

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 FEBRUARY 2015

STATEMENT OF SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS PORTFOLIO HOLDER

COUNTY COUNCILLOR ARTHUR BARKER

Medium Term Financial Strategy & 2020 North Yorkshire

The Children and Young People's Service has continued to meet its savings targets. The scale of budget savings required – and achieved to date, whilst maintaining and at times improving service delivery, has been a significant challenge. The objective has been to protect front-line services as much as possible, thus enabling a restructured Directorate to operate effectively across its universal, preventative, targeted and acute service responsibilities, in line with legislation.

We are now coming to the end of the original MTFs a period of four years in which, the Directorate will have made savings of over £20m. As members will be aware, the Council faces continuing work to deliver a balanced budget over the period 2015-19 and the Directorate has made a robust start to delivering its part of the collective programme. 2015-16 will see the implementation of some major transformation programmes, as are outlined in the budget report, including the review of Preventative Services and a new way of delivering school improvement.

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 relevant resources.

School Improvement

As mentioned in my statement to November's Council, work is continuing to implement the recommendations of the Commission for School Improvement which focuses on a move to greater sector-led improvement with Headteachers and collaboratives playing a more significant role in school improvement. The implementation of the Education Partnership and the Improvement Partnerships are being planned to take place in the summer term. During this period there will be the election of the Chairs and the first meetings of both groups. We will see groups, made up of Headteachers, for Primary, Early Years, Special and Secondary working with LA staff in the new Improvement Partnerships. Mini-conferences have been held in five areas of the county explaining again how the implementation will work. These are being attended by both Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.

The school improvement service restructure is in the consultation period. Two further staff sessions will be held to share emerging thoughts with colleagues and to respond further to questions. Feedback from the staff consultation will be considered by The Executive in March when approval to implement the new structure will be sought.

OfSTED Outcomes

Ofsted data, as at 10 January 2015, showed that 80% of primary schools and 71% of secondary schools in North Yorkshire are good or outstanding with 78% of primary and 78% of secondary pupils attending good or better schools in North Yorkshire. The proportion of pupils attending good or better schools has improved since July 2014 by 1.6% at primary and by 1.8% at secondary, whilst the national averages have improved by 1.7% at primary and improved by 1.3% at secondary. This compares with national averages for the percentage of schools being good or outstanding at 82% for primary and 72% for secondary. Nationally, 81% of primary pupils and 76% of secondary pupils attend schools which are good or outstanding.

There are now only two primary schools in an Ofsted category – Farnley and Skipton St Stephen's. We are seeing effective progress in Farnley and are working with both schools to accelerate progress. Barrowcliff Junior and Braeburn Junior have merged with their respective infant schools, as a result they lose their previous serious weakness judgements. The Local Authority (LA) continues to provide intensive support to both schools and is working closely with Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who continue to be satisfied with the overall progress being made.

There are currently two secondary schools in special measures - Graham School and Filey School. Aireville School, which had been in special measures, has become the Skipton Academy with sponsorship from the Craven Education Trust. HMI are pleased with the progress that Graham School is making towards the removal of special measures. Filey School will convert to academy status in the summer, under the sponsorship of the Ebor Academy Trust in York and the LA is working closely with Ebor to ensure a smooth transition. We are pleased with the positive monitoring report by Ofsted on the progress being now made at Graham School.

February 15 Statement Forest Moor (formerly Foremost) School

Forest Moor received an HMI monitoring visit in November 2014. Having considered all the evidence the HMI reported that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures. HMI was pleased to note the new vision and ethos of the school developed in collaboration with staff and students, together with effective management of pupil behaviour and observation of lively and engaging lessons. Pupils in Upper Key Stage 2 have been admitted to the school and, since the November HMI visit, a new Key Stage 3 class has been established. The staffing restructure has been completed with a number of new appointments to be made to start at the end of April 2015. The local authority continues to monitor and evaluate the arrangements in place, and this will incorporate a local authority review of the school in February 2015.

School Funding

In my last update to Council, I noted that, following lobbying by this and other Councils, North Yorkshire had been allocated additional funding of £9.8m. All of this will be passed directly to schools and equates to an increase of 3.1% per pupil for 2015/16.

Consultation on the home to school transport policy

Approval has been given to public consultation on proposals to remove two areas of discretionary provision from the home to school and college transport policy in order to meet the target saving in the 2020NY programme. Since 2010/11 savings of £3.9m have been made in the budget for home to school and college transport. By 2020 further savings of £325k have to be made in the current budget of £20.5m.

It is proposed to provide free transport for pupils aged 8-11 who live over three miles from their normal school (which is a statutory requirement) but not for those who live between two and three miles from that school, which is the Council's current discretionary policy. This would be introduced for new admissions to school from September 2016. Most of the estimated 520 pupils who would be affected would be able to purchase a bus pass, currently priced at £380 per annum.

It is also proposed to cease to provide free transport for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who move house and their parents wish them to remain at the school at which their GCSE courses commenced. Their parents would be responsible for any transport arrangements and costs.

The consultation ends on 11 March and will be reported to the Executive in May following consideration by the Young People's overview and Scrutiny Committee in April.

Universal Infant Free School Meals

In November I reported that, to help this initiative, the government had announced that it was making available a fund of £20m for kitchen improvements and invited bids from Local Authorities. I am pleased to say that we have had some success with this and have been notified that three of our schools will benefit from this programme with a combined allocation of over £600K.

This is in addition to the £1,3m allocated for capital work reported in previous statements. Officers are working through a number of feasibility studies and proposals will be brought forward shortly regarding how best to use this limited funding, with work expected to be carried out during 2015.

Our early indications showed that take-up of the offer was around 85%. This has since increased to nearer 90%.

School Organisation

It has been a very busy period in terms of school developments, and I expect that this will continue for some time.

Construction work has recently been completed for the long-planned primary school building to replace High Bentham Community Primary School. The school will transfer into the new building immediately after February half term.

Following consultation in 2014 statutory proposals were published in January for the amalgamation of Northallerton College and Allertonshire School. A final decision will be taken in March. If agreed the change will come into effect on 2 April.

Following consultation in 2014 with stakeholders in Sowerby (Thirsk) it has been decided in principle that a new primary school should be provided to serve families occupying new homes in the Sowerby Gateway development. Legislation requires that this will be an Academy for which a sponsor will be sought in due course. The opening of the new school will be dependent on the speed with which the new homes are occupied but is expected to be by September 2017.

A planning application is expected to be approved shortly for the construction of a new primary school to serve the Staynor Hall area of Selby town. The construction of the school is expected to commence in February for opening in September 2016. Again, the school will be an Academy and a final decision on a sponsor for the running of the school is currently awaited from the DfE.

In January 2015 statutory proposals were published for the expansion of Kirk Fenton Parochial CE School to provide additional pupil places. A final decision will be taken on 24 February 2015.

A consultation is currently under-way on a proposal to expand Norton Community Primary School onto an additional site in Norton, currently a Youth Centre, to provide additional pupil places in response to growth. Responses to the consultation will be considered by the Executive on 17 March 2015.

Schools' Capital Programme

A capital maintenance programme for schools for 2015/16 will be considered by the Executive in April, subject to the announcement by DfE of capital allocations. Also awaited are the outcomes of bids for further investment in school kitchens arising from the Universal Infant Free School Meals policy and bids for the replacement of school buildings under the Priority School Buildings Programme 2. Further announcements are expected in the very near future.

Use of Children's Centre Buildings

We have continued to consult with local communities on proposals to change the use of some of our children's centre buildings. Following those positive consultations we have enabled premises in Grassington and Catterick (Le Cateau) to be used by the schools to provide additional school places or by local early years providers to increase the numbers of childcare places. DfE approval was gained to the change of use at Le Cateau to ensure that they would not claw back the capital previously granted to build the centre.

This term consultations have taken place on the future of our children's centre building on the site of Easingwold Community Primary school and proposals will follow that, involving the school. Consultations are now also planned in Skipton, Filey and Whitley over the next few weeks, aiming as ever for local solutions which are supported by the communities. Finally we are starting to merge the management of children's centres, to enable them to be run more efficiently and effectively. Mergers have taken place between two centres in Harrogate, two in Scarborough, two in Whitby and those in Colburn and Catterick.

County Councillor Arthur Barker
Executive Member for Schools and Early Years