

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 DECEMBER 2012

STATEMENT OF SCHOOLS PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ARTHUR BARKER

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 Directorate exceeded its target of £9.150m by over £2.6m.

The target for 2012-13 is £2.8m and we are on course to achieve this – in fact we again expect to make savings earlier than anticipated in some cases. This is part of a 5-year total of £23.2m, of which over 80% was achieved in the first two years, 2010-12.

The Directorate is facing a number of cost pressures over the next few years, principally arising from external changes in policy and legislation (e.g. troubled families, costs of secure remand and the transfer of responsibilities from the Young People's Learning Agency) and is committed to meeting these pressures from within its own resources.

A specific MTFs reserve for the Directorate has been set up to ensure that cash savings are achieved over the next four 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 our joint responsibility for all the relevant resources.

School Funding Reform

Following my last briefing on school funding and in addition to the paper being presented to Council today which sets out the decisions and recommendations from the Schools Forum and Executive, I would like to report that Councillor Keith Barnes, Chair of the Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and I, met with the Schools Minister, David Laws, on 5 December. In that meeting we expressed our concerns – already shared widely with Members – about the government's proposals for school funding and in particular the impact of its restricted formula on schools and children in North Yorkshire.

We are pleased to note that the government has, following concerns raised by this and other Councils and schools, now already promised a review of that formula although we expressed disappointment that its implementation will proceed in April, despite the flaws which have led to the Department's decision on immediate review. Our proposal to pause whilst this took place was rejected.

Nevertheless, officers are doing all they can, within the rules and regulations set out by the Department for Education, to minimise the pain for schools during that first year (when the review will take place) and we will ensure that we contribute fully to it to ensure the best possible outcome for schools in the county.

OfSTED inspections of schools

This September saw the implementation of a new Ofsted framework for inspecting – this is the second this year and the fourth in the past two years.

Put simply the framework rules how a school will be inspected and judged. The changes to this latest framework include:

- new categories – including the judgement of ‘requiring improvement’
- schools only being notified of inspections the day before;
- greater emphasis on quality of teaching;
- leadership of governors being rolled together with that of the Head
- importantly the views of the school by local authority being formally taken into account.

So far North Yorkshire schools have fared well under the latest framework. There has been 34 inspections - four have been outstanding ; 27 have been at least good; three require improvement and one in special measures.

Highlights include:

- Crayke and Cracoe and Rylstone – both outstanding in all areas
- Brayton high being removed from a category, There is no LA secondary in North Yorkshire in an Ofsted Category of concern

LA OfSTED report

OfSTED published the annual report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education on the 27 November. Along with a number of changes to the report for this year OfSTED published a list of Local Authorities ranked according to the percentage of schools which were judged to be good or outstanding in their latest inspection. The data covered all maintained schools in each local authority, including academies, as of August 2012.

Based on these rankings North Yorkshire was placed in the second quintile for early years and in the third or middle quintile for primary and secondary schools. The numbers used are the percentages of a Local Authority’s pupils in schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted through inspections. Comparing these OfSTED rankings with the outcomes and progress of pupils across local authorities reveals weak correlation between the OfSTED view of schools and the outcomes for pupils. In relation to secondary schools, for example, pupil performance at GCSE ranks North Yorkshire as 14th nationally, which would be top quintile. There are similar mis-alignments in a significant number of other Local Authorities’ rankings. What this tells us, therefore, is that HMCI’s report is exploring one good question, but there is other evidence which also needs to be considered to get a complete and balanced picture.

Letter from Secretary of State to North Yorkshire MPs

Members will be aware that the Secretary of State wrote to local MPs and the press regarding performance in some North Yorkshire schools. Whilst there are some issues in a small number of schools, this is not a reflection of the situation in North Yorkshire as a whole. In 2011, 17 of 323 primary schools were below floor targets however this has fallen to eight in 2012. Considerable progress has been made in most areas in most of these schools. Although the Secretary of State stated a significant number of primary schools were judged by Ofsted to be unsatisfactory, the facts are that nine of the 323 primary schools are in an Ofsted category – one of the lower percentages in the country. Only one school was below floor target and in a category: that school closes on 31 December. In 2011 only one secondary school in North Yorkshire was in an Ofsted category and that school is an academy. Performance in secondary schools in the county places us 14th nationally with attainment well above the national average.

**County Councillor Arthur Barker
Executive Member for Schools**