

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21st February 2007

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have met on two occasions since the last full Council. The committee has a full work programme that reflects the County Council priorities and the five key outcomes under Every Child Matters. The following matters have been considered by the Committee:-

In-depth Scrutiny Review – Sports Provision

The Sports Provision Task Group, chaired by Cllr Liz Casling, is steadily working through a programme of meetings, expert witness panels and visits to Outdoor Education Centres. For example, Members met David Watson Executive Officer from North Yorkshire Sport (NYS) who explained the work of NYS in raising sports participation.

Adult and 4Youth Services - Six Months Post Implementation Review (PIR)

The PIR Task Group set up by the Joint Sub Committee (Economic Development & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committees) met with Officers and agreed the terms of reference for this piece of work. A further meeting of the Task Group is planned in March to consider Officer reports for Adult Learning and the 4Youth services.

It was agreed that it would be useful to collate the comments and responses made by Area Committees as a method of learning about provision and take up from a local perspective but this would be undertaken separately to the PIR but would contribute to the final report.

Committee Meeting 9th January 2007

- **Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**
Members received a briefing on the enhanced role of the IRO and the significant benefits to Looked After Children. Members learned that work is underway to align all the operational practices and procedures in respect of Looked After Children to be congruent with IRO guidance.
- **Green Paper- Care Matters**
Committee Members received a brief summary of the proposals contained in the Green Paper and were invited to put forward any comments on the proposals as set out in the governments Green Paper; Care Matters.
- **Annual Report of the Corporate Parents Group**
The committee were pleased to receive the Annual Report of the Corporate Parents Group and recognised its significance to them as Corporate Parents. Chairman Cllr Paul Richardson explained the work of the group and went on to say how important it is for all Members of the County Council to be aware and involved in the care provided for our looked after children and young people. In recognition of the role that all County Councillors have as Corporate Parents, Cllr Richardson's report is appended below
- **Anti-bullying Measures**

Members learned of progress in the delivery of anti-bullying measures in North Yorkshire. The Committee considers this to be an important area to monitor and are keen that this issue is kept on their work programme for regular updates.

- Post 16 Home to School Transport
Members of the committee received a progress report on the impact of the County Council's decision to introduce charges for Post 16 Home to School transport from September 2006 for new students.

At the time, there was real concern that these charges would act as a barrier to participation and the number of students entering post-16 education would fall. The evidence presented to committee suggests that these fears have not been realised and that participation has in fact slightly increased.

Committee Meeting 15th February 2007

Agenda items to be considered:-

- Executive Member update Report
- Work Programme Report and Forward Work Plan
- Developing Local Democracy – verbal report on the progress to date following the Democracy Wall Build at County Hall.
- North Yorkshire Youth Offending Team report on the priorities and challenges for development following the recent YOT Inspection.
- Social Model of Disability – awareness raising session on the aims and principles of the social model of disability which explores how these principles can be applied across the committee's subject area.

**County Councillor Heather Garnett,
Chairman Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
12th February 2007**

Appendix:

Annual Report of the Corporate Parent's Working Group

Introduction

1. Looking after children should always be an evolving process; change is a necessary prerequisite if we are always to challenge our parenting skills. Unfortunately, this gradual metamorphosis had to become drastic in the aftermath of the tragic Victoria Climbié case. North Yorkshire was no exception. The County Council set about transforming the internal structures of the Social Services and Education Directorates. It effectively meant that the formal meetings of the Corporate Parent's Committee were placed on hold until such time that the reorganisation was complete.
2. The result was that on the 14th February 2006, a year after their last meeting, a new look Corporate Parent's Group came into being, designated as a Working Group reporting to the Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the standard of care that we, as Corporate parents, provide for all our Looked After Children. The guiding principle dictating the thinking of Members being, 'would the care be good enough for my child?' After all the children do not want anything fantastic, merely a normal life in which they are Cared About, not just Cared For.

The Group's Work

3. Many Members were new to the role of Corporate parenting (there had been an election during the recess), which meant that the first meetings were very necessary briefing exercises aimed at acquainting Members with their role, acquiring knowledge as to the workings of both the Officers and the Department in carrying out the care needed to achieve a safe and supporting environment for the children and finally, agreeing the terms of reference and developing a working framework for the Group.
4. Since the latter part of the year, work has progressed at a steady pace over viewing such topics as:
 - The advocacy of Looked After Children.
 - Current educational achievements.
 - Regulation 33 inspections of Children's homes.
 - The Government's Green paper 'CARE MATTERS'.
 - Receiving regular updates on current Looked After Children
 - Receiving Member feed-back on inspections of Children's Homes.

Activities

5. During the year, the Corporate Parent's Group hosted a Member's seminar, which proved to be a very enlightening and thought provoking presentation, certainly the Member's feed-back was stimulating, so much so that there may well be another event scheduled in the future.
6. There were two 'C' (celebration) Days during the year. These were times when many of the children met together to show their individual skills; partook of wholesome party food; listened to home grown rock bands and kicked the living daylights out of Members who innocently volunteered to play football. The children were rewarded by receiving individual Award Certificates, which acknowledged their achievements during the year. Finally they wound their way home in the comforting satisfaction that they had crippled a North Yorkshire County Councillor!
7. The final event of the year was held at Thirsk Racecourse in November when a conference was held entitled 'No Roof No Job'. During it Officers, Social Workers, Members and Children highlighted the difficulties of obtaining accommodation suited to their needs as well as earmarking the many obstacles confronted by the children who seek work.
8. In order to acquaint Members more fully with the mainstream activities of the Service and provide additional essential reading, Officers have kindly agreed to provide further reports and a reading list.

The Future

9. The task of monitoring the welfare of our children is inexhaustible, however, in addition to the Committees' regular overview we will be giving extra attention to:
 - The reduction of children in care.
 - Greater access to leisure and health facilities.
 - The attainment of improved exam results, particularly in the realm of the five subjects A*--C, GCSE exam.
 - Improving the transition and the leaving care procedures of our children.
 - Improving opportunities for children to acquire apprenticeships and mainstream work.

In order to help us achieve our aims, we hope to have a greater variety of venues for meetings and have more involvement by children.

10. The Government has recently published a Green Paper, 'Care Matters', which is a discussion document concerning transforming the lives of children and young people in

Care. The Green Paper endorses much of what we in North Yorkshire are already achieving, nevertheless it does contain areas which provide 'food for thought' aimed at improving the lot of the children. One way might be by raising the profile of the Corporate Parents Working Group to that of a full Committee within the Councils' Committee structure.

Appreciation

11. I would sincerely like to thank the Members of the Group for learning so quickly and for their massive contribution to both debate and activity. Whilst many Officers have been extremely helpful to the Group and I thank them all, I would especially like to thank Paul Nixon; Nigel Ogilvy; Jerry Barnes and David Molesworth for their invaluable contribution during the year. As a whole, the 'Team' has bonded exceptionally well which bodes well for the future of all our Looked After Children.

Paul Richardson
Chairman of the Corporate Parent's Working Group