

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

14 DECEMBER 2011

STATEMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Statement to Council on 13 October 2010 set out the approach being taken under the Children and Young People's Service Savings and Transformation Strategy which is committed to giving highest priority to frontline services, while acknowledging that the scale of savings needed means that they cannot be protected completely. In 2011-12 the CYPS MTF target as set by Budgets 1 and 2 is £9.150m. This target has been spread across 18 projects, plus turn-off projects funded by grants which have ended or been reduced.

Overall achievement is well on target at this stage. Indeed, as reported to Executive as part of the Q2 monitoring, it is likely that savings will be accelerated by up to £2m from later years, giving a cash benefit although the overall 4-year target does not change.

The Directorate has set aside a specific MTF reserve to ensure that cash savings are achieved over the next 4 years. This is still the intention and these will be used in addition to the acceleration referred to above to ensure the maximum cash benefit for the Council.

This information appears in the Statements to Council for both Executive Members for the Children and Young People's Service as this reflects their joint responsibility for all the relevant resources.

Project 2 – Children's Social Care Transformation

Children's Social Care is undertaking a significant transformation programme. The transformation will strengthen frontline practice and deliver savings from administration, premises and senior management arrangements, and by reducing the numbers of looked after children. The changes are driven by the need to further improve practice, impact, efficacy and efficiency in the service. A new structure and delivery model went out for 60 days consultation on 4th September 2011. Following on from consultation the structure has been amended slightly but the new model of delivery, which sees the introduction of a 'hub model' where professionals and teams work together around the family, rapid and intensive services to be more responsive to risk, a dedicated Family Intervention Team which delivers evidenced based interventions and a stronger focus on measuring outcomes. The transformation programme is now assimilating staff into posts and working to a tightly managed transition plan to ensure continuity of service delivery and effective implementation of the new structure and delivery model by the 1st August 2012.

Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services

Ofsted's 2011 annual assessment of children's services, published in November, has confirmed that North Yorkshire's services for children and young people "perform well". The large majority of provision is good or outstanding, and outcomes for service users are impressive.

The annual assessment identifies many positive features of services in North Yorkshire, including:

- The large majority of early years, childcare and nursery provision is good or outstanding
- The large majority of primary schools are good or outstanding
- The large majority of secondary schools are good or outstanding, with GCSE results generally well ahead of the national average
- The majority of post-16 learning provision is good or outstanding
- Special educational needs provision is very good, and four of the local authority's eleven special schools are rated as outstanding
- All four pupil referral units are good or outstanding

- All six local authority children's homes are good or outstanding
- The local authority adoption agency is outstanding in all respects

The annual assessment highlights the substantial improvements made in safeguarding services during the last two years. In particular, it identifies the "significant improvements in the timeliness of initial and core assessments, a trend that has been maintained."

The annual assessment identifies two main areas for improvement:

- The GCSE results of young people who receive free school meals
- The proportion of 17 year olds who participate in work-based training

Family and Friends: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities was published in March 2011.

This guidance sets out a framework for the provision of support to family and friends carers. It requires each local authority to publish a policy setting out its approach towards meeting the needs of children living with family and friends, when they are unable to live with birth parents. The guidance is clear about what needs to be included in the policy.

In North Yorkshire we are currently consulting on the development of our Family and Friends Care Policy. Public consultation, accessible through the North Yorkshire County Council website closed on 30th November 2011. Children's Services staff have been consulted directly on the policy development as have young people. Approximately 300 carers currently in receipt of a relevant allowance are also being directly consulted by post. The policy will be ready for approval in January 2012 and publication in February 2012.

Short Breaks

Local authorities are required as a result of Government's Short Breaks Guidance 2010, to develop, consult on and publish a Short Breaks Statement which sets out the range of short breaks available to parents and carers of children with disabilities, the criteria for accessing them and how these services will meet their need for a break from their normal caring responsibilities.

A number of parent consultation meetings have been held throughout the autumn to give them the opportunity to see the new SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Strategy, the proposal to have a single SEND service and the draft Short Breaks Statement. Parent's comments will be incorporated when the Statement is revised in December for final approval in January.

Baliol/Foremost School

The County Council is adapting the former Royal Navy training base at Forest Moor, Darley near Harrogate to provide new accommodation for Baliol School, which is currently located in Sedbergh, providing for both residential and day pupils. This will provide significantly improved facilities for pupils, including single study bedrooms, as well as being better placed for the majority of families, other schools, and networks of specialist support within the County.

This is a major scheme and the contractor has encountered a number of difficulties, most particularly the withdrawal of the mechanical and electrical sub-contractor and the consequential need to appoint a new sub-contractor. This means that the school is now expected to move to the new site at February half term and will be known as Foremost School.

County Councillor Carl Les
Executive Member for Children's Services

COUNTY COUNCIL STATEMENT

14 DECEMBER 2011

STATEMENT OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER (Corporate Affairs, Performance Management)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR CARL LES

Council Plan 2012/13

The Council Plan 2012/13 is currently being drafted alongside the MTFs to ensure that the Council's objectives, priorities and allocation of resources are aligned.

The Council Plan will be a public focussed, easy to read, concise document incorporating an executive summary, and will aim to concentrate on changes which will be seen by, and affect, the public and the services they receive, whilst ensuring a broad overall picture of the full range of services provided.

The Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received a report on the development of the plan. The initial draft will be circulated to all county councillors for comment prior to Christmas. A revised draft will be considered by the Executive on 31 January 2012, before the final draft is proposed to full Council on 15 February 2012.

Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. As anticipated, the Act sets out:

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government (including reform of the national ethical framework);
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals; and
- reform of the planning system.

A briefing paper on the Act is available on the members' news page on the intranet. The Act will also be a key agenda item at the members' seminar on 4 January 2012.

Police and Crime Panel

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 places a duty on the nine local authorities in North Yorkshire and York to establish and maintain a police and crime panel. The panel will not be a replacement for the existing police authority. Its role will be to maintain a regular check and balance on the performance of the directly elected police and crime commissioner including the exercise of his/her statutory functions and other key decisions, such as the police precept.

The nine authorities are working together to develop the arrangements for the panel. It is proposed that the nine authorities will be asked to agree the formal panel arrangements in time to allow the authorities to appoint their member of the panel at their annual meetings in May 2012. This will allow time for the panel to prepare appropriately to take on this new role, in advance of the commissioner assuming their responsibilities on 22 November 2012.

Industrial Action

The strike day of 30th November passed off without event. Some 40% of schools were closed alongside 6 libraries and some care for older people and adults with disabilities had to be re-provided in other locations due to the closure of a small number of facilities such as day centres. We do not have the overall number of staff on strike as we are still awaiting schools information, but for non schools just over 5% took part. Picket lines were small and without problem.

Redundancy Position

A number of restructurings are ongoing and will not conclude until February so the numbers have remained reasonably static. To date there have been 152 redundancies (non schools) of which 60 worked only a few hours a week or did not seek redeployment and 34 were voluntary. So far 183 staff have been redeployed and 21 are currently seeking redeployment.

Regional Award for County Apprentice Programme

I am pleased to report that the County Council's apprentice programme won a regional award last month. 3 new apprentices working in children's centres attended an award ceremony alongside the Leader, CEX and other officers involved in the programme (at no cost). The programme continues to be important particularly now with concerns about youth unemployment.

In the current climate we are not able to appoint as many apprentices as we would like but we still have a good programme with over 50 apprentices currently and increasing success in persuading our contractors to take on apprentices.

Customer Services Update

In October, the Council went live with the Tell Us Once programme, a national initiative from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP). This allows customers, at the time of registering a birth or more particularly a death, the ability to let a range of other local and central government agencies know about the event. The service has been well received by customers who welcome the lifting of extra burdens at what can be a difficult time.

Two new telephone services are also being planned. In December 2011 North Yorkshire Police will join the police "101" national non-emergency number system which will replace their existing non emergency number. Meanwhile

the Department of Health has announced the implementation of a national number, "111", which is to replace the existing telephone service, NHS Direct. Implementation is likely to be late 2012 or 2013 but further details are awaited at this stage.

'One Council' Organisational Change Programme

On 29 November the Executive noted progress on the 'One Council' Change Programme and agreed to the next steps. This includes detailed plans being worked up between now and March 2012 with high level financial expectations being determined for each area of activity. It is anticipated that a further update will be brought to the Executive early in the new financial year as the Programme enters the "implementation" stage.

County Councillor Carl Les
6 December 2011

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Statement of the Chairman of the Looked After Children Member's Group

14th December 2011

Members will be aware that when a child becomes 'looked after' the tasks of their parent become the responsibility of Elected Members and Officers of the County Council.

The Looked After Children-Member's Group as an Executive delegated function meets on a quarterly basis to consider and discuss corporate parenting issues and during the past twelve months have met on five occasions.

Currently we have 449 children and young people in our care and safeguarding and protection remain high on our list of priorities. We now receive additional quarterly information which provides a better profile of the young people in our care such as their age ranges; whether boys or girls, their ethnicity, the type of placements they have been placed in and whether they are inside or outside of the County.

Over the course of the year we have made every effort to find out more about children and young people in fostering arrangements and invited a Foster Carer to one of our meetings. They shared theirs and their families experience as a foster family both the highs and the lows and talked about the Officer support they receive. From this we have established good links with local Fostering Support Groups and will look to widen this in the future.

In March we asked the Local Safeguarding Childrens Board to provide all Members of the County Council with - Safeguarding Children in our Care Training Seminar. A number of Members attended and it was an extremely useful event. Informative and useful for sharing experiences so would encourage any of you to attend when it is re-offered in the New Year.

We regularly track the educational attainment of looked after children through the ELAC Virtual School Team who oversees, monitors and supports all North Yorkshire's LAC, wherever they are placed, to ensure their educational needs are met. The Teams hard work is paying off as we now have 14 young people either in or about to commence courses at University which is fantastic news.

Members of the County Council will already be aware that a number of County Councillors with Senior Officers undertake a quarterly Regulation 33 Inspections at one of the six North Yorkshire County Council Children's Resource/Residential Homes. In addition to this we have just completed a whistle stop tour of all of North Yorkshire County Council Children's Resource/ Residential Homes across the County.

To summarise our visits we felt that we all had a better understanding of the services and provision available for children and young people in our care especially those with special needs. We saw for ourselves the results of recent refurbishments which have taken place and heard about what this means for the children, parents or carers and staff. We were very fortunate to meet several young people who showed us around their residential home and told us about their future plans. We listened as Officers told us about the effective interventions used to support young people and their families in crisis and how this can be a turning point in their lives. It was a very useful exercise and one that opened our eyes and ears to the daily challenges being faced by not only the young people but our extraordinary teams of staff working in this field.

County Councillor Melva Steckles
Chairman looked after Children-Members Group

Report of the Young Peoples Champion – County Councillor Tim Swales

As the Young Peoples Champion I have focussed my attention this year on young people in care and as a Member of the Looked after Children's –Members Group I have the opportunity to bring any concerns to their attention and to talk them through with the help of the Officers present.

On a regular basis I visit unannounced all Children's Homes across the County and take the opportunity to talk with the young people living there.

I regularly attend the Young Peoples Council (North Yorkshires Children in Care Council) which represents young people in care, whether they are in foster care, kinship care or in residential homes.

As you know we hold Celebration events where we present Awards and Certificates to young people in care who have done really well with their achievements and educational attainment. Foster families join in the celebrations and I have the opportunity to meet many wonderful caring people.

From time to time I am contacted by families who have multiply concerns or complaints about the services they are receiving for their child or children. It is my practice to initially meet with the family before moving the matter forward. I work positively with Officers to achieve the best outcomes for the families concerned.

Four years ago we had two youngsters in the care system at University this year there will be fourteen which is a marvellous achievement by the ELAC Virtual School Team – they have made such a difference.

I believe the Childre's Champion is the most rewarding position to be in and that we should all try and help young people with sometimes very challenging backgrounds to get a good start in life.

County Councillor Tim Swales