

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2007 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Heather Garnett in the Chair.

County Councillors John Blackburn, Elizabeth Casling, Tony Hall, Bill Houtt (as substitute for David Heather), Christopher Pearson, Caroline Seymour, Brian Simpson, Jim Snowball, Melva Steckles and Herbert Tindall (as substitute for Michael Heseltine).

Members other than County Councillors:- Michael Barrie (Parent Governor) and Mrs Helen Suckling (Parent Governor).

In attendance: - Executive Members County Councillor Caroline Patmore.

Officers:- Carolyn Bird, Stephanie Bratcher, Bernadette Jones, Stephen Loach, Pippa Manson, Sue Smith, Jan Taylor, Tony Turner and Cynthia Welbourn.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of County Councillors Michelle Andrew, Andrew Backhouse, David Heather and Michael Heseltine. Apologies were also received from non-voting member Rosemary Readman.

Two members of the public were also present.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

91. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2007, having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Arising from Minute Number 89 – Developing Local Democracy – the Chairman stated that the Committee would keep a close watch on this matter, with further updates being submitted to the Committee's mid-cycle briefing and to subsequent meetings of the Committee.

In relation to Minute Number 90 – North Yorkshire Youth Offending Team (YOT) it was noted that the YOT Action Improvement Plan was now available for circulation to Members.

92. 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.

93. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

CONSIDERED –

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance giving details of the Committee's work programme and requesting Members to confirm, amend or add to the list of matters shown in the work programme.

The Chairman referred to the mid-cycle briefing held on 23 March 2007 and highlighted the establishment of the 4Youth Area Development Forums which would assist Members greatly with their interest in and input into this issue.

In relation to the in-depth Scrutiny reviews being undertaken it was noted that the information relating to Sports Provision and Participation had now been collected with a report being developed in relation to that.

The Chairman stated that she would undertake to make arrangements for a meeting of the Members carrying out the small Scrutiny review on the Outdoor Education Service. It was noted that outreach work was being undertaken by representatives of the Outdoor Education Service in local schools.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee, scheduled for 15 May 2007 would include a briefing by the North Yorkshire and York PCT on health improvement issues for children and young people and the North Yorkshire Police Community Safety Officer would provide information on their work with young people across the County.

A Member referred to the Post Implementation Review (PIR) Task Groups, which had been recommended to be undertaken in relation to adult learning and 4Youth Services by the Economic Development and Regeneration or Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It was asked whether consideration had been given to establishing groups to monitor the effectiveness of these services, by the Scrutiny Committee, particularly in relation to youth work provision.

In response to this matter it was stated that the monitoring of youth services would be part of the work programme for the Scrutiny Committee, with regular updates submitted to mid cycle briefings and subsequent Scrutiny Committee meetings. It was emphasised that, at the present time, there were insufficient scrutiny support resources available to undertake a "Task Group" exercise in respect of this matter.

The Member stressed the importance of monitoring the development of Youth Services in the County and proposed that the Committee undertook a "Task and Finish" Group to give careful consideration and monitor improvements in respect of the County Youth Service. The proposal was not supported by other Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED –

That the information in the report be noted, together with the issues highlighted.

94. OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERVICE

Pippa Manson, the Unit Head of Outdoor Education, gave a presentation and briefing on the County Council's outdoor education service.

The presentation highlighted the following:-

- The North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Service includes

- Bewerley Park Centre, Pately Bridge, Nidderdale – 130 beds.
- East Barnby Centre, near Whitby – 104 beds.
- Humphrey Head Centre, Cumbria – 39 beds.
- Great Fryupdale Centre, North York Moors – 26 beds.

The presentation went on to give details under the following headings:-

- Why is Outdoor Education/Outdoor Learning Important?
- Key Qualities of the Service.
- Tensions: National and Local Priorities.
- Challenges and Tensions: North Yorkshire Outdoor Education Service.
- Direction.
- Opportunities for Building Partnerships.
- Budget In Year.
- Budget Projected.

Details of the outreach work offered to schools, the developments of the service over the last ten of the programmes undertaken and the subsequent evaluations, were provided.

It was noted that the service operated under a challenging budget, which resulted in the costs to pupils of around £200 per week for attendance at a Centre. It was noted that, currently, the service was operating on an increasing deficit budget, but strenuous efforts were being made to halt that and it was expected that the service would address the deficit in due course.

Members emphasised the importance of the Outdoor Education Service, particularly as for many young people their attendance at one of the Centres was their first visit to the countryside and it assisted them in their respect of the environment and how to treat the countryside. It was also emphasised that the experience assisted young people in developing their own awareness of risk management taking account of potential dangers and how they could reduce risks. The experience also encourages young people to work in a team environment.

It was asked whether consideration had been given to developing Corporate Packages for the Centres to promote more income from these. In response it was stated that consideration had been given to this matter, although some caution had to be given to this as there was not a great deal of additional capacity available to develop further work and additional costs were involved in providing and promoting these. It was emphasised, however, that, where possible, high income projects would be developed.

It was noted that the Centre did accommodate the needs of young people that were cared for. In terms of disabled young people courses were adapted appropriately to ensure that their needs could be met and that they could be accommodated at the centres.

It was noted that, currently, there was not a significant number of young people attending the centres from organisations outside schools. Where young people had special needs, however, this issue was being addressed with a view to extending the number of visits for organisations that were not schools and the development of courses was being undertaken to encompass young people with varying needs.

It was emphasised that budgetary constraints restricted the courses that could be offered to young people who most needed the benefits provided through the Outdoor Education Service, however, this issue would be carefully considered in the planning of the service which was being undertaken over the next six to nine months. The beneficial nature that outdoor education had on young people with hidden disabilities was also outlined. It was emphasised that a balance had to be struck between singling out young people with difficulties and providing courses appropriate to them and it was felt that it would be appropriate to develop courses for young people with similar difficulties.

A Member raised concerns regarding the funding of Outdoor Education Services and felt that more should be provided to assist the development of this service. In response an explanation of how education services is budgeted, including how the schools block was “ring fenced” so that all other provisions had to be funded from the remaining budget, was provided. It was emphasised that the Directorate had great difficulty in meeting the demands of the services through the remaining budget and priorities had to be made to ensure that an appropriate balance could be achieved. It was suggested that alternative sources of funding, which would enable schools to fund places for young people to attend the Outdoor Education Centres, could be explored. It was suggested that more emphasis be placed on this potential source of funding to create more opportunities for young people to attend.

In relation to the issue of risk management it was emphasised that the Centres operated to a high standard and closely monitored levels of risk, which gave schools the confidence to use the service. Attendance at the Centres was also used to provide risk awareness for the young people attending the courses. It was noted that the County Council had a strong framework in place to support teachers in terms of risk management for pupils undertaking outdoor activities, such as visits to the Outdoor Education Service. This gave teachers confidence to undertake these types of visit.

RESOLVED –

That Pippa Manson be thanked for her presentation, the details of which be fed into the Task Group undertaking a review on the Outdoor Education Service on behalf of the Committee, with a report on the Service to be submitted to a subsequent meeting of the Committee in due course.

95. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE

CONSIDERED –

Report of the General Manager – Strategy and Performance, together with a presentation, which gave an overview of the performance framework in place and provided information about Performance Management practice in Children’s Social Care.

Jan Taylor, the General Manager – Strategy and Performance, gave the following presentation:-

Joint Area Review Criticisms

- No in-year reporting.
- No team-based data.
- Little evidence of quality assurance.

Children's Social Care Data Set

- Complex – over 60 indicators annually.
- Not outcome focused.
- Perverse incentives.
- Proxy measures.

Types of Measure

- Per 10,000 population.
- Timescale of output.
- Ratios.
- Groups of indicators.

Data Quality

- Capture at Source
- TQM approach.
- Data Weeks
- Use of central data base.
- Feedback

Team-Based Data and In-Year Reporting

- Less is more.
- Open reporting.
- Back-up support.
- Understanding of performance indicators.

Planning and Targets

- Monitoring of plans by monitoring targets.
- Individual team targets.
- Greater understanding of practice.

Quality Assurance

- Audits.
- Quality Assurance Process.

Examples of the improved data provision were provided to Members at the meeting, together with an example of the complexity of some of the requests required for information.

It was emphasised that substantial progress had been made in improving Performance Management in Children's Social Care, with the data provided being much more coherent. It was noted that the last monitoring visit undertaken by CSCI had acknowledged the improvements that had been made and had expressed the opinion that the level of Performance Management was in advance of that which many other local authorities were using.

It was emphasised that substantial improvements had been made to the provision of information which greatly assisted those working in the front line of the service. Improvements in targets were particularly useful in increasing the performance of the service as poor targets were demoralising and counter productive for staff.

Members welcomed the excellent presentation and were impressed with the improvements that had been made to the service.

The importance of having appropriate, sufficient and detailed information in respect of young people either in Children's Social Care or being referred to agencies was emphasised. It was noted that detailed information was vital to ensure that referrals were dealt with appropriately, in line with what would best meet the needs of that young person.

It was stated that alternatives to Social Care were being highlighted as appropriate solutions to young people's problems. The development of the integrated services in localities would provide alternative solutions within local communities to diminish the need for young people to be referred into Social Care. It was emphasised that the Performance Management Systems were important in ensuring that young people were referred appropriately.

RESOLVED –

That the improvements in the Performance Management of Children's Social Care be welcomed and the report be noted.

96. INTEGRATED SERVICES IN LOCALITIES

CONSIDERED –

A report and presentation giving details of the provision of Integrated Services and the progress being made on delivering these within localities.

Carolyn Bird, the Strategic Development and Commissioning Manager, Children and Young People's Service, together with Sue Smith, Integrated Service Manager (North) and Tony Turner, Integrated Service Manager (Scarborough) gave a presentation highlighting the development of Integrated Services in localities, as follows:-

Background

- Early Years and Child Care, Extended Services in Schools and the development of services planned and delivered in a more integrated way, in keeping with the needs of children and families.
- Comment Assessment Framework.
- Implementing the Children and Young People's Plan.

Integrated Service Areas/Strategic Development in Commissioning

- Six integrated service managers with teams across the County.
 - North – Sue Smith.
 - Harrogate – Stuart Gregory.
 - Scarborough – Tony Turner.
 - Central Vale – Alan Pitt.

- Craven – Mandy Whitehead.
- White Horse – Julie Hatfield.
- Early Years and Child Care Strategic Development.
 - Early Years Manager – Julie Lowery.

Integrated Service Management

- Direct Line Management responsibility for the development of extended services in schools, and for early years and child care operational side, including the management of Children Centres.
- Responsibility to ensure the integration of services within localities, working in partnership with other agencies, but without having direct line management responsibility for their services.
- Common Assessment Framework co-ordination and monitoring.

Integrated Service Manager Teams

- Children Centre Managers.
- Extended Services Officers.
- Extended Services Development Officers.
- Administrative Support for Children Centres, for Extended Services and to support the Common Assessment Framework Process.

Principals Behind Integrated Service Management

- Common approaches throughout the County.
- Operate within the Performance Management Framework for the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.
- Work in partnership with other agencies in the spirit of co-operation as articulated within the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

Facets of Integrated Service Delivery

- Area Liaison Groups.
- Common Assessment Framework meetings.
- Locality events.

Roll Out

- Phase 1 – Eastfield, Jennyfields, Catterick and Colburn.
- Phase 2 – Selby, remainder of Scarborough, remainder of Harrogate, North Craven.

- Phase 3 – to be determined.
- Children Centres – 28 by March 2008.
- Extended school clusters – all schools participating by 2008/09.

Details of levels of service, the Common Assessment Framework, the Integrated Service areas and a Common Assessment case study were circulated as part of the presentation.

A Member asked how difficult the organisation of multi-agency meetings, in relation to the Common Assessment Framework, were to organise and whether there were any time targets for setting these up?

In response it was stated that the multi-agency meetings were expected to be convened quickly, and preferably two weeks after a Common Assessment had taken place. It was emphasised there was no national target to be met, however, the County Council's own target was the two week period. It was noted that school terms and holidays also had to be accounted for within this process. It was emphasised that the review period was tailored to meet the needs of the children involved and, although a common assessment framework was in place each young person was reviewed in respect of their own particular circumstances. It was stated that the wishes of the young person involved were also taken into account, as this was an important factor in making progress on the review taking place. It was emphasised that there was a duty for relevant agencies to co-operate, with the Common Assessment Framework being used to address the challenges. The development of the framework has given a greater integration of services than previously, which could only be of benefit to the young people involved.

It was emphasised that the service did not carry out assessment for assessments sake and the process was used to solve problems. The multi-agency meetings were used to identify actions and determining how these would be carried out to ensure that each case was being dealt with appropriately. It was emphasised that the multi-agency approach to this issue was very important. It was noted that parents could also be assessed through this process, providing opportunities for agency to work with parents to best meet the needs of the young person in question. This issue links closely with the Parenting Strategy, which would be discussed later in the meeting. It was noted that representatives from the voluntary sector were also involved in the multi-agency reviews and with the Parenting Strategy.

A Member expressed concerns, which had also been expressed at an earlier meeting of the Selby Area Committee regarding the division of the Integrated Service areas, noting that six areas had been provided, whereas there were seven District Councils within North Yorkshire and he asked why the Knaresborough and Boroughbridge areas had been amalgamated with Selby?

In response, the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Services outlined that the focus had always been on the 22 localities. Although this included 6 areas the fundamental unit for the provision of services was the 22 localities identified on the map circulated at the meeting. Each of these localities would have services provided and would be managed locally. The 22 localities were in turn complemented by 29 Children's Centres. It was emphasised that, to keep management overheads to a minimum, the management of the service had been developed as the presentation identified. It was again stressed that services would be provided on a local basis and the management arrangements helped to keep overheads to a minimum.

RESOLVED –

That Carolyn Bird, Sue Smith and Tony Turner be thanked for their presentation, the contents of which be noted.

97. PARENTING SUPPORT STRATEGY

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service providing an overview of progress that has been made in developing a Parenting Support Strategy for North Yorkshire. Details of the development of a Parenting Supporting Strategy as presented to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board in November 2006 were appended to the report. This set out the purpose and motivation for developing a county wide Parenting Support Strategy.

The report highlighted how a Working Group had been established to develop the strategy and examine how it would be implemented. A draft strategy had been developed from the discussions within that group and research with other Authorities. A conference involving 70 delegates from a wide range of agencies was held on 26 March 2007 to consider the draft strategy. The main purpose of the conference was to allow delegates to comment on and contribute to the draft strategy and to seek agreement on the best way to develop the improvement strategies at a local level. The main thrust of the strategy was supported and a number of detailed suggestions had been made in relation to improving that. A second draft was currently being prepared and would be considered by the Working Group in April 2007. The strategy would then be re-submitted to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board for approval to proceed.

Discussions on how to develop improvement strategies at a local level were less clear although there was agreement on the notion of delivering a county-wide entitlement at a local level was the correct way to proceed. It was suggested that acknowledgement should be made of the good work already undertaken and the existence of Parenting Forums, and, that any service provision should involve parents directly. Integrated Service Managers were highlighted as the key players and facilitators for this strategy and it was suggested that designated staff may be required to act as Parenting Support Champions and/or Co-ordinators in each area. There was no agreement at this stage as to what the areas should be, therefore, discussions would continue with relevant partners on that.

It was stated that a further report would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee giving details of the issues discussed at the conference held on 26 March.

It was stated that currently all miscellaneous services were being pulled together to form a framework for the provision of a Parenting Support Service. Clear definitions and expectations of what would be required of the service were included in the strategy.

It was noted that there was little core resourcing for the provision of this service, in line with the strategy and currently this was being developed through short term resourcing. It was emphasised that an effective way to ensure that the service could continue, following initial development, was being sought.

The Chairman requested that the draft Parenting Strategy Improvement Plans are brought to the committee's attention when they are available, which is likely to be around January/February 2008.

RESOLVED –

That the development of the strategy be recognised and any comments/suggestions that may be incorporated into the strategy, be submitted to the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Services, before the strategy is submitted to the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership Board on 14 May 2007.

98. URGENT BUSINESS

Sale of Children’s Night Clothes – Potential Danger from Fire

A Member brought to the Committee’s attention the issue of children’s night clothes, which were made of a highly flammable material, that were on sale locally. He asked what could be done to prevent the sale of these items, whether this should be addressed through the Children and Young People’s Service Directorate or whether it was an issue for Trading Standards to investigate?

In response it was suggested that Trading Standards were the appropriate service to investigate this matter and a request would be made for a representative of the service to contact the Member concerned.

RESOLVED –

That the matter be noted and the action outlined be undertaken.

(The Chairman accepted the above item as a matter of urgency in respect of an investigation of this issue being required as quickly as possible).

SML/ALJ