

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2006 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Heather Garnett in the Chair.

County Councillors Michelle Andrew, Andrew Backhouse, John Blackburn, John Fletcher, Tony Hall, Christopher Pearson, Caroline Seymour and Brian Simpson.

Members other than County Councillors:- Michael Barrie (Parent Governor), Robert Fothergill (Non-conformist Church) and Helen Suckling (Parent Governor).

In attendance – Executive Member Caroline Patmore.

Officers:- Stephanie Bratcher, Judith Johnson, John Lee, Paul Nixon and Jane Wilkinson.

Apologies for Absence on behalf of County Councillors Elizabeth Casling and Melva Steckles and Maggie Allen and Gill Gentle.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

57. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July, 2006, having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

58. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

The Committee was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

59. CHANGE OF AGENDA ORDER

RESOLVED –

That the next item of business be Agenda Item 7 'Criminal Records Disclosure Service'.

60. CRIMINAL RECORDS DISCLOSURE SERVICE

CONSIDERED -

The report of the Head of Facilities Management seeking Members comments on the draft policy document for the Criminal Records Disclosure Service.

Judith Johnson presented her report and informed the Committee that it was her intention once the Policy had been approved to develop a set of performance indicators to be used to monitor the future performance of the service. It was also her intention to use the indicators to monitor the performance of external bodies. She anticipated that in the future this monitoring regime would eventually form part of the policy document itself. At present resources had still to be identified to do this work as currently staff were working to capacity processing CRB applications. She informed Members of the results of an assurance test recently conducted by the Criminal Records Bureau on the Service. The County Council had been awarded a mark of 98.6% for accuracy compared to the national average of 82%. Members praised Judith Johnson for this excellent result and hoped that the high standards of practice already achieved would continue in the future.

Members noted the proposal to develop a service level agreement/contract document for use by external organisations. Once finalised the document would be made available to all schools and other sites within the County where there are children and vulnerable adults present. The document would also be a useful source of advice and guidance. Judith Johnson stated that in her view the current situation whereby there is no charge imposed for checks on "volunteers" may change due to the increased number of applications being processed in this way. Current advice from the Criminal Records Bureau stated that there was no need for School Governors to be CRB checked. The practice in North Yorkshire however was for School Governors to be CRB checked as "volunteers". Guidance on this point had already been issued to all schools in the County.

In response to a question from Members Judith Johnson stated that re-checks were carried out on a three year cycle with individuals being identified by the software.

The Committee was advised that there was still further work to do with Contractors. Whilst the County Council's Home to School Transport Service had a robust checking system in place, other contractors who accessed schools and other sites regularly such as plumbers, electricians and staff on new construction sites were not required to undergo a CRB check. Negotiations had been opened with Jacobs and progress in this area was being made. Members expressed concern that this might be a step too far as it would be almost impossible in practice to monitor effectively all contractors. Judith Johnson stated that it was her intention to introduce a system for measured term contractors only.

Members sought clarification of the position regarding the County Council employing foreign nationals. Judith Johnson advised that this was an area of concern as the County Council was employing increasing numbers of foreign nationals especially people from eastern European countries where it was proving difficult to obtain relevant CRB documentation. The latest advice from the Criminal Records Bureau was being closely followed by the County Council in that certificates of good conduct were required to be produced. Production of this certificate by people from European Union countries was straightforward but was proving much more difficult for people from eastern block countries. The County Council had engaged the services of an agency to obtain relevant documentation and conduct translations where necessary.

Members were very reassured by what they had heard that day but commented that total reliance on CRB check results was not foolproof as they could not identify first offenders. County Councillor Tony Hall stated that all schools had a responsibility to ensure that they had systems in place to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults whilst on their premises as the protection offered by CRB checks was not in itself sufficient.

The Committee was advised that letters had been written to all Members advising them that if they did not consent to being CRB checked then their ability to carry out the full range of member duties may be restricted. At the date of the meeting approximately 80% of Members had undertaken a CRB check. With regard to any positive disclosures received then the Chief Executive together with the Head of Legal Services would determine the course of action to be followed.

It was pointed out that a positive disclosure would not always be a bar to employment. Some convictions such as driving offences meant that line managers had to make a judgment decision.

The Chairman thanked Judith Johnson for her attendance and for providing the Committee with an opportunity to comment on the draft policy.

RESOLVED -

(i) That the content of the draft policy document be noted.

(ii) That the Committee receives a regular Annual Performance Monitoring Report on the Criminal Records Disclosure Service in North Yorkshire.

61. INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SYSTEM

Paul Nixon the Assistant Director – Children's Social Care gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the drivers behind the legislation that had introduced Children's Services and explained the legal framework within the context of North Yorkshire. Copies of the presentation slides were tabled at the meeting. He described the new structures within the Directorate which were designed to improve better inter-agency working. Two multi-agency training days had been organised on 27/28 October and Paul Nixon extended an invitation to all Members of the Committee to attend if they so wished.

The Committee was informed of the Government's ambitious plans for multi-agency information sharing and of the grants available for this work. In practice however development of the necessary software was proving very difficult. The associated delays and problems being experienced were of national concern. Paul Nixon confirmed his intention to bring a further report to the Committee on information sharing systems.

The Chairman thanked Paul Nixon for his overview of the new integrated Children's System which had been both informative and helpful.

RESOLVED -

(i) That the content of the presentation be noted.

(ii) That the Committee receive a further report on information sharing systems in due course.

62. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

CONSIDERED -

The Report of the Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service on development of the Children and Young People's block of the Local Area Agreement.

John Lee described each of the indicators in turn and outlined the proposed targets.

Members commented that the 'enjoy and achieve' targets focused on achievement as opposed to enjoyment. County Councillor Tony Hall commented that the target for the percentage of schools achieving the quality standards for inclusion was low.

The Chairman thanked John Lee for his report which set the Committee's Scrutiny Review of Sport Provision in North Yorkshire into context.

RESOLVED -

(i) That the content of the report be noted.

(ii) That the Committee receive regular progress reports on performance of the targets in the Children and Young People's block of the Local Area Agreement.

63. SPORTS PROVISION IN NORTH YORKSHIRE

The Committee received a presentation from Heather Newman the Health and Well Being Advisor on how the PE, School Sport and Club Links Strategy was being implemented in North Yorkshire. She described the structure of School Sports Partnerships-Hubs and the links between the Strategy and the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.

The Chairman requested that Members of the Committee are supplied with a copy of the Development Plan of these strategies. Members were advised that it was for individual schools to decide what their needs were as opposed to having decisions about which sports were eligible imposed upon them. The purpose of the Strategy was to build capacity and to create opportunities. The Chairman thanked Heather Newman for an excellent presentation which provided the Committee with a direct lead into its next Scrutiny Review of Sports Provision in North Yorkshire.

The Chairman announced her intention to organise a planning/scoping event for the review on the morning of 20 October 2006 to which all Members of the Committee were invited to attend. The venue for the scoping event had yet to be determined but she hoped to organise a venue in the east of the County.

RESOLVED -

(i) That the content of the presentation be noted.

(ii) That a scoping event for the Committee's review of Sporting Provision in North Yorkshire be held on 20 October 2006 and invitations sent to all Members of the Committee.

64. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHAMPION

County Councillor Tony Hall described his actions following his appointment as Young People's Champion. His role as he saw it was to promote participation by young people in the County Council's business and to provide feedback to them. He confirmed that written copies of his report would be circulated to all Members of the County Council and the added Members of the Committee. He drew Members attention to issues he considered needed further attention such as bullying, race relations and further development of work with children and young people with disabilities.

The Chairman congratulated County Councillor Tony Hall on his enthusiasm in developing his role and on the work he had done to date. She referred to work being conducted by the Safe and Sustainable Overview and Scrutiny Committee into the role of champions and the need for structure to help define their roles.

The Chairman noted Councillor Hall's concerns in respect of bullying and race relations and agreed that these matters should be added to the Committee's future Work Programme.

RESOLVED -

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That 'bullying' and 'race relations' be added to the Committee's future Work Programme.

65. EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE

County Councillor Caroline Patmore stated that this was the first of what was to be a regular feature of future meetings of the Committee. The report would be presented on an alternate basis between herself and County Councillor John Watson. She proceeded to give an overview of current issues within the Children and Young People's Service Directorate. She urged all Members to attend the forthcoming SEN Seminar and give an overview of the exam results of looked after children and initial indications of feedback given by the JAR inspectors.

Members noted increased referral activity on the Child Protection Register and suggested that this situation was monitored by the Corporate Parenting Group and referred to the Committee for investigation if necessary.

RESOLVED -

That the content of the report be noted.

66. WORK PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED -

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance advising Members of:-

- (a) The outcome of the first Triumvirate Group meeting.
- (b) Matters discussed at the last Mid-cycle Briefing.

Stephanie Bratcher introduced the report and guided Members through the Committee's Work Programme highlighting key areas.

The Chairman announced that she had received requests from Members for the start time of future meetings of the Committee to be brought forward to 10.00 am. To give all Members of the Committee an opportunity to contribute to a discussion on this proposal a report on this subject would be placed on the next agenda. She referred to matters raised earlier in the meeting and sought the agreement of the Committee for them to be included in the Committee's future Work Programme.

County Councillor Michelle Andrew referred to a matter she had raised at a previous meeting regarding playground safety and asked that this be brought forward.

RESOLVED -

- (i) That the information contained in the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Committee's Work Programme be amended to include:

1. Start time of meetings.
2. The role of independent reviewing Officers.
3. Multi-agency information sharing systems.
4. Bullying.
5. Race Relations.
6. Playground Safety.

67. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Community Education Joint Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Chairman reported that the first meeting of the Community Education Joint Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee had been held on 7 September 2006. At that meeting the Sub-Committee had resolved to establish a task group that would contribute to the post implementation review of Community Adult and Youth Learning Services that would take place in March 2007. Any Member of the Committee wishing to join the task group was asked to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer outside of the meeting.

JW/HP