

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2011 at 10.30 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

Cllr Keith Barnes in the Chair

County Councillors:- Andrew Backhouse, Executive Member Arthur Barker, Chris Pearson (substitute for Patrick Mulligan), John Batt, Liz Casling, Caroline Seymour, David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson, Tim Swales, Cliff Trotter, Joe Plant.

Officers:- Anton Hodge, David Walker, Simon Ashby, Stephanie Bratcher (Scrutiny Support).

Apologies for absence were received from Executive Member Carl Les, Corporate Director Cynthia Welbourn, County Councillors Patrick Mulligan and David Blades, Parent Governor Mrs Suzanne Morris and Non-Conformist Church Representative Jos Huddleston.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

78. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2011, having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

79. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

80. EXECUTIVE MEMBERS UPDATE

CONSIDERED –

The oral report of Executive Member County Councillor Arthur Barker.

In advance of the meeting the Chairman had submitted three questions to the Executive Members and Corporate Directorate – Children & Young Peoples Service.

The Committee received an oral report from County Councillor Arthur Barker summarising recent activity.

In response to questions posed by the Chairman the Committee were advised as follows:

- i) Q: A position statement in relation to the Children & Young Peoples Service: Savings and Transformation Strategy;

A: The first quarter indicates the service is on target to deliver their part in the County Council savings through the 18 identified project areas and anticipates to better the target by up to £1m but were reminded that it is still early days.

Members were reassured that the Transformation Strategy continues to be mindful of frontline services and that some of the changes or further improvements being pursued had positive features that would result in better practices and improved services.

ii) Q: Progress towards a Health and Well-Being Board

A: Members of the Committee were made aware of the plans to have a Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board in place around October/November 2011. This is the forerunner to the creation of the full board in 2013. Members were directed towards the Health and Well Being web page and the consultation being undertaken on the draft proposals

iii) Q: Government Reforms of Early Learning Centres – Is NYCC involved with any of the pilots mentioned?

A: In response to the Chairman's question, Members were advised that NYCC is one of 15 local authorities involved in a pilot investigating how best to implement the new duty to have funded provision available for disadvantaged two year olds. (Expected to become statutory from September 2013). This pilot will consider the issues for local authorities with large rural areas and follows on from a successful pilot NYCC undertook with the most economically disadvantaged children on the Coast.

In addition the committee were also made aware of a bid submitted with East Yorkshire for a "payments by results" pilot. This pilot will look at the problems associated with having children born in one local authority area and receiving their post natal support in another local authority area. (Decision on whether NYCC has been successful is awaited.)

The Chairman thanked the Executive Member and the Children & Young Peoples Service Assistant Director Finance & Management Support for their detailed responses.

RESOLVED –

That the information provided at the meeting be noted.

81. NATIONAL POLICY AND FUNDING CHANGES: HEADLINE BRIEFINGS

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Assistant Director – Children and Young People's Service Finance and Management Support on a series of legislative changes and policy developments that have emerged and affect services for children and young people. Topics covered included:-

- School Funding
- Pupil Premium
- Academies
- End of Education Maintenance Allowance

Members had requested further explanation on all four topics and were provided with the following information:-

Briefing 1: School Funding - The Assistant Director - Children and Young People's Service explained the detail behind the twelve week consultation on "School Funding Reform: Proposals for a Fairer System" launched in July (running until 13 October). In response to questions from the Chairman Members were advised that a programme of work is already underway and that the response will include each proposal being evaluated and its impact on North Yorkshire measured. This will ensure that the County Council can make a clear and comprehensive response to the Department for Education.

Briefing 2: Pupil Premium - Nationally some £626m has been allocated for the Pupil Premium for 2011-12. Schools are allocated £430 per pupil receiving Free School Meals (FSM), with a similar allocation for children who have been looked after (LAC) for more than 6 months and a smaller amount (£200) for service children. This means that North Yorkshire has been allocated £3.5m this year.

In response to questions about governance issues Members were advised that the Department for Education guidance states that "whilst schools will be free to spend the Pupil Premium as they see fit, schools will be held accountable for how they have used the additional funding to support deprived pupils." Members mentioned the Schools On-Line Performance Tables and whether this gives an opportunity to look at this level of detail and scrutinise the benefits. The Committee felt this would be an area to wait to see what sanctions the DfE take with schools that do not use the Pupil Premium to support deprived pupils.

Members also voiced their concerns regarding families who were entitled but did not claim FSM and asked what was happening to encourage parents to register and were advised that there is a national drive to get the message out to parents and an incentive for schools to also get involved.

Briefing 3: Academies - The number of Academies in North Yorkshire stands at 7 secondary schools and 1 primary school. Two other schools are in the formal process. This total of 10 schools represents 2.6% of schools in the County. Academy conversion is a matter for individual schools and North Yorkshire County Council has tried to ensure that schools are made aware of the full implications of Academy conversion and will continue to work with Academies including providing services where requested.

Members were advised of the Schools who have already converted to Academy status.

Briefing 4: End of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) – Following the withdrawal of Education Maintenance Allowance to all students the Government has introduced a new 16-19 Bursary from September 2011. The Assistant Director explained the transitional arrangements and the implications for Learners and for Providers.

In response to questions Members were advised that under the new proposals the worked carried out by school and college administrative staff will be greatly increased. This includes the setting of household income thresholds for eligibility and prioritisation and what the funds can be used for. For the first year the Government has stated that there will be close monitoring to ensure that the funding has been given to those young people in greatest financial need.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for his detailed briefing and for answering Members questions.

RESOLVED –

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

82 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

CONSIDERED –

The summary report of the Senior Adviser Inclusion – Children and Young People's Service on Elective Home Education (EHE)

The Senior Adviser introduced the report on Elective Home Education which explained that the responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. In England, education is compulsory, but schooling is not and parents are therefore not required to register or seek approval in order to educate their children at home.

Currently 158 children and young people from 114 families are home educated in North Yorkshire, 39% primary phase and 61% secondary. Once the LA has been notified of the intention to home education an Education Social Worker will seek to visit the home and offer the opportunity to discuss any concerns or issues that have not been resolved to the parent/carers satisfaction. Maintaining positive relationships with families has resulted in a number of pupils successfully re-entering mainstream education.

In response to questions Members were advised that the responsibility and legal duty of a Local Authority (LA) is concerned only with children who appear not to be receiving a suitable education; that there is no absolute definition of what a suitable, efficient or full-time education is and families educating their children at home do not have to follow any prescribed curriculum or routines; account for or match any age specific educational standards; there is 'no statutory duty on the LA to monitor the quality of home education on a routine basis'. However, the LA aims to establish an on-going relationship with all families who choose to home educate their children either through visits, written communication or discussion over the telephone.

Members commented on the on-going challenge of maintaining contact with families who wish for no involvement with the Local Authority. In response Members were informed that there is no duty for parents to respond to enquiries about the suitability of the education being provided.

The Committee consider that the challenges before the LA in not being allowed to monitor the educational standards being achieved by this group of young people is an extremely difficult one and suggested that the Chairman discusses with the Executive Members and the Corporate Director – Children and Young Peoples Service the possibility of North Yorkshire County Council making representation to Government regarding access points to these homes and suggesting that a review of Elective Home Education is undertaken.

RESOLVED –

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

That the Chairman discusses with the Executive Members and Corporate Director a request that North Yorkshire County Council makes representation to Government regarding a review of Elective Home Education.

83. COVERING REPORT – DRAFT POLICY: ACCOMMODATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Education Officer, Children and Young People's Service on the Draft Policy: Accommodation for Young People developed in partnership with North Yorkshire Supporting People (SP) the seven District/Borough Councils and the Children and Young Peoples Service.

Members of the Committee were invited to comment on the Draft Policy: Accommodation for Young People which presents an overview of the scale, distribution and causes of homelessness of young people (16 – 25) and sets out the requirements for future provision countywide.

In introducing the report the Officer explained that this joint review had been extensive and that without the involvement of the District/Borough Councils this review would not have been possible.

The review identified three key drivers:-

- the need to secure equitable and consistent services county-wide, with a focus on prevention
- secure best value and drive down costs by jointly commissioning services
- secure accommodation pathways offering a range of services of proven value

The consensus reached across all agencies is that a pathway approach should be adopted in line with the recommendations from Communities and Local Government. Whilst the pathway approach recognises that the preferred option in most instances is to return the young person to their family home or kinship arrangement, in a majority of cases this will not be appropriate or possible, despite mediation. In these instances young people will enter into an appropriate pathway of additional support and accommodation.

In response to questions Members were advised that there will be six Hubs in operation providing county-wide provision from October 2011. These Hubs will be fully integrated with mainstream services and a performance management system that will improve performance and cost benefits further and which identifies impact and savings within mainstream services. Members noted that feedback had been positive and that the Department for Communities and Local Government were very interested in the joint working and the combining of budgets to provide homeless young people with accommodation.

Members noted that the true impact will take time to evolve but were reassured by the pathway and performance measures in place.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for attending on behalf of the Partnership and for a succinct but very information briefing.

RESOLVED –

That the information in this report and the Draft Policy Document attached at Annex A is noted.

84. WORK PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED –

The report of the Corporate Development Officer outlined the agenda items covered at the last Mid Cycle briefing held on the 22nd July 2011. The Chairman ran through the Mid Cycle Briefing items and invited members to ask questions or comment on the areas covered.

The Chairman advised Members of the Committee that the Draft Strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and the Short Breaks Statement are about to begin a 16 week consultation period. All elected members will be alerted to these consultations when they commence. It was suggested that the Draft Strategy for SEND and Short Breaks Statement are brought to the next meeting of the Committee in November.

Next in-depth Scrutiny Review – Young Peoples Participation

The Chairman invited comments on the proposed scope of the next in-depth scrutiny review. Members were supportive of the proposed review and added their comments to the draft scope of the review:

- it is important to define 'participation'
- a general approach rather than vulnerable groups
- how we engage with young people who find it difficult to speak up
- local barriers which prevent young people attending
- what do Youth Councils receive in terms of resources
- being realistic with young people about the issues that concern them
- use of social media to engage with young people

Members also acknowledged that local Youth Councils; the North Yorkshire Youth Council and the Young Peoples Council (Children in Care Council) are driven and run by young people and that listening to young people should be an important part of this review.

The Chairman sought nominations for membership of the task group and requested the Corporate Development Officer to arrange a mutually convenient meeting date to mark the commencement of this review.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the content of the report, business scheduled for future meetings and information provided at the meeting be noted.
- (ii) That the Consultation process on the Special Education Needs and Disability Strategy and the Short Breaks Statement are considered at the next meeting of the Young Peoples Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- (iii) That a Scrutiny Review Task Group is established in order to undertake an in-depth review on Youth Participation in North Yorkshire.
- (iv) That the Scrutiny Task Group comprise of County Councillors David Jeffels, Caroline Seymour, John Batt, and Cliff Trotter, Mrs Judith Bromfield and Bjorn Risi Voluntary Sector and Graham Richards Church of England Representative.

The meeting concluded at 12:40.

SB/ALJ