

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 December 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 16th November September 2012. The Mid-Cycle Briefing, using three-way video conferencing, was held on the 14th December.

2.0 **16th December 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:

- The merger of Alverton and Bullamoor schools.
- The reported top-slicing of £150m from the Early Intervention Grant and how that might affect North Yorkshire.
- The recent Select Committee report suggesting that Local Authorities should be less reluctant to take children into Care and what is North Yorkshire's criteria for doing this?

Cllr Barker was also given an opportunity to explain the current position regarding a letter to North Yorkshire MPs from Michael Gove, not sent to the County Council, but seeking promotion of Academies. The letter contained inaccuracies and selective information.

2.2 **Universal Services 0-5 years – report from NHS North Yorkshire & York (NHS NY&Y, the Primary Care Trust(PCT))**

This follow up briefing by the PCT Commissioners was arranged in order to provide Members of the Committee with further detail on the potential implications of the recent financial decision taken in relation to the withdrawal of additional Health Visitor funding for 2012/13. Members duly noted the point that disappointment and frustration with the decision taken by NHS NY&Y have been expressed by North Yorkshire County Council and Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) which they considered to be short-sighted.

A representative from Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT), providers of the service 0-5, advised the meeting that they are in a contractual dispute with the Primary Care Trust regarding the withdrawal of funding for the three additional wte Health Visitors who are already in post, adding that the pause in the investment for 2012/13 would have an impact on how they could progress some of the planned expansion towards full delivery of the Healthy Child Programme.

The Committee will continue to monitor this important issue and have requested a progress report from the PCT Commissioners on the Local Area Team's decision regarding Health Visitor funding for 2013/14.

2.3 **Ofsted Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children, 1 – 10 October 2012**

The Corporate Director advised the Committee that the overall effectiveness of the arrangements to protect children in North Yorkshire County Council is judged to be 'Adequate'. She explained in detail the process behind the Ofsted Inspection which evaluated many services at each stage of 'the child's journey'; from those children who are identified as being at potential risk through to those who are referred to children's social care and require formal protection arrangements.

The report contained many positive references to the council's child protection services. A number of paragraphs within the inspection report referred to the work of the committee and a recommendation that elected members should routinely scrutinise the effectiveness of child protection and preventative work which is evidenced by feedback from children and young people. The Committee agreed to contribute to the development of the Post Inspection Action Plan and will work with officers in the Children and Young People's Service to agree the format for future six monthly briefings on child protection and preventative work.

2.4 Ofsted Inspection of NYCC Fostering Service

At the suggestion of the Executive Lead Member a report on the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service was brought to the attention of the Committee. We were advised that the overall rating had been judged to be 'Satisfactory' and were briefed on the strengths identified and the areas for development.

Members heard that North Yorkshire County Council's response to the recommendations has been set out in an Action Plan with the majority of its items having been actioned immediately.

2.5 Alternative Provision and Support

Members of the Committee had requested a briefing paper on the range of provision made available for children educated outside mainstream school.

The briefing included information on the eight primary schools in North Yorkshire that have been enhanced to support and work with primary-aged children with challenging behaviours and also provide support to younger children with medical needs. Information was provided on the five Pupil Referral Units across North Yorkshire with an explanation on the statutory and discretionary/preventative services provided; Special Schools; Out of County Placements and Behaviour and Attendance Support.

The Committee were pleased to note that there were no permanent primary exclusions since 2010 and that secondary exclusions had reduced further to 32. Some concern was expressed about possible major changes to funding for the Harrogate Pupil Referral Unit.

2.6 Next In-depth Scrutiny Review

Members of the Committee agreed to re-visit the Scrutiny Review on Health Visiting and School Nursing which had recorded their interest in the awaited review by the Government on *Maximising the contribution of the school nursing team: Vision and Call to Action*. This review has been published and a Task and Finish Group chaired by Cllr Andrew Backhouse will meet with the providers of the School Nursing Service to look at how this impacts on the current service and in the light of the PCT's financial decision to withdraw additional Health Visitor funding for 2012/13.

3.0 And finally

The meeting on 19th November was the last meeting of the Committee that the Corporate Director, Cynthia Welbourn would attend. On behalf of the Committee I thanked her for her many years of dedicated service. In her role she had to work with many different stakeholders – children, staff, parents, teachers, civil servants, health and other partners and, of course, inquisitive Members of Council. She was a consummate professional and a caring professional. The committee wished her well in her retirement.

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