussion of matters in connection with the town.

2a: Nigel Ward, Schools merger

I attended the consultation at the Spa about the proposed merger of the secondary schools in Whitby. I have been contacted by many current and former teachers and pupils. People accept that there are problems, but it is important to keep local choice. Pupils need the option to move to a different school if their current school is unsuitable. The issue of choice has created the opposition to the proposed merger.

Proposal:

This meeting write to North Yorkshire (County) Councillor Annabel WILKINSON (Executive Member for Education, Learning & Skills) and Mr Stuart CARLTON (Corporate Director: Children & Young People Services), informing them that Whitby Town Council fully supports Whitby parents/carers in their strenuous opposition to the proposed Amalgamation of Whitby's secondary schools - this formal opposition to be included within the present Consultation process.

Proposed: Nigel Ward, see address

Seconded: Alf Abbott, see address

Voted on and approved by a majority of people voting.

Rob Barnett: This seems to be a done deal for a land grab. We could ask for a decent plan for secondary education in Whitby. It appears to be a land grab to build second homes. Rural seaside towns with unaffordable houses being built, problem affects all rural season towns. There will be knock-on effects from the school proposals. We need to assist our authority with devolution of power from North Yorkshire Council, no longer at the behest of Scarborough Borough Council. We can make rules of town our priority. Schools issue highlights this problem. It is a land grab to build second homes. Children in Whitby move away for jobs, we are the low-pay capital of Britain. People don't want chip-shop wages. This is happening all over the country. We need to get

education authority to make a decent education provision plan. We must have an independent enquiry on education in Whitby.

Proposal:

We must have an independent enquiry on education in Whitby.

Proposed: Rob Barnett

Seconded: ???

Voted on and approved by a majority of people voting.

Rob Barnett: We've had this before, education in Whitby is on the guillotine.

Joyce Stangoe: It's more than just education. It impacts on Whitby town, not just education.

other: North Yorkshire Council has the power to form an independent panel to do a review.

Alf Abbott: It needs to be Whitby Town Council leading on this.

other: This is urgent due to uncertainty. It needs to be done before any decision is made.

Linda Wild: Whitby Town Council have already resolved to support an independent enquiry on the proposed merger.

other: At a previous meeting they asked for North Yorkshire Council officers to come to a meeting, but they have not come to a meeting.

Chris Riddolls: North Yorkshire Council just implied that Whitby Town Council should just respond to the consultation, not actually have any meetings with them.

Linda Wild: Whitby Town Council knows as much about the proposals as local residents. We need to pass this on before the deadline for consultation.

Joyce Stangoe: The consultation runs until 31st March, then goes to North Yorkshire Council on 18th April for discussion on feedback. There is then a comments deadline of 25th May, and the final decision is made on 20th June.

Nigel Ward: Some weeks ago I wrote to the board of governors asking them to explain why a letter to parents said that the Head had brought Newcastle Academy from "Needs Improvement" to "Good". I researched this and found it is not to be. How is it possible to misrepresent credentials of the head teacher? I got a reply from the governors, they said: we are unpaid volunteers and sometimes make mistakes.

But the Chair of Governors is CEO of the Academy and is head teacher of Lealholm Primary School.

I have been mis-led. I proposed a vote of no confidence on the governors at the Spa meeting and was supported. An online petition also had more than 400 supporters. But it is just a voice of opinion, it has no legal power. There should be an interim board to take over.

Proposal:

(This meeting) Write to the co-chairs of the Whitby Secondary Partnership Board of Governors call on them to write to the North Yorkshire Council Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills, and the Corporate Director of Children's and Young People's Services, asking them to:

- *immediately withdraw the Whitby Secondary Partnership Board of Governors' formal request for the amalgamation of the Whitby secondary schools;*
- *immediately formally appoint an interim Board of Governors for the Whitby Secondary Partnership;*
- *and immediately after, they tender their resignations, along with all other members of the Board of Governors, from the Whitby Secondary Partnership Board of Governors.*

Proposed: Nigel Ward

Seconded: Rob Barnett

Voted on and approved by a majority of people voting.

Joyce Stango: Talks on move goes to board, but there are no parents on the board. Why are there no parent governors or LEA governors?

Linda Wild: The current state of the schools is terrible. We need to take the opportunity to improve the schools.

Nigel Ward: At the consultation the chair said they had no knowledge why no parent or LEA governors. They said they would look into it, but I never got a reply back.

other: Whitby Town Councillors need to be the voice of people in Whitby. Councillors need to write to papers, make our voice heard.

Linda Wild: We tried to get NYCC to come to WTC to discuss, but NYCC didn't come. We should write to The Gazette saying North Yorkshire Council didn't turn up.

other: We must talk about the whole catchment area, not just Whitby. We need to involve councillors in the valley as well.

Rob Barnett: The public present should write to papers to get message out. Need to keep press coverage, keep floor on the pedal.

other: We need banners, fliers, protests, must not go quietly.

Joyce Stangoe: There are no North Yorkshire councillors here.

Sandra Turner: We have the support of Whitby Town Council councillors, but not North Yorkshire Council who are the education authority. North Yorkshire Council councillors haven't supported local choice.

Nigel Ward: Whitby Town Council is working with the people of Whitby to support Whitby.

2b: Andy Jefferson, Buses

Many parts of Whitby have had no bus service for years. Some parts are served by the 95 bus, but the service is shoddy. Buses are missing, low quality, lack of drivers. From 2nd April a 96 bus will be introduced to run via Castle Park, but it is being introduced by reducing the 95 service which will be cut back by half. The service is low because users have given up on it because the service is bad. North Yorkshire Council want people to reduce car usage, but there is no bus service.

Propose:

This meeting requests North Yorkshire County Council to retain the #95 service to what it is pre-April 2023 to retain this essential lifeline for many elderly people, and furthermore to undertake an urgent review into providing a bus service to the parts of Whitby without any service at all.

Proposed: Andy Jefferson

Seconded: Nigel Ward

Voted on and approved by a majority of people voting.

Rob Barnett: It is important in terms of climate change, we need to include climate change impact, acknowledging the impact of cars on climate change and public transport.

other: The Sunday 95 bus has already been removed. The 95 bus is very often full, so what will happen when the service is halved?

Linda Wild: It will also be affected by the Swing Bridge being shut as people use cars when the bridge is closed.

Joyce Stangoe: 50% of Whitby's population is over 55. We have a faster aging population than most areas.

other: With the reduction in buses cars come into town, blocking the roads and reducing the bus services even further. We need better signage to reduce cars coming into the centre of town.

Nigel Ward: We need a proper traffic plan for Whitby.

Linda Wild: We had a million visitors last year, it's a nightmare for locals.

2c: Joyce Stangoe, Housing

Every week in planning applications we are now seeing business premises being changed to holiday homes as well as private homes.

Proposal:

This meeting requests North Yorkshire Council implement immediately [an SPD planning policy stating] “Where the number of second homes and holiday lets in any Parish is 20% or over at the last census (2021), the focus shall be on providing for local housing needs through the provision of affordable housing and housing to support local employment opportunities and key services in Parishes affected.

Rob Barnett: What does “affordable” mean? It’s a nonsense. People in Whitby can’t afford “affordable” housing.

other: When housing was built recently in Sleights it was restricted to locals with a local connection.

Joyce Stangoe: Whitby is not classed as a rural area, so gets lumped in with other urban areas.

Rob Barnett: We are a coastal town and have the same problems as other coastal towns. We need to change so that only locals can buy local houses.

Linda Wild: The draft Local Plan consultation has just closed. Whitby Town Council has commissioned a Neighbourhood Plan. It will be developed over the next 18 months. We need to get this into the neighbourhood plan.

other: How much can we do in parallel while also building the neighbourhood plan? The National Park has a local connection restriction, could this be adopted in Whitby?

Joyce Stangoe: Scarborough Borough Council claims that less than 19% of Whitby are holiday homes. People know about flats being built that are unsuitable for residential accommodation.

John Nock: Whitby Town Council planning committee does try to find reasons to oppose conversions, but Whitby Town Council don’t make the decision. Scarborough Borough Council makes the decisions, from next month it will be North Yorkshire Council. People living more than 50 miles away could be making these decisions. We were promised that the new unitary council would give power to towns and parishes. We asked for a seat on the planning board, we were told Yes, but now have been told No.

Joyce Stangoe: There will be fewer planning councillors.

Nigel Ward: It’s unfortunate that the new chair of planning, Cllr Trumper, has not attended.

Alf Abbott: Cllr Trumper insisted that parish cannot sit on the planning boards, only attend as observers.

John Nock: North Yorkshire Council are treating parishes with contempt. We were told to support the unitary proposals as it would result in £35m of savings by merging the councils. They are stating already more than £100m in deficit instead. We need to start from scratch over policy. Why has the money disappeared? The whole point was to save money.

Rob Barnett: I have been involved in building schools. They built houses on playing fields and built a new school, costing £30m. These amounts are nothing.

Joyce Stangoe: I have looked at other councils' residential occupancy rates. We can't wait for the whole town to be holiday lets.

other: I live on a small estate, I came here 35 years ago when it was all residents. In the last couple of years five houses have become holiday lets. If people can't buy at £400,000 they will buy what they can at £300,000 and convert them to holiday lets.

other: Holiday lets have gone too far. Tourism is not great for locals, we have the lowest pay in the country. No benefit for local residents. There are rumours that of the new Captain Cook development 19 houses have been bought as holiday lets.

Chris Riddolls: At Eskdaleside I sold them the land for housing and insisted it be sold to locals.

other: This isn't a 15-minute city.

other: I live in the town centre, next to holiday lets owned by a person in Bradford who owns 31 properties.

other: It's outrageous, and the prices they charge as well.

Nigel Ward: We live on Church Street. Each day I go up Blackburn's Yard, the Mary Linskill cottage has just sold for £570,000. These are old working class fishermen's cottages. In the 1970s people left these to move to the suburbs.

John Nock: North Yorkshire Council have the power to add a Second Homes tax on Council Tax.

Joyce Stangoe: But it's holiday homes that are the problem.

John Nock: The difference is blurred.

2d: Linda Wild, Parish governance review

North Yorkshire Council is consulting on creating a town council for Harrogate and for Scarborough. Harrogate has a population of 75,000 and is proposed to have 19 town councillors, Scarborough has a population of 60,000 and is proposed to have 15 councillors. Whitby has a population of 13,500 and has 19 councillors. Is Whitby over-represented? Should we have about 12 councillors, as in other similar sized places?

I propose to write to North Yorkshire Council to propose a governance review of the Town Council to have between 12 and 15 councillors, to bring the council in line with other similar sized town.

Alf Abbott: Scarborough has many identities; Whitby has one identity.

Heather Coughlan: Scarborough and Harrogate don't have a parish precept, so people in Whitby and other areas are paying for developments that happen in Scarborough town. Whitby has rarely had a full complement of 19 town councillors.

Nigel Ward: There are currently 19 councillors, many are co-opted, many elected unopposed. Reducing the number of seats would result in competitive elections as with fewer seats candidate would have to put themselves to the electorate.

Proposal:

This meeting supports the Town Mayor in writing to North Yorkshire Council to propose a governance review of the Town Council to have between 12 and 15 councillors, to bring the council in line with other similar sized towns.

Support: 16

Against: 3

Rob Barnett: A reduction in members would make it hard to fill committees.

Heather Coughlan: Committees would be smaller with a smaller council.

Chris Riddolls: It needs to be clarified what procedures to follow.

Linda Wild: The next review will eventually happen by 2026, but we need to be prepared now so that it can be brought to attention.

3: Meeting closed at 8:05pm.

Attendance

Cllr Linda Wild (Town Mayor) - chairing

Cllr Jonathan Harston - taking minutes

Cllr Rob Barnett

Cllr Sandra Turner

Cllr John Nock

Cllr Heather Coughlan

Cllr Chris Riddolls

Cllr Steve Hinchliffe

Cllr Alf Abbott

Sue Boyce

P. Holmes

M. Holmes

Val Appleton

Robert Young

Martin Hart

Dot Russell

Susan Stuart

Sonya Kilpatrick

Carla Blackman

Paul Bennison

E. Price

D. White

Louise Waller

Jane Warburton

Brian Lorains

L. Brgep

Andy Jefferson

Jenny Burns

Marie McCrone

Robert McCrone

Nigel Ward

Michelle Vasey

Alex Hawksfield

Gary Davies

Robb Rich

Joyce Stangoe

Rachael Peart

Brian Jones

I. Dixon

Leona Collum

Peter Lyth