

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2007 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Heather Garnett in the Chair.

County Councillors:- Michelle Andrew, Andrew Backhouse, John Blackburn, Eric Broadbent (substitute for County Councillor Jim Snowball), Tony Hall, David Heather, Michael Heseltine, Christopher Pearson, Caroline Seymour, Brian Simpson and Melva Steckles.

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

In attendance: - Executive Member County Councillor Caroline Patmore.

Officers:- Stephanie Bratcher, George Bateman, Andrew Terry, Andrew Whittaker, Lynette Wise, Cynthia Welbourn and Jane Wilkinson.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of County Councillor Jim Snowball.

Apologies were also received from Maggie Allan and Jill Gentle (Voluntary Sector).

One member of the public was present.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

106. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

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

107. 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.

108. EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE

CONSIDERED –

The briefing report of County Councillor Caroline Patmore highlighting issues within her Portfolio she had considered since the Committee last met. The report also identified key issues and priorities for the coming months. In introducing her report County Councillor Caroline Patmore stated that she was happy to expand upon any of the topics referred to in her report or respond to questions from Members.

In addition to the items mentioned in her report she informed the Committee of the findings of an inspection of residential children's homes within the County. In particular the Audit report had identified specific concerns in respect of the children's home at Morton on Swale. She emphasised that those concerns had now been addressed and arose as a result of exceptional circumstances which were highly unlikely to be repeated in the future.

On returning to her written report County Councillor Caroline Patmore said that she shared the concerns of the assessors about the ability of a centralised contact centre to deliver the same high standard of service as was currently provided by the County Council's Customer Relations Units. In view of her concerns she informed the Committee that this was an area she intended to closely monitor in the future.

The Chairman asked what was being done to identify those children in North Yorkshire who are privately fostered. County Councillor Caroline Patmore replied that there are many foster families in North Yorkshire who make arrangements for their children to be cared for privately whilst they are posted abroad. The private nature of these arrangements means that the County Council is unaware of the exact numbers and identification of the children concerned. Consequently the County Council was working closely with its partners in health, schools and social care to locate and identify these children. A report on this matter was under preparation and would be referred to the Children and Young People's Partnership Executive in due course.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Member for her attendance and the information contained in her report and looked forward to receiving further reports in due course.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the information in the report be noted, together with the issues highlighted.

109. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

County Councillor Andrew Backhouse declared a personal interest in the following item as a Member of the County Council's Catering Board.

CONSIDERED –

The 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 highlighted in Appendix A of the report.

The Chairman stated that she had been contacted by the Executive Member for education and advisory services County Councillor John Watson who was keen to receive the Committee's review of the outdoor education service as soon as possible. In view of his request the Chairman suggested that instead of holding a mid-cycle briefing meeting of the Committee on 31 July 2007 as scheduled the date be utilised and a full meeting of the Committee be held instead. Members supported her suggestion and it was agreed that the update on the teenage pregnancy strategy and progress made in relation to the recommendations set out in the Scrutiny Review on Sex and Relationship Education be also dealt with at that meeting. A representative from North Yorkshire and York PCT would also be invited to attend to address school nurse issues.

A Member enquired if attendance at mid-cycle briefing meetings was restricted to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Group Spokesperson for the Committee. If this was not the case then he expressed an interest in reserving a right to attend future meetings when items of particular personal interest were discussed. The Chairman

replied that attendance at mid-cycle briefing meetings was open to all Members of the Committee to attend if they so wished. So as to assist Members in deciding whether to attend or not the Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to circulate electronically a copy of the agenda for all future mid-cycle briefing meetings. Any Member wanting to attend was asked to give advance notice to either the Scrutiny Support Officer or Committee Administrator.

The Chairman referred to a letter she had received dated 28 June 2007 from the Assistant Director Finance and Management Support. The letter drew her attention to a major issue in respect of school meals that had arisen as a result of Job Evaluation. Copies of the letter were circulated at the meeting and a copy placed in the Minute Book. After having read the content of the letter Members agreed with the proposal of the Chairman that the Committee include in its Work Programme a review of the emerging strategy for school meals.

Members sought clarification from George Bateman the Assistant Director Finance and Management Support of the timescale for completion of the proposed review and were advised that it would be most helpful if the review were concluded sometime during the autumn term.

In view of the urgency of the situation the Chairman suggested that a small task group be established and requested the Scrutiny Support Officer to contact all Members of the Committee and seek expressions of interest and details of availability for meetings.

Finally, the Chairman added that following the Triumvirate Group Meeting due to be held on 11 July 2007 feedback would be reported to the Committee.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the information contained in the report be noted together with the issues highlighted.
- (ii) That the Scrutiny Support Officer circulate to all Members of the Committee the agenda for all future mid-cycle briefing meetings with an open invitation for them to attend.
- (iii) That the Scrutiny Support Officer seek expressions of interest from all Members of the Committee to establish a school meals task group with immediate effect.

110. ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED –

That the order of business be amended so that the next item of business is item 7 Contact Point (Formerly Known as Child Information Sharing Index).

111. CONTACT POINT (FORMERLY KNOWN AS CHILD INFORMATION SHARING INDEX)

CONSIDERED –

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service updating Members on implementation of the national Contact Point system. The report also provided up to date information on the data to be held on Contact Point, proposed security measures, and the County Council's responsibilities in relation to Contact Point.

The Committee received a detailed presentation from Andrew Whittaker, Integrated Children's Systems Manager and Lynette Wise, Integrated Processes Manager on Contact Point and the background that had led to the introduction of integrated front-line services and multi-agency working. Members were given an overview of the integrated processes involved one of which was Contact Point. Copies of the presentation slides were tabled at the meeting and a copy placed in the Minute Book.

It was noted that Contact Point would only be applicable in England (details of children in living in Scotland, Wales and Ireland would not be indexed) and that parental consent was not needed in order for a child's details to be registered. Members acknowledged that the information to be held on Contact Point would in most instances already be known to a range of agencies. The Index would for the first time collate and retain and make accessible that information from one central source. Members were concerned however that as knowledge and awareness of the Index spread there could be widespread resistance to it as many people could consider it an infringement of their civil liberties and that it could be seen as an attempt by the Government to introduce national identity cards. Members were advised that all information held on Contact Point would be destroyed upon a child reaching the age of 18 or 25 in special circumstances. Some Members remained sceptical that this would be the case.

Members sought clarification about where responsibility lay for the additional resources needed to introduce the system. The Committee was advised that the DfES had given a long term commitment to provide local authorities with grant funding to implement the system but that additional costs such as CRB checks would not be covered. The grant monies in North Yorkshire had been used to establish a specialist team who were tasked with scoping the project and conducting an analysis to see which professionals would require access to the system. George Bateman believed that funding would be time restricted and that at some point in the future the County Council would be expected to take over the responsibility for the costs involved in the upkeep of the system. At present there was scant information available about future funding for Contact Point. He considered that it was likely that the costs would lie where they fell between partner agencies.

It was stressed that the benefits and advantages offered by the system were that it was inclusive and could be used to identify those children who were not attending school or not registered with a GP. This would be of assistance when planning services as well as a valuable source of additional support to vulnerable children. Members were advised that young people would be able to request sight of their personal details held on Contact Point under the Data Protection Regulations.

Despite some reservations Members acknowledged the benefits that the system offered and the opportunities it provided to professionals to be pro-active.

Members were informed that in order for the system to be effective it was crucial that the stored data was accurate and maintained properly. The development of systems and processes to achieve this were currently under discussion and a report in due course could be prepared and made available to Members to comment upon.

It was agreed that if the data on the system was not maintained properly and proved inaccurate then the system would be discredited. A Member asked what sanctions could be imposed if the database was not maintained properly by professionals. The Committee was advised that the Regulations stipulated that the database had to be maintained but that local practice and procedure had yet to be developed in this area. Disciplinary action was considered a last resort. It was clear that a lot of promotional work was needed in order to win the hearts and minds of the professionals concerned. In response to a question from the Chairman, the Committee was advised that local policy guidance for partners and the County Council was currently

under development and could once drafted be referred to the Committee to enable Members to comment.

The Executive Member County Councillor Caroline Patmore pointed that there were many private residential schools in North Yorkshire which were attended by children who lived outside of the County and many children who were privately fostered. She asked which authority would be responsible for registering these children. Members were advised that the Regulations stipulated that the Authority area with normal residency had responsibility but that there was a lot of debate about the definition of normal residency.

The Chairman thanked Lynette Wise and Andrew Whittaker for their comprehensive report and presentation which Members had found extremely informative and thought provoking. She invited them to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss future developments in this area.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report and presentation be noted.
- (ii) That a report on the development of policy guidelines for Contact Point be referred to a future meeting of the Committee and included in the Work Programme.

112. SEN/BESD DELEGATED RESOURCES

CONSIDERED

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s outlining how the County Council through the Children and Young People’s Service intends to monitor challenge and support schools and settings in the use of their delegated resource to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs including those with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.

In introducing this report Andrew Terry referred Members to the Committee’s Work Programme and the item on SEN Review which was due to be considered at the September meeting. The report before Members that day had close links to that item and had emerged from the SEN Review consultation. During the consultation a theme had emerged from parents concerned that some schools were not using delegated resources properly in order to meet the needs of their SEN pupils. Consequently the County Council had explored their concerns which had resulted in a fundamentally revised system for monitoring challenging and supporting schools in their use of SEN delegated resources.

John Bell outlined in detail the revised system and how information could be extracted from the databases of its four key elements. By way of example he circulated for Members information raw performance management information and described how it could be used to make service improvements. Written advice was currently being prepared and would be circulated to all schools about how best to use the inclusion profile and inclusion quality mark tools. Members were advised that first indications were that once schools gained a better understanding of the new system and realised the benefits (improved outcomes led to receipt of extra funds) then participation would increase and improve. Already the County Council had started to receive increased data from schools that could be used to plan services. John Bell anticipated that the first batch of data received by the County Council could be analysed and a report prepared for early in the year New Year. The report would give an overview of progress made give an indication of the effectiveness of the revised system. On behalf of the Committee the Chairman stated that she would be

very interested to see the report when available and requested that it be referred to a future meeting when available. Officers agreed to this request.

The Committee's attention was drawn to issues surrounding the under achievement of gifted and talented pupils and agreed that this matter be awarded higher priority on the Committee's future Work Programme.

Members were delighted and encouraged by progress made following the SEN review and were pleased to note that the County Council was leading the way nationally on work in this area.

Some Members expressed concern that as School Governors they were unaware of the revised system and the tools available to schools.

A Member referred to truancy sweeps and asked if they were conducted in North Yorkshire. Officers confirmed that truancy sweeps did take place in North Yorkshire and described briefly the problems encountered. Members recognised how the information from Contact Point discussed earlier in the meeting could be used. In view of Members interest in this area Officers agreed to prepare a report for consideration by the Committee on truancy sweeps in North Yorkshire.

In response to a question from Members the Committee was advised that as at April 2007 North Yorkshire had 85,000 pupils with Special Educational Needs or Behaviour, Emotional Social Difficulties and that this figure was below the national average. It was acknowledged however that some schools within the County did have a higher than average number of pupils with Special Educational Needs but were assured that the funding formula took account of this when monies were awarded to schools.

In response to a question Members were informed that the report to be considered at the meeting of the Committee in September on the SEN review would include locality sites for Pupil Referral Units.

Members stated that they were greatly encouraged by what they had heard that day. The data circulated at the meeting prompted many questions and Members looked forward to receipt of the progress report in the New Year.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That developments to the system for monitoring, challenging and supporting schools in making provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Behaviour, Emotional Social Difficulties be noted.
- (ii) That a progress report on the above system be referred to the Committee when available.
- (iii) That a report on truancy sweeps in North Yorkshire be referred to a future meeting of the Committee.

113. REVIEW OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

The Chairman referred to the previous meeting of the Committee at which the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service had given a short presentation and briefing evaluating the performance of the County Council's Children and Young People's Service. At that meeting the Committee was advised that as a result of the JAR Inspection and a recent local review of the Children and Young People's Plan various revisions to the original document had been made which would be discussed at the meeting of the Committee held that day. Following circulation of the agenda papers a copy of the Year One Review of the Children and

Young People's Plan 2006-09 together with Year Two Revision had been circulated to all Members of the Committee. It was explained that the Year One Review document covered two aspects – the Review of the Children and Young People's Plan Year One and the annual performance self assessment. It was pointed out that whilst there was strong links between the Year One Review and the Annual Performance Self Assessment they were not co-terminus. The Year One Review document incorporated outcomes following the JAR inspection together with Local Area Agreement targets that related to children and young people and maternity issues. It was noted that the Year Two Revision document had been submitted to the DfES for approval and had been circulated to Members for information only.

In referring Members to both documents the Corporate Director – Children and Young People Service stated that taken together they provided a clear position statement of the Children and Young People's Service. She was pleased to be able to say that progress was being made and that there was an increasing amount of evidence to support the actions being undertaken as demonstrated in Part Two of each of the sections within the Year One Review document. Whilst performance in Year One had been good there remained a lot of work still to do and the plan for Year Two was more focused with tighter targets to enable progress to be evidenced and measured.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service for her presentation of what was a complex document. The Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service stated that the document had to be detailed so as to reflect the complex partnership arrangements that existed. She acknowledged that many service users would find the document difficult to negotiate and in response to a question from a Member agreed that there was a need for a simplified version to be produced that focused on those areas that young people considered the most important.

A Member referred to the Work Programme report considered earlier in the meeting. In that report reference was made to the presentation given at the mid-cycle briefing meeting held on 25 May 2007 on young carers in North Yorkshire and the support they currently received. In view of the issues highlighted at that briefing meeting clarification was sought of the reasons why the needs of young carers were not specifically mentioned in the Children and Young People's Plan. The Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service replied that the "vulnerable groups" included on page 3 of the Plan explicitly identified young carers. This was as a direct result of feedback received on the Plan which had proved extremely helpful. Some of the actions identified in the Plan related explicitly to specific service user groups and others were of a more general nature. Underneath the Children and Young People's Plan was a second layer of more detailed plans that would convert aspirations into detailed policy and this was where the needs of young carers would be addressed. Work was currently underway to assess the needs of young carers as they were variations across the County. Current delivery arrangements for support to young carers were also varied and would require different levels of support to be implemented.

A Member asked if adequate arrangements were in place in North Yorkshire to ensure that there were no gaps or disputes about where responsibility lay to fund the support given to young carers. The Committee was advised that the roll out of integrated services would make it much more difficult for people to slip through gaps in provision but it was acknowledged that systems and processes had yet to be developed to prevent this from happening to young carers in North Yorkshire.

The Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service offered to submit to the Committee at a later date a report on young carers. The Chairman welcomed the offer of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service and stated

that it was important that such a report include input from the Corporate Director – Adult and Community Services and North Yorkshire and York PCT.

The Executive Member County Councillor Caroline Patmore was concerned that many young carers would not identify themselves as being a “young carer” and that further work was needed in order to address this problem. She agreed to explore this and move it forward. The Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service commented that she to had anxieties about the extent to which all agencies scanned for young carers.

Service users with complex disabilities were identified by the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service as being a service priority. Children in families where domestic violence took place but were not necessarily subject to the domestic violence were also identified as being a service priority. It was noted that the Safeguarding Board had recently co-opted a domestic violence co-ordinator to its membership.

The Chairman commented that it was obvious that a partnership approach offered many benefits but that some agencies within the partnership were at different stages of development. The Chairman thanked the Corporate Director for her attendance and the information she had provided to the Committee.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the Year One Review and Year Two Revision of the North Yorkshire Children and Young People’s Plan 2006/2009 and progress made be noted.
- (ii) That a report on young carers be added to the Committee’s Work Programme.

JW/ALJ