

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2008 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Heather Garnett in the Chair.

County Councillors:- Michelle Andrew, Andrew Backhouse, Elizabeth Casling, David Heather, Michael Heseltine, Christopher Pearson, Caroline Seymour, Brian Simpson, Martin Smith, Jim Snowball, Melva Steckles and Tim Swales.

Members Other Than County Councillors:-

Rev A Judd (Church of England).

Jos Huddleston (Non-Conformist Church).

Suzanne Morris and Patricia Stowell (Parent Governor Representatives).

Anne Swift (Primary Teacher Representative).

Maggie Allen (Voluntary Sector).

Officers:- Seamus Breen (Adult and Community Services), Cynthia Welbourn, Lynette Dodds, Stuart Gregory and Karl Podmore (Children and Young Peoples Service), Stephanie Bratcher (Scrutiny Support Officer) and Ann McMorris (North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board), Carol Dunn, Josie O'Dowd and Jane Wilkinson (Legal and Democratic Services), and George Bateman (Financial Services).

Two members of the public.

Executive Member: County Councillor Caroline Patmore.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

189. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 September 2008 having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

190. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

191. EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE

CONSIDERED -

County Councillor Caroline Patmore gave an oral summary of recent activity on the following areas within her portfolio:-

- Children and Young Peoples Plan.
- Looked After Children
Inspection of Childrens' Homes.
Young People's Council.

- Early Years Partnership / Children Centres.
- Youth Offending Team.
- Integrated Youth Support System.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore said that she was happy to expand upon any of the topics discussed or to respond to questions from Members.

A Member referred to a recent inspection she had undertaken of the children's home at Morton on Swale which provided respite care for children with complex needs. The Member said that some of the children at the home required specialist nursing care especially during the night on account of their complex needs. At present there was no specialist nursing care available and she asked if the Executive Member could investigate the situation and contact North Yorkshire and York PCT with a view to seeking a practical solution. The Executive Member said that she had raised the matter with the PCT in the past and gave assurances that she would revisit the situation.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the oral report and the information provided at the meeting be noted.

192. NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL SAFEGUARDING BOARD

CONSIDERED –

The report of Ann McMorris Manager of the North Yorkshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) on the work of the North Yorkshire LSCB. The report also highlighted recent changes to the constitution of the LSCB and outlined the new three year LSCB Business Plan.

The Committee was advised that the report had been written prior to recent announcements surrounding the "Baby P" case which would have a direct impact on the work of the LSCB.

Members noted that as a result of the "Baby P" case the Corporate Director – Children and Young Peoples Service in her capacity as Chairman of the LSCB had directed that a Section 11 Review (Children Act 2004) was carried out. Members were informed that a consultant had been appointed to carry out the Review that would include all agencies involved in the provision of childrens services in North Yorkshire. Members said that they were reassured by the news that a Section 11 Review was to be undertaken.

In response to questions on the recent reconfiguration of the Executive Committee Members were advised that the LSCB was experiencing problems with its website and it was acknowledged that the published details of its structure and Board membership were incorrect. Assurances were given that all necessary changes had been affected and that an up to date list was available and would be circulated to Members following the meeting. The Executive Committee now comprised of senior officers in the PCT, Police, Probation, Social Care and the NSPCC. Work to rectify the website was already underway and it was hoped that the problems would be resolved in the near future.

Members enquired if there were any plans to appoint an Independent Chair to the North Yorkshire LSCB. Ann McMorris replied that as a result of the "Baby P" case there had been calls for the Chairs of LSCBs to be independent and that this was currently under consideration in North Yorkshire. The Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service Cynthia Welbourn is the current Chair of the North Yorkshire LSCB and had proved herself to be a very effective champion of the work

of the LSCB. Ann McMorris said that she was reluctant to lose the impetus that had resulted from the Chairmanship by the Corporate Director and that it was crucial that the right person was identified to carry this work forward. The Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service said that if a new Chair was appointed she would continue to support the work of the LSCB through the work of the Children and Young People’s Service and the Children’s Trust.

The Chairman of the Committee said that she was slightly concerned that some Members of the Board appeared to lack the seniority required in order to be effective. The Chairman of the LSCB replied that it was difficult to achieve the right balance as Board Members had to have the ability to make strategic decisions yet retain knowledge of front line practices. Following her appointment two and a half years ago some progress in this area had been made. The Executive now comprised of more senior people and there was also greater clarity and coherence amongst the groups that supported the work of the LSCB.

Members were informed that one of the LSCB Board Members represented the District Councils in North Yorkshire with whom the Manager of the LSCB had arranged to meet in January 2009. The meeting would also be attended by the lead officer from each of the District Councils and would discuss their statutory responsibility with regard to the work of the LSCB. Part of the discussion would involve finance and in particular levels of contribution from each of the district councils. It was acknowledged that this was a sensitive area. The Manager of the LSCB said that at present North Yorkshire District Councils did not make a financial contribution towards the work of the LSCB. The Chairman of LSCB said that in her opinion all statutory partners should contribute financially to the work of the Board. She was aware of capacity issues surrounding provision of training and said that under the previous system, the training that had been provided had not made the best use of available resources. She believed there was a need for investment at a higher level to provide agency training and said that all safe guarding partners had now agreed that this should be the policy of the LSCB.

The Committee noted that all agencies operating in the voluntary sector had a duty to train their own staff and that it was the responsibility of the LSCB to ensure that this training was done properly. It was stressed that agencies should not rely on the LSCB to carry out staff training on their behalf but it was acknowledged that provision of adequate training was difficult for some of the smaller groups.

Members suggested that it would be helpful if a glossary of terms was attached to the LSCB Business Plan.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the information contained in the report be noted and approved.
- (ii) That quarterly progress reports on the work of the North Yorkshire LSCB are reported to mid-cycle briefing meetings of the Committee and that any concerns raised at mid-cycle briefing meeting are referred to a full meeting of the Committee.
- (iii) That the annual report of the North Yorkshire LSCB is referred to the Committee in due course.

193. YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DISABILITIES IN TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD

CONSIDERED –

Report of The Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service briefing the Committee on the steps being taken to improve the transition into adulthood of young people with disabilities in North Yorkshire.

Present at the meeting was Seamus Breen, Assistant Director – Adult & Community Services (Commissioning and Partnerships) and Karl Podmore (Group Manager) – Children’s Social Care who outlined to the Committee the joint work already underway in both directorates to improve transition arrangements in North Yorkshire. It was acknowledged by the representatives of both directorates that at present transition planning started much too late in North Yorkshire. Comparator information was being collated from other authorities many of whom started transition planning much earlier and continued to support service users for a longer period.

The Chairman said that the current arrangements surrounding transition planning were a cause of concern to many Members and that it was clear from the report and presentation that day this remained an area of work in progress. During the presentation reference was made to the development of a Transition Protocol which Members asked to be kept informed of progress and to see a copy of the final document when available.

A Member enquired if the allowances paid to service users were payable at a fixed rate and if so were they realistic. Seamus Breen replied that current allowances were fixed dependant upon individual circumstances. The system was however about to change as the Directorate moved towards the introduction of personalised budgets. Personalised budgets would give service users greater freedom about how they spent the monies they were awarded. He warned that this could lead to tensions as a result of differences in the aspirations of service users and members of their own families as in the future service users would have increased control and choice. This change in culture was also adding to parents concerns.

Members said that it was their personal experience that services in this area were not joined up and that it would be helpful if elected Members could attend planning events to contribute and add value to the planning process. The Corporate Director – Children and Young Peoples Service said that for those Members who were particularly interested in this area of work she would arrange via the Scrutiny Support Officer for them to receive a copy of regular progress reports.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the work to improve the transition to adulthood for disabled young people in North Yorkshire be noted.
- (ii) That the Committee receives regular progress reports on work to improve transition arrangements in North Yorkshire.

194. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS 2

CONSIDERED –

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service reporting progress on implementation of the first six months of Local Area Agreements 2 2008-11 for North Yorkshire.

The report was presented by Lynette Dodds, Principal Performance Officer who gave an explanation of those indicators that were a cause of concern. In most instances Members noted that this was due to data collection and reporting difficulties. Reassurances were given that measures to rectify problem areas had now been introduced. Members also noted those indicators where performance information

was provided to the County Council by Government Departments on an annual basis. Members were pleased to note that the vast majority of indicators were on target.

Members asked a number of questions surrounding the performance of individual indicators and were given an explanation of how individual targets were set.

Members were also advised that the LAA2 was to be refreshed to incorporate deferred indicators and to update baselines where appropriate. This process was due to take place between November and February with ministerial approval due at the end of March 2009.

The Committee agreed to continue to overview these targets on an ongoing basis.

RESOLVED –

That the Local Area Agreement 2 progress achieved to date be noted.

195. DATE OF CALL-IN MEETING REGARDING JUDICIAL REVIEW OF HARROGATE AND SURROUNDING AREAS ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman agreed that the following item of business was dealt with as an urgent item of business in view of the time limits imposed by the County Council's Constitution for processing a call-in request.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) tabled a report (copy placed in Minute Book) requesting the permission of the Committee to seek an alternative date due to a clash of meetings of the meeting of the Committee scheduled to take place on 4 December 2008 at 11.00 am to consider the call in of the decision to institute proceedings for judicial review of the School Adjudicators Determination on Admissions to Community Schools in Harrogate.

RESOLVED –

That the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) be instructed to seek an alternative date for the call in meeting in order to optimise elected Member attendance.

196. EXTENDED SERVICES IN SCHOOLS – PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 2010 TARGET AND NEXT STEPS

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service updating Members on progress towards achieving the National Targets for schools delivering the full core offer for extended services. The report also outlined the next steps needed in particular assessing the impact of services on standards and achievement.

The report was presented by Stuart Gregory, Integrated Service Manager, Children and Young People's Service. The Committee noted that in North Yorkshire there are 261 schools delivering the Core Offer and 49 schools delivering four elements of the core offer. The target set by the DCSF for September 2008 was 212 which meant that the County Council had exceeded the target and had a green rating. North Yorkshire was currently on track to achieve the 2010 target but some action was needed to support a few school clusters.

Copies of the following documents were tabled at the meeting:-

- Extended Services Toolkit for Governors.
- Draft Extended Services in and Through Schools - Whole School Case Studies 2008.

- Details of the Website address for the schools finder.

A copy of all of the above documents were placed in the Minute Book.

Members commented that small schools and those where the majority of pupils relied on school buses would struggle to deliver the extra services outlined in the report. In many schools the only time available to provide extra curriculum activities was during the lunch period and some schools in the County had already taken steps to reduce the lunch break period. Given the transport and practical logistical difficulties involved Members commented that it would be very difficult for the County Council to meet future targets especially as the County Council lacked the funds to provide school transport out of hours.

Members made reference to the findings of the on going joint scrutiny review of Transport for Young People. The issue of School To School transport posed a serious challenge and Members commented that as it was already proving very difficult for schools to meet their statutory obligations the provision of extended schools services would further exacerbate transport problems.

RESOLVED –

That progress achieved with regard to the development of Extended Services through schools in North Yorkshire is noted.

197. VALUE FOR MONEY PLAN 2009/10

CONSIDERED -

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service on the Children and Young People’s Service Value for Money Plan 2009/10.

George Bateman attended the meeting and summarised on going activity under each of the 16 headings in Appendix D of the report. Members were advised that the Service was currently “on target” to achieve the required savings in 2008/09.

Members noted however the shortfall in savings that had been identified for 2010/11 in the sum of £700,000 and were advised of the range of projects being undertaken within the Directorate to maximise potential efficiencies and achieve the required savings.

The Chairman thanked George Bateman for a comprehensive and sobering report.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the Children and Young People’s Service Value for Money Plan for 2009/10 be noted and approved.

198. WORK PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED –

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance asking the Committee to note the information in the report and to confirm, amend or add to the list of matters shown on the work programme (attached at Annex A).

The Chairman said that given the current economic downturn the Country was experiencing she wondered whether there was any merit in the Committee undertaking a piece of work that focused on the affect of changes in the economy

relevant to the remit of the Committee. The Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Services suggested that the Committee could look strategically at how service provision was developed or concentrate on operational aspects such as how the Children and Young People’s Service supported families with economic pressures.

A Member referred to the content of the Committee’s forward work programme and suggested that Members of the Committee would appreciate more opportunities to initiate and influence reports as opposed to mainly receiving a series of overview reports.

Another Member observed that the item on Young Carers had now slipped to the end of the Work Programme. She expressed her concern and disappointment that as a result of the forthcoming county council elections and possible subsequent changes in the membership of the Committee the subject of Young Carers may never be considered by the current Committee.

Members noted that a TRIG meeting had been arranged for 20 January 2009.

The Chairman referred to discussions at previous meetings regarding the need for a working group to be established to review the monitoring arrangements for looked after children similar to those considered by the former Corporate Parenting Group. The Chairman proposed that a Looked After Children’s Group comprising of Members of the Scrutiny Committee was established. She said that the Scrutiny Support Officer would administer the working group who would report annually to the Scrutiny Committee.

Members supported her suggestion and agreed that the Scrutiny Support Officer should contact all Members of the Committee to ascertain expressions of interest in being a Member of the Working Group. It was proposed that the Working Group would meet on the same day as the Committee in the afternoon. The first meeting of the Working Group would take place on 23 January 2009 when a Chairman would be elected.

The Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to circulate Members of the Committee with the meeting dates for 2009 and said that it was likely that a reserve date early in July would be arranged.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the information contained in the report be noted and approved.
- (b) That progress reports on:-
 - North Yorkshire Local Children’s Safe Guarding Board,
 - Young People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities in Transition into Adulthood,be added to the future Work Programme of the Committee.
- (c) That a new Corporate Parenting Working Group be established.

JW/ALJ