

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 May 2010

SCRUTINY BOARD

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Scrutiny Board met on 21 April 2010.

Children and Young People Service strategic issues

County Councillors Caroline Patmore and Jim Clark together with Cynthia Welbourn, Corporate Director of the Children and Young People Service, joined the Board to discuss the directorate's strategic issues and priorities for the year ahead.

The issues covered in the discussion included:

- Safeguarding children, including child protection issues
- The Government's 21st Century Schools Policy
- North Craven and Upper Wharfedale schools reviews
- Services for 16 – 19 year olds
- The importance of maintaining preventative services
- Designing services for children and young people with disabilities around individual needs
- Funding challenges, including the threat to rural authorities of the current national funding review
- Home to school transport costs
- The role of health partners.

Proposal to reduce the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Board considered a proposal to reduce the number of Overview and Scrutiny committees from nine to five and agreed to ask the Executive to recommend this to the County Council.

The current committees have differing workloads in terms of the amount of work they take on, the extent and number of 'in depth' reviews they undertake and how closely their work relates to the key objectives and priorities of the County Council. The Young People and the Care and Independence committees cover two of the most high profile service areas for the council and have heavy workloads. The Scrutiny of Health committee has a separate statutory basis, has been set up with district councillor members, and also has a heavy workload.

Some of the other six committees have overlapping or closely linked remits and there is potential for rationalising and combining the work of the other six committees into two. This will enable a better focus on some cross-cutting and closely related issues, such as transport and telecommunications

infrastructure, sustainable development and the economy. It will also enable better use of scrutiny support staff and other resources and release some cashable savings.

Scrutiny Board proposes that the Young People, the Care and Independence and the Scrutiny of Health committees would not change. The Transport and Telecommunications, the Economic Development and Regeneration and the Environment and Heritage committees would combine to form a new Transport, Economy and Environment committee. The Corporate Affairs, Communications and Safe and Sustainable committees would combine to form a new Corporate and Partnerships committee which would include the statutory crime and disorder function.

It is proposed that the changes should take effect after the July meeting of the County Council.

Duty to respond to petitions – the role of scrutiny

The Board noted that under the petition scheme the County Council is obliged to have to comply with the new duty to respond to petitions there are three possible ways for a petition to come before an overview and scrutiny committee:

- The local authority may choose to refer a petition to an overview and scrutiny committee for consideration.
- Petitions with a defined level of support, set by the local authority, will trigger a senior local government officer to give evidence at a meeting of an overview and scrutiny committee.
- Petitioners will be able to appeal to an overview and scrutiny committee if they feel the response from their council is not adequate.

Joint working with districts on scrutiny

The Board received an update on the actions that have followed the joint member workshop held with districts in November 2009. The Board agreed to organise another joint workshop in the autumn to review the outcomes of the work and to look for further opportunities to share information and work together on scrutiny to avoid duplication of effort and waste of scarce resources.

Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report

I am pleased to attach to this statement the annual report of the chairs of scrutiny. It gives an account of the very positive role scrutiny has in this council and I am sure that the changes proposed will ensure this continues to be the case despite the necessary constraints on budgets.

County Councillor Paul Richardson
Chairman of Scrutiny Board
10 May 2010

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report
April 2009 to March 2010



County Councillor Paul Richardson
Chairman of the Scrutiny Board
April 2010

Chief Executive's Group

By extending a hand of co-operation we recognise a need, a true desire, to help and to be helped. To grasp the proffered hand takes courage and can only be done in an atmosphere of trust and a belief in the knowledge that by doing so, the renewed strength can enable all parties to face an uncertain future with vigour.

This realisation that Scrutiny can only forge ahead during these troubled times by extending its partnership working has permeated our activities during the past year.

In November, we held our second annual scrutiny workshop with the District Councils. The relationship between the scrutiny officers had already been cemented by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The encouraging outcome of the workshop was a tremendous bonus, with all representatives agreeing and being enthusiastic about working more closely; sharing ideas and information; and dispersing topics for scrutiny more evenly throughout the County.

Partnership working in one form or another has featured in the business of all our committees, none more so than the Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee, particularly with its work associated with the ageing population. The Safe and Sustainable Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken a keen and

constructive interest in those voluntary groups that support disabled people in the community.

The Government reports following the Baby Peter case have had the beneficial effect of seeing the Children and Young People's Service work hand in hand with our partners and the Primary Care Trust. This palpable aim of co-operation has also been evidenced in the programme of the Health Scrutiny Committee, working with the NHS locally.

One of the most telling examples of good partnership working could be seen in the joint working of the County and District Councils on flooding. Flooding occurs all over our county and the recommendations from this exercise – including greater support for community resilience and local flood planning – are relevant to all authorities.

Because of the necessary restraints on budgets, the pathway to a better future is not proving to be an easy journey. However, with the support of all our partners and agencies we can at least tackle the problems in a united way, and this should have the best outcomes for the public we represent.



County Councillor Paul Richardson
Chairman
Scrutiny Board



Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen - April 2010

L-R County Councillors David Jeffels, Tony Hall, Gareth Dadd, Liz Casling, Paul Richardson, Robert Heseltine and John Blackburn
Photograph by Richard Jemison

Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: The needs of vulnerable adults and older people and people whose independence needs to be supported by intervention from the public or voluntary sector.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Ray Busby

“The more we understand, the more we can help.”

Those words headline the current national Dementia awareness campaign, but it struck me how much they sum up what the Committee is all about.

The Committee has aimed to improve its understanding of the big challenges in social care and then contribute where we can help the most. Perhaps the most publicised is the pressure that comes with an ageing society; indeed we face staggering increases in the number of people with dementia. If we are to avoid escalating costs and reducing services year on year, we have to think differently about how people with this devastating condition and their carers are supported. Our proposals earlier in the year did just that. They stemmed from listening to people, understanding their experiences, alongside working with partners in all sectors. The key recommendation was the formation of a Dementia Network, which has made progress in identifying service gaps in provision and support, leading to a joint commissioning and action plan. I genuinely believe therefore it will make the difference we thought it would.

It is possible to encourage independence, choice and well being, and tackle high priority items effectively, by doing things differently. This underpins our work on the National Strategy “Valuing Employment Now” which aims to support people with learning disabilities by finding pathways to employment. This has repercussions not just for people with learning disabilities, but for users and carers, many of whom are used to more traditional approaches to support. Services could look radically different from what they do now. Some changes will not be universally

popular; the level of resistance in communities could well be significant. We will be judged by how far we understand people’s experiences and ensure as far as we can that the result is a positive one.

We have concluded the strategic arrangements for Safeguarding Adults across the County are sound. Safeguarding is everybody’s business – adult abuse can happen to anyone, anywhere, and responsibility for addressing it lies with all of us. Councillors share a responsibility to ensure that all vulnerable people can live their lives free from violence and abuse. How we translate that into action is a high priority in our work programme.

Older people’s interests are increasingly recognised as a corporate responsibility. The annual assessment of how we engage with older people, undertaken as it is by County Councillors in conjunction with representatives of the North Yorkshire Older People’s Forum and the Older People’s Partnership Board, is an excellent example of learning by working together. Last year’s review was well received but this year’s has arguably reached a higher level of rigour and expertise. Not many councils would be prepared to open up its activity in such a transparent way to the members of the community it serves and then invite them to evaluate performance independently.

These examples may only give a flavour of what the Committee has done but they demonstrate that **“The more we understand, the more we can help.”**

County Councillor Tony Hall
Chairman, Care and Independence
O&SC



Communications Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: How the Council listens to and communicates with partners, stakeholders and the public; how it tells them how it plans to meet their needs and what it is doing; communications and information services delivered through libraries; and electronic communications.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Jo Broadbent

During 2009/10 the Communications Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered a wide range of topics relating to both internal and external communication across North Yorkshire County Council.

Our work programme has included keeping an overview of both the major staff survey and the re-accreditation programme for Investors in People. We have considered the findings from these and will be working closely with Human Resources to monitor the progress of action plans arising from this.

We have also looked at the new “New Look, No Shush” Library Strategy and were most impressed with the facilities offered when we toured the new library facility at Catterick. Members have visited the Contact Centre at County Hall and have received a presentation on the progress with the Access to Service Strategy. We have also continued with our watching brief on the development of the North Yorkshire County Council internet and intranet and have jointly scrutinised the development of NYNET. We have monitored the uptake and use of video-conferencing facilities across the county and have actively encouraged its usage by members and officers. I am pleased to report that this Committee is successfully using video-conferencing for a number of its meetings.

The Committee has undertaken an in-depth topic of work on exploring how communication can be improved between the County Council and town and parish councils. Members have researched best practice on this and have visited Lancashire County Council to look at the initiatives and the

approach adopted. We have received a presentation from the Yorkshire Local Councils Network, which highlighted the challenges on communication given the number and diverse range of parish councils across the county, and are contributing to the work on the development of the Parish Charter, liaison meetings and the introduction of a parish newsletter.

We have taken the lead role on scrutinising the ‘duty to involve’ as well as on the development of the Community Engagement Strategy. A small working group has supported work on developing: the community engagement framework, including community engagement structures across the county; the draft community engagement charter; and the changing role of members in relation to community engagement.

Finally, the County Council will face a period of unprecedented change as the pressures on public sector spending start to hit over coming months and this will be a period of anxiety and concern for many staff. The way that we communicate and manage these changes for staff is going to be of the utmost importance and in recognition of this, the Committee has started discussions with senior officers to ensure that communication plans are robust and appropriate. We will continue to keep this as a major focus of our future work.

County Councillor Margaret-Ann de-Courcey Bayley

Chairman,
Communications O&SC



Corporate Affairs Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: The Council's corporate organisation and structure, resource allocation, asset management, procurement policy, equalities, people strategy, performance management and the implementation of corporate initiatives.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Lorraine Laverton

When I looked up the meaning of the word 'corporate' the explanation I found was 'of, or shared by, a whole group and not just a single member..' (Cambridge Online Dictionary) I thought this not only reflected the scope of the Committee but also the attitude of its members and a shared responsibility for the work we undertake. My first year as chairman of this Committee has been a busy one and this is a glimpse back at just some of the work from the last year.

One example sees the Committee in its role as critical friend in the development of the corporate Health and Safety Policy. My signature on the completed document represents the commitment of all Non Executive Members (not just our Committee) in making sure that 'our decision making and contacts with employees and members of the public support the aims of this (Health & Safety) Policy and the requirements of health and safety legislation'. (NYCC H&S Policy 2010)

However that does not mean that we should not take responsibility for our own health and safety.....



Health and Safety Executive myth
April 2009

Although the work of the Committee, in scrutinising an issue or assisting with policy development is important, I also see the Committee using this critical friend influence in driving home important corporate and leadership messages. I recently hosted an event that looked

at equality in our communities. As a Committee we monitor the progress the organisation is making on the single equality framework but this event was about our role as community leaders and how the equality framework is put into practice. I wanted to make the event much more dynamic than a 'death by powerpoint' or a lecture by senior officers and so I enlisted the help of a local theatre forum group; **'Talkback Diversity'**.

The event not only conveyed a very important message about respecting all the different people who make up our communities but was done in a fun and interactive way. We even had a visit from

James Bond and
Miss
Money Penny.....



As well as raising awareness the event has also prompted me to suggest to the Committee that we

work together with the Communications Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at County Council publications and see whether they could be produced in an easy read style.

And finally, the message about a shared responsibility has also underpinned the Committee's work around two tier working. Although the Committee is keen to see what the County Council is doing to promote two tier working where it can, it is also important to include our District and Borough Council scrutiny colleagues in this discussion. This annual meeting gets better each time as Members are engaged in looking for positive outcomes for our communities by working better together.



County Councillor Liz Casling
Chairman, Corporate Affairs O&SC

Economic Development and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: Supporting business, helping people develop their skills, including lifelong learning and regeneration of the economic infrastructure of North Yorkshire.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Jo Broadbent

“Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Economists set themselves too easy, too useless a task if they can only tell us that when the storm is long past, the ocean will be flat again” – so said J Maynard Keynes.

2009/10 proved to be a very interesting year for the Economic Development and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as the worldwide uncertain economic situation continued to unfold. The impact of the economic downturn dominated much of our work programme and our efforts have focused on looking at how North Yorkshire is placed to meet these challenges and on shaping the action required to support the recovery.

Unemployment levels have been an area of concern, particularly as previous recessions have shown that it takes nearly five years after a recession begins for unemployment to return to its pre-recession levels. The Committee met with partner agencies, including the Learning and Skills Council, Job Centre Plus and Business Link, to explore opportunities for job creation and re-skilling of individuals. Youth unemployment has been an area of particular interest and we have been encouraged by the initiatives led by North Yorkshire County Council on developing apprenticeship opportunities and are pleased to be involved with Young People O&SC looking at young people not in education, employment or training. We have also looked at support for the over 50s, many of whom have found themselves unemployed for the first time, and will continue to monitor outcomes on this.

The impact of policy and structure changes for economic development following on from the

Sub-National Review, have continued to feature in our work and the Committee has been involved in both the development of the Geographic Programme and the Economic Assessment. This work is being led by the York and North Yorkshire Partnership Unit, and we have had a number of healthy debates on the development of these, particularly in relation to exploring how best North Yorkshire can sustainably benefit from the City Region Agenda. We have actively promoted the need to develop a clear focus and strategy for the great majority of the county which falls outside of the City Regions.

Strengthening relationships with District Councils and engaging with partner agencies is key to future success. We had a very informative visit to meet with the Economic Development and Renaissance Team at Scarborough Borough Council and this included a tour around the town to look at a number of projects which are being undertaken. We were most impressed at the progress and changes that are being made.

The economic conditions and public spending restrictions will create many challenges in the coming years for economic development and I look forward to working with the Committee and the Executive to ensure that North Yorkshire maximises opportunities for economic benefit and improvements for our county.

And finally, as Eddie George, ex-Governor of the Bank of England, said in a review in 1996 “There are three kinds of economists. Those who can count and those who can't!”

County Councillor Robert Heseltine
Chairman,
Economic Development and
Regeneration O&SC



Environment and Heritage Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: Sustainable development, countryside management, waste management, environmental conservation and enhancement, and cultural issues.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Rachel Rushforth

The Committee has continued to take an active interest in the impact that changes to our climate, countryside and heritage are having and how we can respond to them.

A sub-group of the Committee has looked at how the County Council can use the green spaces that we own or manage to improve habitats for wildlife and biodiversity.

The group focussed on bees in particular, because they are vital to pollination and are a 'keystone' species. Bees pollinate all kinds of flowers including those of crops, vegetables and for seed production and also wildflowers whose fruits, berries and seeds form the basis of many food chains. These food chains are vital to biodiversity. In economic terms, bee pollination contributes an estimated £200 million a year to the UK economy. Bees need a constant supply of nectar-rich plants for food, and this is best provided by a network of small patches of flower-rich habitats – these habitats also directly benefit other wildlife and species at risk.



The group visited a school in Ripon that is putting wildlife-friendly grounds management into practice and also spoke to experts from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and the National Bee Unit.

Habitat loss is one of the main reasons for the decline of bee populations, because it means that there is less food available to them during the active season. Small changes to the management of open spaces can have a big impact – for example, reducing the amount of grass-cutting and replacing non-native, non-flowering plants and shrubs with native, flowering plants. Most of these small changes can be achieved at little or no extra cost. The group has therefore recommended that pilot schemes are introduced to improve habitats for biodiversity on school grounds, and that a grounds maintenance

manual is developed to help to spread good practice to other sites.

The joint county and District/Borough council scrutiny project on flooding produced its report and recommendations last Summer. The group made recommendations regarding supporting communities and residents to prepare for flooding and integrate community level emergency plans into flood planning. We will be having an annual review of progress in the Summer.



The Committee contributed to the consultation on the County Council's climate change strategy. We particularly highlighted the need to reduce staff and Member

travel and consider low-carbon alternatives such as video-conferencing. We also spoke to the Energy Saving Trust about developing an information pack for Members on simple steps to save energy, and to representatives from the Northallerton and Villages in Transition Group about the 'transition towns' initiative to reduce the reliance of communities on fossil fuels.

The Committee had a useful discussion with English Heritage about how they can work more closely with communities to protect and make the most of heritage sites that are important to local people.

We have continued to keep a watching brief on progress with the County Council's plan to reduce its energy consumption and carbon emissions, and on the future management of unsurfaced, unclassified roads.



County Councillor John Blackburn
Chairman, Environment and Heritage
O&SC

Safe and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: Community development, community safety, community strategies and the accessibility of Council Services to communities.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Ray Busby

We set out to cover a number of topics which fell within our, admittedly, very broad remit. Nevertheless, it was the decision to designate the Committee as the Crime and Disorder Committee at county level which helped to shape what we have done. First of all we ensured that we had a good appreciation of Community Safety issues at a strategic level. Nigel Hutchinson, Chair of the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership Safer Communities Forum explained the priorities that have been set, what has been achieved and how partners work together.

We followed this with an exchange of views and information with Peter Brown, the Chief Probation Officer, on the contribution his service makes in the wider community safety arena. This was the first in a series of meetings we will hold with strategic leaders of partner organisations in the Safer Communities Forum. We were struck by the excellent work being undertaken by the probation service and how little is known of the key role it occupies in the criminal justice system. There is a strong community focus to protecting the public in its work with reducing re-offending and making sure offenders comply with community sentences. Little is known of the service, especially the excellent community schemes under Community Payback. There are real opportunities for local organisations and public sector bodies to identify projects which in themselves can contribute to community safety.

Similar meetings are planned with strategic leaders from North Yorkshire Police and the Police Authority.

Community leadership has been part of our work programme over recent years. This is certainly the

case when we assessed the results of the Eastfield Participatory Budgeting (PB) Pilot. PB can be an effective vehicle to deliver community engagement and involvement from both the perspective of the community and the public agencies in that it addresses the one thing that agencies usually say is the biggest problem – getting real community support and interest. More work remains to be done by the Committee on this topic focussing especially on how PB can stimulate community engagement and empowerment at parish council community level.

At the opposite end of the spectrum has been our recent attention on Total Place; a new initiative that looks at how a whole area approach to public services can lead to better services at less cost. It seeks to identify and avoid overlap and duplication between organisations – delivering a step change in both service improvement and efficiencies. This is, as a national project, very much in its infancy with 13 pilots coming to a conclusion over the course of 2010. This is a topic we are beginning to hear a great deal more about, but as yet the County Council has not formed a view. Whilst the Committee believes the jury is still out on whether this represents a step change in local government and services for the community, it is something we intend to revisit on a regular basis so that we can contribute to the debate of how Total Place might affect North Yorkshire residents.

County Councillor David Jeffels
Chairman
Safe and Sustainable Communities
O&SC



Scrutiny of Health Committee

Scope: To review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the County, including Ambulance Trusts and the policies of the Strategic Health Authority.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Bryon Hunter

As well as holding formal committee meetings through out the year I have tried to work with local Members to resolve issues at a local level and in an informal way.

A good example of how this approach worked well was in relation to Ambulance cover changes for Stokesley and Gt Ayton area.

The background to this is that in June 2009 the Assistant Director of Operations, Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS), wrote to Great Ayton Parish Council setting out changes to ambulance service provision in the Stokesley and Great Ayton areas. The Parish Council was informed that a new 24 hour service, 7 days a week would be introduced from midnight on 31 October 2009.



To try and get to the bottom of the story I called an urgent meeting with YAS representatives. The meeting took place in

September and was attended by local County Councillors and District Councillors.

YAS representatives conceded that they had not handled the consultation at all well. But in actual fact the proposals were a vast improvement over the old arrangements. For instance, under the old arrangements the ambulance meant to be serving

the area was frequently unavailable due to it being called to emergencies in Teesside.

Members accepted this would actually be an enhanced service because whilst the ambulance would be based further away, a paramedic would actually arrive on site more quickly. Members undertook to use their networks to get this message out.

Whilst I fully acknowledge there will be instances when this approach will not be possible I do think there is considerable potential for the NHS Trusts to communicate with local members in a much proactive way to get their message out.

Finally I would just like to add that I am also anxious for Members on the Committee to build their own relationships with the NHS locally and to be involved in healthcare developments in their area. A good example of how this has worked well is how County Councillor Andrew Backhouse has chaired two public engagement events for the Primary Care Trust on its plans for improving older people's mental health services in Whitby.



County Councillor Gareth Dadd
Chairman, Scrutiny of Health
Committee

Transport and Telecommunication Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: Transport and communications infrastructure of all kinds, however owned or provided, and how the transport needs of the community are met.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Lorraine Laverton

I have enjoyed my first year as Chairman of the Committee and the variety of work as we scrutinise such things as the progress being made on the third Local Transport Plan and the development of a road safety protocol.

Early in 2009 the Committee worked with members of the Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on access to the 14-19 Diploma. This piece of scrutiny work did not attempt to offer recommendations that could immediately solve the problem but allowed us to recognise just how complex this problem is. This work continues and it is the responsibility of scrutiny to ensure that it remains on track with regular updates for members of both Committees but we have to accept that this was never going to be easy or straightforward.

November 2009 saw a return visit from Phil Jones of Government Office Yorkshire and Humber with our annual look at major traffic schemes, and it was clear to see that the funding for the schemes over the next few years is going to be in short supply.



We are keen to maintain our interest in the results of previous scrutiny reviews and so it was also interesting to hear from

Balfour Beatty with our annual update on reusing and recycling materials in highways. We were told that they have introduced new construction techniques and on-site recycling opportunities, are using in-house recycling facilities such as Towton as well as using third party recycling opportunities where they can.

The Committee was also involved in a 'Call in' this year. It involved a decision taken by the Harrogate Area Committee to make permanent the experimental 7.5 tonne weight restriction on the B6161 Otley Road, Killinghall.

This was the first time an Area Committee decision had been called in so it proved to be a steep learning curve for us all. County Councillor Peter Sowray did a sterling job chairing the meeting and ensured that both sides, for or against the decision, were heard. After much deliberation the decision of the Harrogate Area Committee was upheld.

Our links with Harrogate Borough Council were also strengthened as their scrutiny committee invited us to be involved in a meeting looking at changes to a local bus service. We were told how the decision of the bus operator to change some services had come about as a result of the economic crisis. It is not within our power to dictate to the bus operator to continue with a service that is not financially viable, but it was important that the bus operator heard the strength of feeling from members of the public.



County Councillor Don Mackenzie has chaired the Task Group set up by the Committee to investigate a range of possible solutions for managing traffic speed outside schools.

It is good to see the Task Group getting out and about and seeing for themselves some of the methods already being used in the County as well as areas where there are problems, real or perceived.



This work will result in a report to the Executive which will set out recommendations that could be used around the county. The safety of children is paramount so it is very important that this work also feeds into the development of the wider road safety protocol.

County Councillor Cliff Trotter
Chairman, Transport and
Telecommunication Services O&SC



Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scope: The interests of young people, including education, care and protection, and family support.

Scrutiny Support Officer: Stephanie Bratcher

‘Every Child Matters’ in North Yorkshire is our County Council’s fundamental commitment to work with partners to fulfil the potential of every child in changing times and from unequal starting points.

We know the five key outcomes for young people refer to: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. These key outcomes provide us with an ideal route to monitor performance and progress and the Committee has aligned and themed their work programme to these outcomes. We know that delivering services for young people requires a multi-agency approach so throughout the year we have invited health partners and voluntary services to talk about the services they provide for young people.



Whilst we have visited each of the key outcomes over the year, stay safe and safeguarding children is one of the key statutory responsibilities

vested in top tier local authorities. This important issue has been highly influenced by the tragic baby Peter case and Lord Laming’s subsequent report. We believe the Committee’s work programme has reflected this priority, and we participated in the rigorous Ofsted Inspection on safeguarding and looked after children’s services. Our experience, not surprisingly, can only be described as ‘robustly challenging’.

Members have recognised that keeping safeguarding on their agenda is important and we have monitored progress against the Post Inspection Action Plan and questioned partner agencies about their duties and responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Safeguarding will remain an integral part of local overview and scrutiny and we will continue to

monitor the County Council and partner agencies’ safeguarding arrangements to ensure that improved outcomes and the protection of children in North Yorkshire is sustained.

The Committee has also been involved in the proposed two-stage consultation on the Harrogate Community Secondary Schools admission arrangements for 2011/12. Our role was very precise: to monitor the consultation process to ensure that it was thorough, fair and inclusive; and that it provided ample opportunity for members of the public to put forward their comments.

The health of young people is also high on our list of priorities. We have continued to monitor teenage conception rates and sexual health services and continue to raise our concerns regarding the number of available health visitors and school nurses across the county. We want the best available health prevention services for children and young people, so ‘be healthy’ also remains on our radar.

The Corporate Parent Standing Group sits as a sub-group of the Committee. As elected members we are all corporate parents and we have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people in our care and be re-assured that they are receiving quality care and services. We need to look at raising awareness and ensure that better information is given to all county councillors.

Finally, we know that the social, economic and environmental trends can change the context in which children and young people grow up so we need to ensure that services adapt and update to keep young people’s needs at the heart of service delivery.

County Councillor Paul Richardson
Chairman, Young People O&SC



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