

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2010 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Keith Barnes in the Chair.

County Councillors:- Andrew Backhouse, John Batt, David Blades, Elizabeth Casling, Janet Jefferson, Heather Moorhouse, Patrick Mulligan, Joe Plant, Paul Richardson, Caroline Seymour and Tim Swales.

Members Other Than County Councillors:-

Chris Head (Secondary Teacher Representative), Suzanne Morris and Patricia Stowell (Parent Governors), Bjorn Risi and Judith Bromfield (Voluntary Sector).

In attendance:-

Executive Members:- County Councillors Caroline Patmore and John Watson.

Officers:- Cynthia Welbourn, David O'Brien, Lynette Dodds (Children and Young People's Service), Stephanie Bratcher (Scrutiny Support) and Jane Wilkinson (Legal and Democratic Services).

Apologies for absence were received from Rev Judd, Jos Huddleston, Helena McGouran and Anne Swift (Primary Teacher Representative).

One member of the public was in attendance.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2010 having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

38. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Committee was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

39. EXECUTIVE MEMBERS UPDATE

The Committee received oral reports from County Councillors Caroline Patmore and John Watson summarising recent activity within their portfolios. Their report included reference to the savings required to be made by the Children & Young People's Service, a detailed report on this subject appears later on the agenda. The Committee noted that the savings required totalled £18.3M of which £15.8M had already been identified. Work to secure the remaining £2.5M was ongoing.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Committee was advised that the target figure of £18.3M was the proportion of the total savings required by the County

Council being divided on a pro-rata basis across directorates based on turnover. It was stressed that the target figure of £18.3M was annual and would have to be achieved each year for the next three years. The Corporate Director – Children & Young People’s Service had identified those areas within her directorate where the savings would have to be made as it was not possible to adopt a pro-rata savings approach on services. It was emphasised that all parts of the Service would be asked to contribute to savings.

County Councillor John Watson warned Members that some of the proposed cuts to services would almost certainly prove to be very unpopular with the public.

County Councillor Caroline Patmore reported that the Looked After Children’s Group had held its first meeting earlier in the week. She commented that the Group would monitor the impact of the savings referred to above. She said she would arrange for all Members of the Committee to receive a copy of the SEN newsletter that was published every six months and recommended that they read ‘Induction For New Members’ produced by the Childrens Safeguarding Board.

RESOLVED –

That the information provided at the meeting be noted.

40. CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE’S SERVICE SAVINGS AND TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY –

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service presenting the Children and Young Peoples Service - Savings and Transformation Strategy attached as Annex A to the report.

Members were invited to comment on the Strategy proposed to deliver savings under targets set by the County Council in its Medium Term Financial Strategy and a 24% cut in Area Based Grants from the Department for Education, together with other cuts in grants announced by the Secretary of State in June 2010. Appendix 4 of the report summarised the extent of the savings required in eighteen separate project areas.

The Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service introduced the Strategy. She stressed that front-line services would be protected wherever possible and that some of the changes or further improvements being pursued had positive features that would result in better practices and improved services. However the scale of savings to be made was very challenging and difficult decisions would have to be made. Over the course of the next couple of months further details of savings in the eighteen identified project areas would emerge. The £2.5M shortfall referred to earlier in the meeting would be met by digging deeper into those projects. If following Government announcements in October the savings required were increased then she was unable to give any guarantees about specific parts of the Service being exempt from cuts. The approach being adopted was based on service priorities.

In response to a question regarding the NHS contribution to savings, Cynthia Welbourn replied that NHS budgets were also under pressure. She said that the County Council was working with the Primary Care Trust regarding the transfer of community health services to new providers. She hoped that negotiations between the County Council and the new providers would ensure agreement was reached on the shape of community service in North Yorkshire. With regard to other changes such as GP commissioning it was too early to say what the impact would be on the County Council.

County Councillor Liz Casling referred to Saving Project No 2 (Premises Co-location) and suggested that greater savings could be achieved if a corporate as opposed to directorate approach was adopted.

In response to a question about how many staff would be made redundant as a result of the cuts the Committee was advised that it was impossible at this stage to give an accurate specific figure. Staff redundancies were inevitable and posts at all levels would be affected, with the more senior positions being hit the hardest.

The Executive Member, County Councillor John Watson said it was important that the Committee was aware of the significance of some of the proposed cuts in particular the closure of elderly persons homes and the removal of home to school transport costs for children attending faith schools. Both of these were likely to result in a public outcry and Members should be prepared.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

41. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES AND EMERGENT POLICIES: HEADLINE BRIEFINGS:-

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny & Corporate Performance briefing the Committee on a series of legislative changes and policy developments affecting services for children and young people that emerged following the formation of the Coalition Government in May 2010. Topics covered included:-

- Decommissioning of ContactPoint.
- Reform of Children's Trust.
- Changes to 16-19 Funding Arrangements.
- Academies and Free Schools.
- Review of Child Protection.

Members sought more information on a question and answer basis and were provided with the following information:-

ContactPoint – Assurances were given that all actions needed to decommission ContactPoint at a local level were now complete. With regard to the staff employed to work on ContactPoint, one post had been deleted, the remaining members of staff who were not solely dedicated to working on ContactPoint continued to do systems development work in other areas such as Integrated Childrens Systems (ICS).

Academies & Free Schools – following the introduction of academies, the legislation controlling their operation had undergone several changes and was now more restrictive. The full extent of the affect of these changes however remained unclear. As soon as the position was clarified the County Council intended to issue an advice sheet to all schools in North Yorkshire.

Review of Child Protection - North Yorkshire has not progressed the use of volunteer social workers. This is because child protection work is so highly regulated and Officers are unable to envisage a role for them. With regard to the shortage of health visitors the Corporate Director – Children & Young People's Service agreed to include in her response to Professor Munro on the review of the child protection system the comments of the Committee regarding the essential need for other services to have available capacity.

RESOLVED –

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

42. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN – ANNUAL REVIEW AND REFRESH:-

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Director – Children & Young People's Service presenting the results of the 2009/10 annual review of the Children & Young Peoples Plan and performance against targets in the Local Area Agreement for Children's Services. .

Members noted that whilst currently a statutory requirement to review annually the Children & Young People's Plan, new guidance due to be issued in the Autumn was expected to revoke this requirement. It was also anticipated that in the future the number of targets prescribed nationally would be significantly reduced. It would therefore be necessary to decide at a local level which targets the County Council wished to continue monitoring. This was to be the subject of further discussion at the forthcoming development event being held by the Children's Trust Board.

In response to a question from a Member, the Committee was advised that the indicator 'NI115 Reduce Substance Misuse by Young People' referred primarily to alcohol and not drugs. As this indicator had been dropped from the national indicator set, alternative reporting mechanisms needed to be agreed as substance misuse had been identified as a priority for the local area.

RESOLVED –

That the information contained within the report including Annex A and Annex B be noted.

43. WORK PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Corporate Performance inviting comments from Members on the content of the Committee's programme of work scheduled for future meetings.

The Chairman referred to visits by Sixth Form Students to attend County Council meetings in October and December and said that the Scrutiny Support Officer would arrange for each of the Members of the Committee who were also County Councillors to have a student 'buddy' during the meetings.

Members were asked to select the subject of the next in-depth scrutiny project and agreed that it should be School Nurses and Health Visitors. The Chairman sought nominations to be a member of the task group and it was agreed that following the meeting the Scrutiny Support Officer would contact those Members of the Committee not in attendance to see whether they wished they wished to join the task group.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report, business scheduled for future meetings and information provided at the meeting be noted.
- (ii) That a Scrutiny Review Task Group is established in order to undertake an in-depth review of the current and long term future of the School Nurse and Health Visitor Service.
- (iii) That the Scrutiny Task Group comprise of County Councillors Keith Barnes, Andrew Backhouse, Joe Plant , Caroline Seymour and Patricia Stowell.

JW/ALJ