

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 February 2009

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

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN WATSON OBE

School Closures due to Weather

Like much of the country, North Yorkshire has experienced difficult weather conditions this week. North Yorkshire schools are to be commended on their efforts to remain open wherever possible. I can report that out of our 388 schools, 156 (40%) schools were forced to close on Monday 2 February, with 35 of these managing to remain open until early afternoon. The closures involved 128 primary schools and 28 secondary or special schools. The picture improved on Tuesday 3 February with 36 schools closed (2 of which opened for part of the day). Ten of the 36 schools were secondary and special schools. On Wednesday 4 February there were no school closures as a result of weather conditions however on Thursday 5 February three rural primary schools were required to close early in order that pupils and staff were able to get home safely in the deteriorating weather conditions.

Manfield CE VA Primary School

Statutory Notices have been published for the closure of Manfield CE Primary School near Darlington from 31 August 2009. This is a voluntary proposal but forward by the Governing Body following a drop in pupil numbers to 10. If the proposal goes ahead, the area currently served by Manfield School will become part of Eppleby Forcett CE School catchment area. For North Yorkshire pupils on roll at the time of closure, pupils will be able to choose between Eppleby Forcett and Barton CE School with free transport to either as Barton is the closer school for some pupils. It is, however, on the other side of the A1. Some children may express a preference for Croft CE School where the normal transport rules will apply.

The final decision will be made by the Executive on 17 March, following the expiry of the Statutory Notice period.

Strategy for 14-19 : Machinery of Government

The statutory framework for 14-19 learning and skills is changing. By 2012 all 17 year-olds will have to be learning or training, all 18 year-olds by 2015. They will be entitled to wider options which must include 17 diplomas. Provision must be of good quality and take account of learners' views. It must also be affordable and reflect the skills demands of the economy.

Responsibility for ensuring this is delivered passes to Local Authorities and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) goes. Under the new arrangements Local Authorities will work collaboratively with all sectors locally and with one another sub-regionally. North Yorkshire will be part of the North and East Yorkshire sub-region with East Riding, Hull and York. North Yorkshire will also have to work closely with both the West Yorkshire and Tees Valley sub-regions. The next requirement is for sub-regions to develop detailed proposals for how they will operate.

In practice, sub-regional arrangements will depend on the quality and robustness of what is done by the constituent Local Authorities. The purpose of the sub-regions is to ensure that Local Authorities' Strategic Commissioning Plans each year are well-aligned with one another, and with regional priorities.

The sub-regional role is intended to be light touch. There will be no separate sub-regional structure or staffing. Its contribution to key aspects of the new arrangements will be important

rather than large. The sub-regional responsibilities will be discharged jointly by the constituent Local Authorities within frameworks and protocols developed for the purpose.

If we are successful in doing a good job on Strategic Commissioning Plans at Local Authority level, the sub-regional work would be more managerial than policy or political. For the purposes of the Sub-Regional development work therefore, the Director has our support in promoting a governance model which includes:-

- A Memorandum of Understanding agreed by all four Authorities at Member level
- A scheme of delegation to officers working within the Memorandum to determine sub-regional Strategic Commissioning Plans, and associated issues
- That decisions should require agreement by all Authorities' representatives
- That delegations to officers include reporting accountabilities to Elected Members and Children's Partnership Boards within their respective Authorities
- Requires constituent Authorities to have sound and consistent governance arrangements
- That local commissioning includes robust contractual arrangements with all Providers, with associated monitoring arrangements to secure delivery and performance

School Admissions – Consultation on 2010/11 Arrangements, Harrogate Adjudication Ombudsman Report

A detailed report on the Ombudsman Consultation for arrangements for 2010/2011 is on the agenda for the County Council. The Report covers the Annual Admissions Consultation. The main difference from previous years is the requirement to consult parents on admissions which was introduced in November 2008. Despite advertisement of this change, we had only received 27 responses from parents (see section 3.2 of the report).

The position on the Harrogate Adjudication is as set out in detail in Section 3.2 of the Report. However, by the County Council meeting on 18 February there may be more news on the Consent Order which has still to be approved by the Courts.

There is an outstanding Ombudsman decision on Skipton selection. A draft report was received in December 2008 and comments had to be sent by the end of January. We had only one minor amendment to suggest. When the Report is issued, it will be widely publicised.

School Results

The LA performance, as measured by statutory assessment and tests and by GCSE and Post-16 qualifications remains above the National and Regional averages on all key indicators at all key stages.

Well publicised problems with the administration and marking of National Curriculum have delayed the publication of results for Key Stage 2 (11 year-olds) and no results will be published for Key Stage 3 (14- year-olds) this year.

Notable improvements in results in 2008 occurred in Key Stage 1, (7 year-olds) Key Stage 4 (16 year-olds) and post-16.

In Key Stage 1, North Yorkshire improved to be top for level 2 (the expected outcome) and above in reading, writing, maths and science in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

At **GCSE** the proportion of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs including English and Maths at grades A* to C improved to 55% - compared to 48% Nationally - ranking the Authority first in the Region, second compared to its statistical neighbours – behind Rutland – and maintaining a position in the top 25 of the 150 local authorities nationally.

The proportion of pupils achieving at least one pass at GCSE also places North Yorkshire as first in the region.

The Contextual Value Added indicator, which measures the progress of pupils from Key Stage 2 (11 year-olds) to Key Stage 4 (16 year-olds) places North Yorkshire top of the rankings of our statistical neighbours.

The results for students Post-16 also rose – both the total points score per student and the average points per exam entry increased at above the National rate. On both measures the Authority is second in Yorkshire and Humber region and second and fourth respectively compared to our statistical neighbours.

For information :-

Yorkshire and Humberside region consists of:

Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Doncaster, East Riding, Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield, York

Statistical neighbours:

Cheshire, East Riding, Essex, Hampshire, North Yorkshire, Rutland, Staffordshire, Warrington, Warwickshire, West Berkshire, Worcestershire

DCSF Bids for Cookery Spaces and Kitchen/Dining Facilities

Children and Young People's Service is bidding for two additional sources of capital funding which will support the 'Be Healthy' aspect of the Children and Young People's Plan if we are successful.

In January 2008 the DCSF announced that the **teaching of cooking skills** should be a compulsory entitlement for all 11-14 year-olds in maintained schools from September 2011. Nationally, £150M has been made available from the Targeted Capital Fund and a fixed sum of £300k per school will be provided. There is only one maintained secondary school in the County with no food technology provision. This is Ermysted's Grammar School. One special school is also bidding for funding to deliver this entitlement – Brooklands Special School in Skipton. A bid for both schools has been submitted in December 2008. We await to hear the outcome.

A second Targeted Capital Fund provides additional funding for **kitchen and dining rooms**. The aim is to increase school lunch take-up. Our bid has three elements. Firstly, we want to create full production kitchens at one third of the 40 schools which currently receive food transported from other schools.

We also intend to improve kitchen and dining room facilities at eight schools at a cost of £1.62M. Schools involved are Sessay CE Primary, Easingwold Primary, Starbeck Primary, Hampsthwaite Primary, Boroughbridge Primary, Scalby School, Harrogate High and King James, Knaresborough.

The third priority which we have bid for is the introduction of cashless catering systems in secondary schools. This is believed to increase the take-up of free school meals. The priority is to tackle schools in the 20 most deprived areas of the County. The cost estimated at £200K, half of which would be funded by the Schools Devolved Formula Capital.

The bid was submitted to the DCSF in December and we await to hear the outcome.

County Councillor John Watson OBE
Executive Member for Education