

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2009 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Heather Garnett the Chair.

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

Members Other Than County Councillors:-

Suzanne Morris and Patricia Stowell (Parent Governors).

Ann Swift (Primary School Representative).

Maggie Allen and Judith Bromfield (Voluntary Sector).

Officers:- Stephanie Bratcher (Scrutiny Support), Jane Wilkinson (Legal and Democratic Services), Chris McGee, Katharine Bruce, Bruce Wood, Louise Dunn and David Walker (Children and Young People's Service).

Two members of the public.

In attendance:-

Executive Member: County Councillor Caroline Patmore.

Scarborough Borough Council:- Andrew Rowe.

Apologies for absence were received from Jos Huddleston (Non-Conformist Church) and Rev Judd (Church of England).

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

216. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 March 2009 having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

217. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

218. IN-DEPTH JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW – FINAL DRAFT REPORT OF THE MEMBER TASK GROUP ON TRANSPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (AND THE 14-19 DIPLOMA)

CONSIDERED –

The final draft report of the joint scrutiny task group on Transport for Young People was presented to the Committee by County Councillor Tim Swales. He emphasised that the report was only the first step towards providing transport for young people engaged in 14-19 educational reforms in North Yorkshire. Further work was required

and would be rolled out over the forthcoming years before the project was finally completed. He highlighted the key findings of the task group and summarised individually each of the report recommendations.

Members were advised that experience had shown that the availability of funding had encouraged competition between educational establishments as opposed to promoting collaboration. This was now a national problem to which there was at present no solution. The real problem the reforms presented was around access to services, not rurality or transport. The reforms required services to be delivered in a different way which was why recommendation 4 was key to future success. The vital importance of transport being an integral part of future programme planning was stressed to the Committee.

A Member commented that the provision of a new concessionary transport scheme for young people was not the answer. She believed that a better solution would be greater access to public transport to enable young people to access leisure activities.

Members said that the draft report was a valuable piece of scrutiny work and requested further progress reports in due course.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the information in the Transport For Young People Joint Scrutiny Task Group draft final report (attached at Annex A) of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the recommendations set out in the Transport For Young People Joint Scrutiny Task Group report be agreed and referred to the Executive.
- (iii) That an update report on Transport for Young People (14-19 Diplomas) be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

219. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR 16-19 YEAR OLDS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service updating Committee Members on developments to improve training and employment opportunities for 16-19 year olds in North Yorkshire.

In response to questions from Members the Committee was advised that as the funding streams for learners were now better defined cross-border service planning had commenced and integrated quality assurance protocols were in the process of being developed.

Members were concerned that those schools on the coast had not made as much progress as had other parts of the County and asked Officers to bear this mind in their future work.

The Chairman said that the developments outlined in the report represented a huge cultural change and looked forward to receiving further update reports in due course.

RESOLVED –

That the information contained in the report and given at the meeting be noted.

220. REDUCING THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET) AND KEY STAGE 4 ENGAGEMENT

CONSIDERED –

The reports of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service.

(a) Reducing the Number of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

The report was presented by Louise Dunn who outlined the County Council’s responsibilities for meeting national targets set to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). She summarised 2008/09 performance and described the difficulties the County Council had encountered since taking over responsibility for reporting on NEET. Members were assured that data cleansing was due to be completed in the next couple of months and that thereafter efforts would be concentrated on hitting Local Area Agreement targets.

Members noted that the economic downturn was impacting on NEET figures and that there was a reduced number of vacancies now available. As always rurality in North Yorkshire was a key issue as the lack of a critical mass of young people made it very challenging to offer all young people employment opportunities.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the information contained in the report and provided at the meeting be noted.
- (ii) That a further update report on NEET be referred to the Committee in due course.

(b) Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme

The report was presented by Katharine Bruce who updated Members on the current position regarding the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme within North Yorkshire.

Members asked to be informed of those schools in their electoral division that were not fully engaged with the Engagement Co-ordinator and to receive further update reports in due course.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report and the information provided at the meeting be noted.
- (ii) That further update reports on the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme be referred to the Committee in due course.

221. REDUCING HOMELESSNESS AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

CONSIDERED –

Report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service informing Members of progress being made to reduce homelessness amongst young people and families with dependent children in North Yorkshire.

The report was introduced by David Walker who said that the indications were that the performance management information for 2008/09 was positive and indicated that the initiatives outlined in the report were proving effective. Overall there had

been a reduction in the number of incidences of homelessness in North Yorkshire. The adoption of a county wide approach to homelessness was he said key to North Yorkshire's success. He was pleased to confirm that the delay in the setting up of the Supported Lodgings scheme referred to in paragraph 2.5 of the report due to lack of funds had now been resolved and that the Scheme was due to commence shortly.

The meeting was attended by Andrew Rowe, Housing Manager at Scarborough Borough Council who was also the chair of the county wide homelessness group. He described the success of the Nightstop project and said that the jointly commissioned mediation service had also been a big success. He confirmed that the performance management data for 2008/09 was in the process of being compiled and expected targets on the three key indicators for homelessness to be exceeded. On a note of caution he said that the current economic downturn had seen a 30% increase in the number of repossessions but that he remained confident that the preventative services now in place would cope with any increased demand. Finally he said that Members should be aware that the future funding of the homelessness initiatives described in the report and at the meeting was no longer secure as the ring fence was about to be removed from the government grant monies currently received.

In response to questions from Members it was acknowledged that the accommodation given to Looked After Children Care Leavers was often unsuitable and inappropriate. Ideally what was needed was a supported lodgings scheme whereby care leavers were encouraged to be independent whilst receiving ongoing support. Members agreed therefore to add this matter to the Committee's future Work Programme.

The Executive Member said that it had been agreed in North Yorkshire that the income received from second homes was to be awarded to local strategic partnerships and disadvantaged housing groups. To date the monies earmarked for disadvantaged housing groups had been spent exclusively on extra care housing. The Executive Members said she could see no reason why some of these monies could not be awarded to looked after children and said that she had already discussed the possibility of this with the Corporate Director – Finance and Central Services. It was pointed out that if additional capital monies were made available it was possible that the amount of the government grant could be reduced and second homes monies could then end up subsidising existing schemes. It was suggested that a better use for the monies would be to improve communal facilities.

Members thanked officers for an interesting presentation and said that it was clear that greater emphasis on preventative work such as NEET was key to future success.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report and the information provided at the meeting be noted.
- (ii) That a report on accommodation for care leavers be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

222. WORK PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance presenting the Work Programme and inviting comment.

The Scrutiny Support Officer introduced the report and said that the following items would be added to the Work Programme as had been agreed earlier in the meeting:-

- Accommodation for Care Leavers
- Transport For Young People (14-19 Diplomas)
- NEET & Key Stage 4 Engagement Progress
- Apprenticeships

A Member reported that the young people on the Craven Youth Council had become frustrated in their relations with the County Council and had as a result now severed all ties. This was a worrying development which he said needed further investigation. The Executive Member said that the County Council supported all youth councils in establishing a structure but that ultimately their work programme was driven by the young people themselves. She asked that details of the criticisms by Craven Youth Council be forwarded to her so that she could investigate.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Work Programme be updated and suggestions made earlier in the meeting incorporated.

223. VOTE OF THANKS

This being the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee prior to the County Council elections in June 2009, Members thanked County Councillor Heather Garnett for the excellent way in which she had chaired the Committee.

In turn the Chairman thanked Members, Officers and the Executive portfolio holders for their support and participation in the work of the Scrutiny Committee.

JW/ALJ/JD