

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 December 2007

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Early Years education and all school related education issues and advisory services)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WATSON OBE

INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF JOSEPH LISTER

In November a seven-day inquest was held into the death of Joseph Lister, aged 14 and a pupil at Tadcaster Grammar School, who died tragically in a caving incident whilst on a trip to Bewerley Park Outdoor Education Centre in November 2005.

The inquest, which concluded on 15 November, was heard before a jury, who were asked by the Coroner to provide what is called a "narrative verdict". This followed agreement between legal representatives of all the parties and the Coroner that this was a case of accidental death. The jury's narrative said:

"The Deceased, Joseph Lister, a pupil at Tadcaster Grammar School, was attending a school trip at the Outdoor Pursuit Centre at Bewerley Park in November 2005.

While on a caving activity in Manchester Hole, 14/11/05, Joe died as a result of drowning. This was caused by flooding as a result of:-

weather conditions, surging and overflow of water in Scar House reservoir, the high level of water in Goyden Pot and the possible impact of the hole immediately upstream of the Crawl and the recently discovered fissure."

The County Council suspended caving at its outdoor education centres in November 2005 out of respect for Joe's family, and for the extensive enquiries set in train for the Coroner. We do not propose to resume caving at this stage and would not do so without prior consultation with parents, schools and appropriate national governing bodies and regulatory bodies.

Our thoughts remain with Mr and Mrs Lister, their family, and all of those affected by this tragic accident.

IMPROVEMENT AGENDA FOR 14-19

The 14-19 reforms aim to create a broader range of courses, including vocational options, so that more young people can choose subjects they enjoy and in which they can succeed. To that end it will be a statutory requirement to establish 14 specialised diplomas between now and 2013 with equal access for students in all parts of the County. Very few individual schools will be able to deliver this broad curriculum by themselves. They will need to collaborate with each other, with Further Education colleges and with workplace learning providers.

This will be challenging to deliver. Collaborative provision is complicated to arrange and can be hard to sustain in urban areas, and even more so in rural areas. We will need commitment and ingenuity to devise a workable strategy in the first place, and a clear resource plan to implement it. This will involve revenue and capital, delegated, County-level and national resources.

The County has been working on 14-19 developments for three years through its Area Learning Partnerships and its strategy called "Putting the Learner First". It has made some useful progress, most notably in the Ryedale area which will be the first place to begin teaching a new diploma in September 2008. It is recognised by DCSF as a successful rural model, and the schools are to be congratulated on it.

The DCSF has now asked all Authorities to develop detailed strategic plans to map out how the new entitlements at 14-19 are to be delivered. Plans must be developed jointly with LSC, and will cover the period in which statutory responsibilities for 16-19 will return from LSC to the Local Authority. The Plan will have to address how to produce learning and training opportunities for all young people up to the age of 18.

FALLING ROLLS/SURPLUS PLACES

In common with most areas in England, North Yorkshire is experiencing falling rolls. Overall pupil numbers at the millennium were around 86,000 and now are down to 82,000. The fall, inevitably, is experienced in the Primary sector first where the September 2007 pupil numbers were 41,585. The lowest point is expected around 2010 and the Primary forecast is 39,574 for January of that year. As year groups move through the system, falling rolls are beginning to affect the Secondary sector with the low point expected in seven or eight year's time.

Certain areas of the County are expected to buck the trend due to significant housing development, eg Scarborough, Selby town, Sherburn- in- Elmet. Richmondshire has increasing birth rates. District Councils are in the process of developing Local Development Frameworks detailing plans to 2021 so longer-

term housing development is unknown as yet, but will be incorporated into forecasts as soon as the position is clearer.

The headline figures for the impact of falling rolls can make the picture appear more dramatic than it actually is on the ground. In some smaller schools, for example, unfilled places can appear as a significant percentage (say 20%-25%), but in practice that may still not equate to any unused classrooms. In fact, only 27 Primary schools have two or more classrooms worth of spare accommodation. This is something we take seriously, but it is also important to keep it in perspective.

We are actively looking at ways of reducing surplus accommodation by using spare space for the development of integrated services at schools such as Children's Centres and Extended Schools activities. We also continue to remove temporary classrooms where they are no longer needed.

Our Small Schools Policy emphasises continued review of surplus places and this is actively monitored. Since 2005, two small schools have been closed and one amalgamation carried out. A further small school closure is to be considered by the Executive in December with closure proposed from 31 December 2007. We are also continuing to promote confederation and federation between schools.

The Primary Capital Programme is a new part of the national Capital Strategy. In North Yorkshire consultation will begin in the Spring. The Programme in 2009 aims to replace or refurbish the worst Primary schools in the County. This will also give an opportunity to rebuild or refurbish schools in line with current need for places.

In relation to Secondary, we will be considering the position area by area, linked closely with the 14-19 agenda and the opportunities for Integrated Services and positive activities for young people. Definitive, long-term planning for Secondary will be linked with Building Schools for the Future, which is not expected to reach North Yorkshire for several years. We will address medium-term priorities as far as we can, however, in the Local Authority's Capital Programme for schools.

SCHOOLS CAPITAL ALLOCATION

In October, capital allocations were announced and officers are in the process of drawing up the three-year capital programme for 2008-11, which will be presented to Members in the Spring. The overall allocation for schools in the County looks very positive with a total of around £130M over three years. Of this £42M is Devolved Formula Capital which goes directly to schools. Other allocations include Modernisation (£25M), Primary Capital Programme (£12M),

ICT (£13M), Basic Need (extra pupil places) (£9M), and Targeted Capital for SEN and 14-19 Provision (£8M).

Priorities will be set for inclusion in the programme using the Authority's Asset Management Plan Local Policy Statement which was agreed by the Council this time last year.

HINDERWELL KITCHEN/DINING FACILITIES

The kitchen/dining room facilities at Hinderwell Community Primary School in Scarborough have been the subject of some debate in recent weeks. The key issues under discussion have been whether the kitchen should be replaced and health and safety issues focusing on the current kitchen.

As far as the replacement kitchen is concerned, as I have indicated, we are in the process of drawing up the Capital Programme for 2008/11 which will be finalised in Spring 2008. A letter was sent to the local MP and copied to the school in August 2007 which gave a clear steer, without pre-empting Council decisions, that the project was expected to be a priority for a place in the 2008/11 programme. That remains the position.

The Area Committee subsequently became involved and issues were raised about a number of health and safety issues and reports which had been made about the present kitchen. A comprehensive Health and Safety report was made in mid-November and action has already been taken or is in the process of being taken about the various issues arising. A further detailed report was made to the Area Committee on 6 December.

SCHOOL RESULTS 2007

I reported on School Performance in October, based on provisional information at that time. I can now report in more detail.

Foundation Stage Profile

Pupils in North Yorkshire score well above national averages on all scales. North Yorkshire ranks in the top quartile on 4 out of the 13 scales, in the top half of authorities on 8 scales. It is important to say that these assessment measures are new and still "finding their feet".

Keystage 1

Pupils at the end of Year 2 are assessed in Reading, Writing and Maths. Pupils are expected to reach level 2+. Pupils in North Yorkshire achieve above the national average in all three areas - 86%, 82%, 91% respectively. North

Yorkshire ranks well into the top half of Authorities in all three areas. Both nationally and in North Yorkshire results were little changed in 2007.

Key stage 2

Pupils at the end of Year 6 are assessed in English, maths and science. Pupils are expected to reach level 4+. Pupils in North Yorkshire score well above the national average in all three areas - 84%, 82%, 90% respectively. North Yorkshire's results place it in the top quartile of LAs for all three subjects. Results in North Yorkshire in 2007 improved at a faster rate than the national figures. The number of schools with results below the government's floor targets of 65% of children with at least level 4 in both maths and English has reduced from 12 to 1

Keystage 3

Pupils at the end of Year 9 are assessed in English, Maths and Science. Pupils are expected to reach level 5+. Pupils in North Yorkshire score well above the national average in all three areas - 81%, 83%, 82% respectively. North Yorkshire's results place it in the top quartile of Authorities for all three subjects and in the top 12 for all subjects. Results in North Yorkshire in 2007 improved at a faster rate than the national figures.

Keystage 4

The key indicators are the % of pupils achieving 5 GCSE or equivalent qualifications at grades A*-C, the % achieving 5 A*-C including GCSE maths and GCSE English and the average points score achieved by pupils. Pupils in North Yorkshire achieve well above the national average on all three measures 65.3%, 53.6%, 385.7% respectively. North Yorkshire's results place it in the top quartile on all measures. Improvements in results in North Yorkshire matched or exceeded the national changes in all three measures and improved at a faster rate than the national figures.

Keystage 5

The wide variety of courses available to learners in post-16 education, and the different lengths of those courses mean that performance measures are not well developed. For students in Year 13, who reached the end of their A level and AS level courses, the two indicators used are the average points achieved by each student and the average point score for each examination entry. On both measures in North Yorkshire the results fell slightly in 2007 though the average points per students, 771.5% ranks the authority 12th of all Authorities (we were 9th last year).

We are working closely with schools to identify the reasons behind the results.

In conclusion, the picture for North Yorkshire's results this year (2007) is a strong one overall.

County Councillor John Watson OBE
Executive Member for Education

CW/BAW
10 December 2007