

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

22 JULY 2020

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN

YOUNG PEOPLES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Firstly, can I thank my Vice Chairman, Cllr Gill Quinn for chairing our last meeting late February.

Small Schools

Members noted the number of small schools, especially those in rural areas, which were finding it difficult to manage the financial pressures. To better understand this, and the role the authority plays, members examined recent cases of local authority maintained schools which had proceeded to full closure. Some themes stood out:

- a) Low pupil numbers - A drop in numbers increases concern around the financial sustainability of the school and its ability to provide good quality education.
- b) Breadth of curriculum - Small school with declining numbers on roll limits the range of personal and academic challenges.
- c) Adverse Financial position - Pupil numbers determine a school's budget. A number of schools had an in-year deficit position. "The local authority's ability to support schools experiencing financial difficulties is now limited and small schools became vulnerable following the introduction of a national funding formula which is largely driven by pupil numbers".
- d) Leadership – problems recruiting leadership teaching staff.

Members were pleased that the directorate had set out the position clearly and appropriately. In the light of information given and the evidence in front of them, members concluded that the directorate had demonstrated a clear understanding of the issues, founded on robust information and data, with procedures and practices being well thought through and carried out effectively.

Teacher recruitment

Recruitment within a wide range of sectors can be challenging for North Yorkshire; as areas such as the Coast and the North Yorkshire Moors have challenges around mobility i.e. people coming to the areas to retire and skilled graduates moving to bigger cities for tailored opportunities and lifestyles. This has a knock on effect: with house prices around the picturesque villages being above average housing is out of the price range for graduates and young people preventing them access to the property ladder.

This, together with small schools providing limited career development opportunities due to their size, and the prospect of long challenging commutes to change roles, increases longevity of teachers in role. Whilst retention is positive in terms of consistency it limits growth, progression, skill development and can slow the adoption of modern methods whilst limiting opportunities for newly qualified teachers.

With long service and experience comes higher pay under teaching terms and conditions, in school budgets this inevitably means fewer staff. When a vacancy occurs the challenge is

therefore greater, and the gap has significant impact. The challenges identified above are reflected in the limited diversity of teachers in LA schools across North Yorkshire.

These challenges are most acute in the North Yorkshire Coastal Area. In response, a workforce planning and teacher recruitment solution has been implemented resulting in over 125 education professionals being appointed to coastal schools, and the financial benefits of saving advertising spend (estimated £21k) and avoid of requiring supply teachers (estimated £560k per term).

In addition to the specialist recruitment support the Opportunity Area has funded relocation and recruitment incentives package to attract teachers and their families to the area which reimburses for stamp duty, estate agency fees and moving costs for example. The committee was pleased to learn of this initiative through which we have welcomed 27 education professionals to the coast

Overall the committee believed the response given demonstrated that the directorate has a good understating of the challenge and is doing what it can to help.

Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

We had planned at our June meeting to review progress on the SEND Strategic Plan. This meeting was, of course, cancelled. So I was grateful for the opportunity for group spokespersons to be briefed virtually and informally on the progress against the SEND strategy. We were all pleased and impressed at how much has been achieved across the whole scope of the strategy.

Also in relation to SEND, the Executive has recently considered proposals for Special Educational Needs in the form of Targeted Provision at Mainstream Schools and to formally remove Special Educational Needs Provisions from former Enhanced Mainstream Schools. I know members will be keen to review the results of the consultation process on these important proposals.

I understand that formal scrutiny may not return until the Autumn. In the meantime, it is important we keep as connected as we can. That's why I am keen to build on the success of this first informal meeting by holding further member-led briefings, bringing in more of the committee membership as we go. There is much for members to discuss informally. In doing so I will be mindful of the pressures staff are under in these difficult times

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET JEFFERSON

9 July 2020