

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

10th October 2012

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1.0 Since the last meeting of the County Council the Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee met for its scheduled meeting on the 14th September 2012. The next Mid-Cycle Briefing, using three-way video conferencing, is arranged for the 19th October.

2.0 **14th September 2012 – Committee Meeting – Items included on the agenda:-**

2.1 Executive Member's Update

Executive Members provided the Committee with updates and responded to questions regarding:

- Maintenance of tenanted properties on school sites
- Review of Pupil Referral Services
- Sale of playing fields
- Protocol for changes to Children's Centre management
- Effect of GCSE grade boundary changes in North Yorkshire

2.2 Changes to the Adoption process

As Chairman I received correspondence from County Councillor Caroline Patmore regarding her concerns about the government's changes to the adoption process. She asked that the Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee request a briefing from the Corporate Director of the Children & Young People's Service (CYPS) regarding the Action Plan for Adoption which was published in March 2012.

The Committee were advised that following significant interest by the government the Action Plan for Adoption addresses three main areas which impact directly on North Yorkshire's Adoption Service and the wider functioning of Children's Social Care and that all relate to the speed and effectiveness of different aspects of the service.

In summary the Action Plan for Adoption challenges councils to increase the speed with which decisions are made about whether a Looked After Child should be adopted and when such a decision has been made, the speed with which they are placed with their adoptive parents; the government wants a significantly faster process for the preparation and assessment of prospective adopters with the current intention being that it will take no more than six months from initial enquiry to becoming an approved adopter, and a "score card" will be introduced which will be published annually to measure performance of each adoption agency against nationally determined target timescales – the intention being that the target will reduce over a four year period.

The Committee was assured that North Yorkshire is reasonably well placed to respond to the Action Plan whilst retaining quality of decision and assessment. Currently North Yorkshire Adoption Service is within the target threshold and deemed to be in an improving position.

2.3 School Funding Arrangements for 2013/14

The Committee was reminded that over the last two years there have been a number of consultations on school funding issues and that the Committee has received updates regarding the County Council's response to each of the consultations.

Members were provided with an overview of the final decision taken by the Department for Education and were advised that the government continues to state that it will work towards a "national funding formula" although this will not be before the next Spending Review period (i.e. after 2015). In High Needs, funding for this provision will be arranged on an equivalent basis across different types of providers and there are some changes to the role of the Schools Forum.

The underlying principle of the new regime will be "maximum delegation" which is not so very different from where we are currently in North Yorkshire. In future all school formulae will only be able to include components from a list of 12 allowable factors. Whichever combination of factors NYCC decides to use there will be significant winners and losers among our schools, although there will be a time-limited transition/protection period. There are also concerns about the lump sum and the impact this will have in drawing resources away from pupil-led funding.

The proposals also encompass a change in the way Academies are funded which in principle places Academies back on a level of funding which is consistent with Local Authority maintained schools, which is welcomed.

2.4 Update from NHS Colleagues on the Commissioning and Provision of Child Health Services

Colleagues from NHS North Yorkshire & York (the PCT) had been invited to update the Committee on the current position in relation to Health Visitors. We learnt that due to the significant financial pressure being experienced by the PCT a decision has been taken to withdraw the proposed increased funding for the Health Visitor budget 2012/2013. The Corporate Director is aware of the recent decision taken and discussions will be taking place to assess the impact on the Children & Young People's Service and meeting the Healthy Child Programme.

A progress report has been requested and the NHS Commissioners will be attending the meeting in November to update the Committee.

2.5 Meeting the Needs of Children & Young People with Autism

Following widespread consultation on the draft Autism Strategy Members of the Committee were provided with a digest of responses for their consideration and an opportunity to add any comments or issues for inclusion in the report to the Executive Members in October.

Members raised their concerns regarding the transition of young people with autism into adulthood and were advised that a joint CYPS and HAS (Health and Adult Services) senior officer group is progressing this work which the Committee will monitor with interest.

2.6 In-depth Scrutiny Review on Youth Participation

The Task Group presented their draft final report to Members of the Committee which was well received.

Cllr John Batt, as Chairman of the Task Group felt they had met their objective which was to meet, talk and listen to groups of young people about youth participation and what it means to them. He added that not only had this scrutiny review improved communications between young people and County Councillors but that it had also encouraged the three youth councils to talk to one another and share their ideas to shape the future of Youth Voice in North Yorkshire. The three councils represent a) young people generally b) Looked After Children and c) Special Needs Children.

Feedback from the Youth Councils involved has been positive: they are pleased to see that young people are on the agenda of the County Council and the report will now be presented to the Executive in October.

3.0 And finally I would like to mention the outstanding achievements of North Yorkshire's GCSE and A level students who have maintained the high levels of success of previous years. Indications show that the county's students overall performed above the national and regional average.

County Councillor Keith Barnes
Chairman
Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
October 2012