

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 January 2008

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS

1.0 REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL, 19 DECEMBER 2007

My report included summaries of the position on school performance in 2007, Schools Capital, 14-19 issues (national and local) and falling rolls. The last is the subject of a separate report today, and I will be present for that discussion so I make no further comment in this paper. I would like to update the position on the other items, and to touch on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, school meals and the Committee's reports to the Executive in January 2008.

2.0 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

I am very pleased to confirm that OFSTED has now removed Aireville School from Special Measures and Raincliffe School from the Notice to Improve category. Both schools are now judged to be satisfactory with good capacity to improve further. This is very good news for pupils and parents and great credit to leadership, governance and staff. In both cases the schools and OFSTED also acknowledge the very effective support and challenge they have had from the Directorate.

3.0 CAPITAL PLAN

My report in December set out the allocations we have received from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). These are very useful allocations, some of them funding, others permission to borrow. The overall spending power is valuable as part of our commitment to good quality education, though the borrowing approvals do form part of the County Council's overall revenue challenges in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Despite the allocation being larger than in previous years, there are big demands for investment on national and local priorities. There are also some pressing cases for big sums to cover new regulatory requirements. Inevitably, therefore, there will be difficult decisions to take about priorities, and these will be based on the agreed Policy Statement and objective evidence. In addition to the familiar categories for basic need and modernisation, we will need to incorporate strategies for Special Educational Needs/Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (SEN/BESD) provision, 14-19 and the Primary Capital Programme. For the first the County Council has an established strategy, for the second and third there is major work in progress.

Anticipating capital pressures, as intended we are progressing some key projects (Children's Centre top up funding and establishment of two Pupil Referral Units) through planned and earmarked carry forwards.

4.0 14-19 STRATEGY

Schools, colleges, employers, the Directorate and Learning & Skills Council have been working together to improve 14-19 opportunities for some years, particularly through the Learning Partnership structure. Worthwhile progress has been made, but it varies across the County and the challenge is greater now that the clock is ticking

for the delivery of all 17 Diplomas by 2013. This means that efforts are intensifying to ensure we know exactly what it will take to get there. A practical 14-19 Plan will have to go to the DCSF in the next four months and this will be of interest to the Committee during the consultation period.

5.0 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2008/9 – 2010/11

This is undoubtedly our biggest overall challenge at present. The combination of three year planning and 3% efficiencies for each year provide very tough parameters in which to work. It is important to remember that in addition to whatever efficiency targets are agreed for the Children and Young People's Service, we will also have to address the financial position within the County Catering Service. I am very grateful to the Committee for the detailed work it is doing on that.

6.0 COMMITTEE REPORTS TO EXECUTIVE

The reports on the Outdoor Education Service and Sport were well-received by the Directorate. Both provide a valuable platform from which we can now take work forward which should help us to maintain momentum in these two important areas of work. Again, I am grateful for the Committee's contribution.

County Councillor John Watson, OBE
Executive Member for Schools

January 2008