

North Yorkshire County Council

Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 28 June 2019 at 10am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Present: County Councillor Janet Jefferson in the Chair.

County Councillors, Stephanie Duckett, Cliff Lunn, Cliff Pearson (as substitute for Val Arnold), Joe Plant, Gill Quinn and Annabel Wilkinson.

Co-opted Members: Dr Tom Cavell-Taylor, David Sharp (North Yorkshire Youth)

In attendance. County Councillors Patrick Mulligan and Janet Sanderson (Executive Members)

Officers: Ray Busby (Scrutiny Officer (Central Services)), Stuart Carlton (Corporate Director Children and Young Peoples Services), Howard Emmett (Assistant Director - Strategic Resources (CYPS), Integrated Finance (CSD)), Karl Podmore (Disabled Children and Young Peoples Service Manager, Inclusion (CYPS))

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillors Val Arnold, Lindsay Burr MBE, Zoe Metcalfe, Richard Musgrave, John Mann, Stuart Martin MBE and David Watson (Voluntary Sector)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

170. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2019 having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

171. Any Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

172. Public Questions

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

173. Disabled Childrens Service

Considered –

Presentation by Karl Podmore, (Disabled Children and Young Peoples Service Manager, Inclusion (CYPS))

Karl explained that eligibility criteria determines that support is provided for disabled children and young people where the disability has a substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities AND there are significant difficulties in meeting needs within their family, broader support networks or through local universal provision. Some members queried what constitutes significant; furthermore, how can we be sure the interpretation of criteria was being fairly made. Applying this criteria and its correlative definitions is inevitably complex; but Karl and Stuart Carlton emphasised that there was a high level of leadership confidence in how professional judgement, together with an increasing body of national knowledge from SEND tribunal decisions, was ensuring a fair and consistent level of support.

Karl explained that out of a budget of circa £5m:

- staffing is provided by DCS Manager, 4.5 Locality Team Leaders, 18.5 Social Workers and 2.5 Family Support Workers.
- 3 Children's Resource Centres are NYCC managed: Nidderdale (Harrogate), Morton-on-Swale and Cherry Tree Lodge (Scarborough). All 3 of these are rated as Outstanding by Ofsted.

Of the 400 children supported by the service:

- 27 are Looked After Children.
- 20 classed as Looked after because they who have substantial packages of short breaks sometimes in more than one setting.
- 5 are covered by a Child Protection Plan.
- 340+ are receiving a service under s17 Children Act/Short Breaks Guidance

In terms of short breaks - a lifeline for many parents and carers, and an issue of interest for some time for the committee - many families use direct payments as part of exercising choice and control.

The challenges facing the service were reported:

- The cost of purchasing care is high and increasing; National Living Wage, Auto-Enrolment pensions are factors here.
- The availability of domiciliary care is less and decreasing.
- Parents find it hard to use Direct Payments because they cannot recruit Personal Assistants.
- Recruiting and retaining skilled staff in Children's Resource Centres is difficult.
- Reductions in the budget for DCS is affecting support to families.
- Significant reduction in health funding (over £200k less since 2017).
- The service has - with good cause we accepted - overspent since 2012.

More widely, for the council the key issues are:

- The range of legal duties in respect of disabled children is wide and the Council has to balance the budget against the risk of legal challenge.
- Availability of budget cannot be used as a reason not to meet assessed needs.
- Rising expectations from families, especially those with children with autism who do not meet the DCS eligibility criteria – this creates pressure in the Children and Families Service.
- Reducing the budget of DCS does not necessarily save the Council money long term because short breaks help sustain children to stay with their families.

Transition at all stages, whether from birth to home, home to nursery, primary to secondary, to a new home or residential situation or transition into a new specialist

service, is a key issue for children, young people and families. Karl advised that HAS and CYPS have worked hard at improving the sharing of information and the planning and budgeting for services. Clear protocols are consolidating better integration of services in appropriate areas to ensure appropriate support is in place as children move to adulthood.

Resolved –

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That in her statement to council the Chairman emphasise that members were impressed with the following:
 - the commitment to meet the needs of disabled children and young people in a way that addresses the considerable complexity, both for professionals and families;
 - the willingness to take a proactive approach to promoting direct payments as an option;
 - the understanding that different families will welcome different forms of support;
 - the commitment to empowerment in decision making and accessing resources - making sure the views of disabled children and young people themselves are taken into account in the provision of service;
 - the commitment to improving the quality of responsive services and timely support; and
 - the adoption of a range of actions in support of the further development and sustainability of short breaks.

174. School Finances Update

Considered –

Joint report of the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Service and Corporate Director, Strategic Resources updating on the latest financial position in relation to local authority maintained schools as at 31st March 2019 and the management action that has been taken in response to the trends and issues identified.

Howard Emmett explained that school finances clearly remain challenging for a number of schools in North Yorkshire. Funding has not kept pace with cost pressures which adds to local issues such as fluctuations in pupil numbers. Aggregate school balances have continued to reduce in 2018/19 although they remain in a surplus position.

The concern is that the financial position of maintained schools will continue to deteriorate.

Members commented upon the number of small schools, especially those in predominantly rural areas, which were finding it difficult to manage the financial pressures. A discussion followed about the numbers of small schools that may have no alternative but to consider closure – rather than, for example, confederation or collaborative arrangements. Falling school rolls are often caused by changes in the makeup of the local area – job opportunities, local shops closing and so on. It was suggested that with a clear understanding of the social capital of a local community and its assets, it maybe that Stronger Communities, for example, could target and

bolster community resources generally understood to be critical to a school's sustainability in the longer term. To better understand this situation, members were minded to review cases over, say, the last 18 months of local authority maintained schools which had proceeded to full closure rather than achieve academy status.

Resolved –

- a) That the report be received.
- b) Members agreed that in respect of school finances, it was clear that the local authority is not complacent demonstrated by the directorate's willingness to continue to work proactively with a range of individual schools to avoid deficits wherever possible and to develop robust recovery plans for those projecting a deficit, or in the worst case, tackling accumulated historical deficits.
- c) In terms of school closures, the interest of members in understanding the rate of closures and whether it is possible to identify common causes, trends and circumstances be noted; and the topic be, therefore, provisionally added to the committee's work programme pending consideration by group spokespersons of a possible approach to any review.

175. Healthy Child Programme

Considered -

Report by the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Service providing an update on the re-commissioning of the Health Child Programme (HCP) and the timelines for procurement.

Resolved –

That the report be received.

176. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Scrutiny Team Leader inviting comments from Members on the content of the Committee's Programme of Work scheduled for future meetings.

Resolved –

- a) Members again confirmed the content of the Work Programme.
- b) It was agreed that:
 - Consideration be given at a future meeting as to what scrutiny could achieve by reviewing the relationship between Multi Academy Trusts and the local communities served by schools under Trust management.
 - Young People with additional needs Transitioning to Adulthood - How NYCC supports and offers guidance to a young person aged 14 to 25 with special educational needs or a disability. Including access to education, training and employment, and to live as independently as possible. This may be best tackled in a joint informal session with Care and Independence Scrutiny Committee.

- Supporting children in and out of education who have medical condition, especially a chronic (life threatening) illness be taken as part of the intended consultation on a proposed Medical Education Service (MES) that would enable a more flexible delivery model for those children/young people who cannot access education because of medical needs.
- A workshop on Elective Home Education be held on the provisional Date 1 November at 2pm agreed. New guidance may be available for this date.

The meeting concluded at 12.45pm
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