

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2007 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Heather Garnett in the Chair.

County Councillors Michelle Andrew, Andrew Backhouse, John Blackburn, Elizabeth Casling, Tony Hall, Michael Heseltine, Christopher Pearson, Caroline Seymour, Brian Simpson, Jim Snowball and Melva Steckles.

Members other than County Councillors:- Michael Barrie (Parent Governor), Mrs Helen Suckling (Parent Governor) and Judith Bromfield (Voluntary Sector).

In attendance:- Executive Member County Councillor John Watson.

Present by invitation:- County Councillor Paul Richardson.

Officers:- Stephanie Bratcher (Scrutiny Support Officer), Bernadette Jones, Jan Taylor, Nigel Ogle and Chris McGee (Children and Young People's Service), George Bateman (Finance), Richard Owens (Integrated Passenger Transport) and Jane Wilkinson (Committee Services).

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of County Councillor David Heather and Maggie Allen and Gill Gentle (Voluntary Sector).

One member of the public.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

75. MINUTES

Members called for greater consistency in the production of future Minutes. In particular they were concerned that sometimes Members making points were named and at other times they were not.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2006, having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:-

Minute No 73 'Statutory Review of SEN and Behaviour Provision'
14th paragraph after the word "expressed" the remainder of the sentence to be deleted and replaced with the following "but there was still scope for debate about the points made".

76. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

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

77. EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT

CONSIDERED –

The report from County Councillor John Watson that identified and summarised some of the key issues facing the County Council in 2007.

Members discussed a variety of issues arising from falling rolls and requested further information on the associated cost and number of staff redundancies and the number of staff currently employed on fixed term contracts.

The Chairman referred Members to the Committee's Work Programme and pointed out that the Committee was due to receive a monitoring report on pupil numbers in North Yorkshire and on the affects of falling rolls at its meeting in June 2007. She requested that any Member requiring specific information on this topic should submit their request in writing to the Scrutiny Support Officer who would arrange for responses to be provided at the meeting in June.

A Member drew the attention of County Councillor John Watson to the problems and difficulties experienced by North Yorkshire schools when dealing with the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO). County Councillor John Watson stated that he was aware of the situation and had been led to believe that the problems were food related only. The difficulties had arisen following the installation of a new IT system by YPO and were transitional in nature and the situation was already improving. North Yorkshire County Council whilst represented on the Board of YPO did not have a majority holding. Any delivery failure was therefore the responsibility of the management of YPO. He assured Members that he would continue to monitor the situation closely.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked County Councillor John Watson for his attendance and the information he had provided to the Committee.

RESOLVED –

1. That the content of the Executive Member's progress report be noted.
2. That the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Services provide the Committee with written details on the cost and numbers of school staff made redundant as a result of falling rolls together with details of those staff currently employed on fixed term contracts.
3. That further requests from Members for information on pupil numbers and the affects of falling rolls be forwarded in writing to the Scrutiny Support Officer in readiness for the meeting of the Committee in June 2007.

78. WORK PROGRAMME AND START TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance asking Members to agree the start time for future meetings of the Committee, note the changes made to Committee meeting dates in 2007 and confirm, amend or add to the lists of matters shown on the Work Programme attached as Annex A of the report.

Members wished to ensure that the Committee continued to monitor the implementation of the SEN Review as effectively as possible and suggested that task groups be established to monitor both the use of delegated resources and implementation as described in the Work Programme. The Chairman agreed that this was an important task for the Committee and said she would discuss with the

Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s how best to do this within the resources available to the Committee and would report back to Members at the next meeting of the Committee.

Race Relations - Michael Barrie suggested that more inclusive title for this item be found to better reflect cultural diversity. He offered his services to lead a piece of work in this field. The Chairman appreciated Mr Barrie’s offer but pointed out that the Committee was already committed to an in-depth scrutiny review on sports provision and that the Committee did not have sufficient resources to undertake a further in-depth review at this time.

Members agreed that Race Relations be renamed Young People and Diversity and the item be added to the list of in-depth scrutiny reviews to be undertaken by the Committee in the future.

Evaluation of the Performance of the Children and Young People’s Service - the Chairman suggested that partner agencies should be invited to contribute to this item scheduled for the May meeting. The Committee supported her suggestion and agreed that representatives from the North Yorkshire and York PCT be invited to attend the meeting.

After a brief discussion, Members voted to start future meetings of the Committee at 10.00 am in order to accommodate the heavy workload of the Committee.

Finally the Chairman 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.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the information contained in the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Committee’s Work Programme be amended to include:-
 - (i) Arrangements for monitoring the SEN Review to be brought to the next meeting of the Committee
 - (ii) Partnership arrangements in the report to the Committee on Evaluating Performance of the Children and Young People’s Service
 - (iii) Young People and Diversity as a future topic for an in-depth scrutiny review.
- (iii) That future meetings of the Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee will normally commence at 10.00 am.

79. THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service outlining the role of Independent Reviewing Officers. The report was in response to a request made at a previous meeting and Jan Taylor stated that the Briefing Checklist devised by the Committee had been extremely useful when drafting the report.

Members were assured that the appointment of Independent Reviewing Officers would not result in the termination of an independent advocacy service for looked after children in North Yorkshire.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

80. REVISED AGENDA ORDER

RESOLVED –

That the Order of Business be amended so that the next item of business to be considered is agenda item 8 'Annual Report from the Corporate Parenting Group'.

81. ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CORPORATE PARENTING GROUP

County Councillor Paul Richardson introduced his report that described the Group's activities which coincided with some of the proposals contained in the Government Green Paper 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care'.

Members noted the work of the Corporate Parenting Group and were pleased that Member awareness of looked after issues had been recognised by Inspectors in the JAR report.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

82. GOVERNMENT GREEN PAPER CARE MATTERS: TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

The Chairman resolved that this item be dealt with as an urgent item of business as the deadline for receipt of responses to the consultation was 15 January 2007.

At the request of the Chairman Jan Taylor gave a summary of the proposals contained in the Green Paper and described the consultation process undertaken by the County Council. Members were advised that Paul Nixon the Assistant Director – Children and Social Care was responsible for the co-ordination and drafting of the County Council's response to the Green Paper. Comments made by Members during the meeting would be fed back to Paul Nixon who was also happy to receive individual Members comments direct via email.

Members supported the need for reform and welcomed the opportunity the Committee had been given to shape future legislation. Some Members however were critical of the lack of notice given in which to formulate a response and requested that future consultations are brought to the attention of the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Members were advised that the Green Paper suggested that young people upon reaching age 16 were often no longer provided with accommodation by local authorities. However, officer experience was often different, Officers frequently found that young people were keen to leave the care system on reaching their sixteenth birthday and that attempts to discourage them from this course of action quite often were to no avail.

At the invitation of the Chairman County Councillor Paul Richardson stated that the proposals contained in the Green Paper made it clear that the profile of corporate parents would be raised and that consequently he thought that the status of the County Council's Corporate Parenting Working Group should be reviewed.

Members supported in principal the proposals contained in the Green Paper and commented as follows:-

- Expressed disappointment that there was no reference to the role of elected members as Corporate Parents in the Green Paper.
- That many of the proposals contained in the Green Paper would require the provision of additional funding of which there was no mention.
- That there should be provision for looked after young people leaving care at age 16 to have access to on-going support or a mentor.

The Chairman thanked Jan Taylor for her attendance and for providing the Committee with the opportunity to participate in formulating a response to the consultation.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the comments made by Members during the meeting be referred to Paul Nixon, Assistant Director – Children’s Social Care.
- (ii) That Members forward any additional comments they may have on the Green Paper direct to Paul Nixon by Friday, 12 January 2007.
- (iii) That a copy of the County Council’s response to the Green Paper be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

83. ANTI-BULLYING MEASURES

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service on anti-bullying measures and the supervision of Young People in North Yorkshire at vulnerable times during school.

Copies of training materials supplied to schools were available for Members to inspect at the meeting.

County Councillor Caroline Seymour referred to her recent attendance at a seminar on Cyber Bullying and sought assurances that strategies and advice for dealing with this new method of bullying were covered in the training materials and anti-bullying policies of the County Council. Members were advised that Officers were aware of IT and mobile phone bullying and that advice on these matters was included in new guidance currently being drafted.

Members were disappointed at the number of schools/governors who had not accessed the available support outlined in the report. Members requested an update report on the take up by schools/governors of training opportunities be included in the Committee’s future Work Programme.

Members further suggested that in order to encourage schools to report accurately all incidents of bullying a mechanism is devised in order that this can be done in a positive way such as by recording outcomes and benefits.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That progress in delivery of anti-bullying measures is noted.
- (ii) That a further progress report on the uptake by schools/governors of anti-bullying training opportunities be referred to the Committee at the end of the year.

- (iii) That a copy of the revised guidance be circulated to all Members of the Committee when available.

84. POST 16 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT CHARGES

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service reviewing the impact of the County Council's decision to introduce charges for Post 16 Home to School/College Transport from September 2006 for new students.

At the request of Members Officers agreed to evaluate the benefits of the introduction of differential charging. Officers stated that there was no evidence that a student's choice of a college was in any way restricted by what they could afford. It was also acknowledged that scams to dodge paying fares were in operation.

The impact of the new Education and Inspection Bill would be the subject of a report to the Executive in February 2007. Changes outlined in the Bill included transport rules for denominational schools.

RESOLVED-

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Committee receive a briefing report on the impact of changes introduced in the New Education and Inspection Bill.

JW/ALJ