

North Yorkshire County Council

Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2014 at 10.30 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Present: - County Councillor Elizabeth Shields in the chair

County Councillors: Val Arnold, Andrew Backhouse, Derek Bastiman, David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson, Anne Jones, Cliff Lunn, Joe Plant, John Ritchie, Janet Sanderson, Tim Swales, Cliff Trotter

Co-opted Members: Louise Alder (Primary Teacher representative), Mr Paul Bircumshaw (Secondary Teacher representative), Mr Tom Cavell-Taylor (Parent Governor), Pam Crabtree (Roman Catholic Church representative), Mr Jeremy Noott (Parent Governor), David Sharp (Voluntary Sector representative)

In attendance: Executive Members County Councillors Arthur Barker, Tony Hall

Officers: Neil Irving (Assistant Director - Policy and Partnerships (Central Services)), Carolyn Bird (Assistant Director - Prevention and Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services)), Phil Bennington (Principal Adviser, Quality and Improvement (Children and Young People's Services)), Bryon Hunter (Scrutiny Team Leader (Central Services))

Apologies for absence were received from: Graham Richards (Church of England representative), Jon Carling (Voluntary Sector representative)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

47. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2014 having been printed and circulated be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

48. Public Questions

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

49. North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund

Considered -

The report of Neil Irving, Assistant Director - Policy and Partnerships on the operation of the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) to date and seeking the Committee's view on the options for the future of the fund ahead of a decision being taken from the Executive in December 2014 or January 2015.

Members were advised that the NYLAF was established in April 2013 following the abolition of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants under the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Social Fund scheme.

The NYLAF provides emergency support for vulnerable people aged 16 or over, to move into or remain in the community, and to help families under exceptional pressure to stay together. The NYLAF does not replicate anything that was previously provided by DWP. No cash payments, crisis loans or community care grants are available. Awards are now made in kind, in the form of goods or services. Items requested must be essential and critical to the needs of the applicant or those of their family. Available items include essential items of household furniture and equipment, beds and bedding, food vouchers, clothing vouchers, utility top-up vouchers, utility reconnection charges and essential home repairs.

Although the DWP has allocated additional funding to the County Council for NYLAF, the amount provided for awards in 2013/14 and 2014/15 was £793k per year, compared to the DWP expenditure of £915k on awards in North Yorkshire in 2011/12 – a reduction of 13%.

Members' views were sought on three options:

- Continue with the NYLAF as currently.
- Reduce funding for NYLAF awards in line with the overall reduction in council budgets.
- Abolish the NYLAF.

At an event on 1 October 2014 stakeholders expressed overwhelming support for NYLAF to continue.

The Executive will consider the level of budget that should be allocated for the NYLAF from 2015/16 and beyond at a meeting in either December 2014 or January 2015.

Elected Members raised a number of points including:

- the need to guard against people using the vouchers to obtain cigarettes,
- the potential to issue vouchers which individuals could exchange for food at local shops or supermarkets and these outlets then reclaim the cost of the goods back from the scheme,
- the possibility of parcels being delivered to peoples' homes. This would help to ensure that people were not abusing the scheme by obtaining cigarettes, but it was acknowledged that such a system would incur delivery cost for the providers which could lead to a disproportionate amount of funding being taken up on delivery costs.
- Whether or not awards were being taken up by people moving into Scarborough – the area with the highest take up of awards – 49%.
- the need for the area committees to receive regular reports on the operation of the scheme.

Members were informed that there was little evidence of the scheme being abused.

Resolved -

- a) That the report be noted.

- b) That the Executive be recommended to continue with the NYLAF as currently.
- c) That area committees receive regular reports on the operation of NYLAF.

50. Executive Members Oral Briefing

County Councillor Tony Hall commented that many of the items in which he is involved were part of the agenda for the meeting and, with the Chairman's approval, would offer comment as part of discussion on agenda items as they arose. Cllr Hall emphasised the need for the County Council to work in partnership with all stakeholders to tackle issues affecting children, whether that be with regard to sexual exploitation or homelessness. Cllr Hall referred to the recent Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, including children looked after and care leavers which concluded that working in partnership is one of the key strengths of the local authority and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

County Councillor Arthur Barker drew Members' attention to the Department for Education's Fairer Schools Funding Arrangements for 2015 to 2016 under which North Yorkshire schools will receive an additional £9.8m pa based on October 2013 pupil numbers. The portion of funding allocated to primary and secondary allocation is remaining unchanged.

51. Prevention Service Review

Considered -

The oral report of Carolyn Bird (Assistant Director - Prevention and Commissioning) Children and Young People's Service, updating the Committee on the Prevention Service Review taking place in the Children and Young People's Service.

Members were informed that the review is now in the implementation phase and appointments have been made to the key posts which will lead the area teams and the process of filling posts in the new structure was underway. A number of consultations are taking place on specific issues such as the future use of local children centre buildings. Additional work is also taking place to explore opportunities for the voluntary sector to become more involved in direct service delivery.

The review had highlighted the need for the Prevention Service to be more closely aligned with children's social care within the Children and Young People's Service.

Members welcomed the level of engagement that had taken place with local councillors as part of efforts to keep them abreast of developments.

Resolved -

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That a further report be brought to the Committee in the New Year, once the implementation process is completed.

52. North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2013/2014

Considered -

Introductory report by Bryon Hunter, Scrutiny Team Leader, alerting the Committee to the publication of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board (NYSCB) Annual Report 2013/14.

Professor Nick Frost, Independent Chairman of the NYSCB advised Members that publication of the Annual Report is a statutory responsibility. The Report has been circulated widely across the County.

Members were informed that the recent Ofsted Inspection had assessed the safeguarding service as good. In achieving this level of success the Board had worked in partnership with a wide range of agencies.

Members supported the priority been given towards improving the on-line safety of young people and were pleased to hear that the work of the task group drawn from this Committee which looked at this issue had informed the SCB's work.

Resolved -

- a) That the achievements of the NYSCB during 2013/14 and its priorities going forward be noted.

53. Progress Update on the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Initiatives with North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board (SCB)

Considered -

The report of the CSE Project Lead, North Yorkshire SCB updating Members on performance and progress towards the stated aims and functions of the NYSCB business plan in relation to CSE.

Nick Frost highlighted to the Committee the work of the CSE sub group set up by both the North Yorkshire and the City of York SCBs to look at responses on a strategic level across the geographical area. The group was chaired by North Yorkshire Police.

Progress has been made on 3 aspects:

- Policy
- Partnership working
- Data collection and sharing

It was emphasised to Members that this work was well in train before publication of the Jay Report on CSE in Rotherham.

Members were advised that across the geographical area detection and prosecution rates are high although there is never any room for complacency.

There is now an opportunity to improve the support given to victims, through for instance, better counselling and therapy services.

Members raised a number of issues including:

- the extent to which in North Yorkshire there are more effective safeguards in place than there were in Rotherham;
- the importance of collecting reliable data and intelligence;
- the risks and dangers to children must inform the allocation of resources;

- the need to prioritise and target interventions;
- the importance of preventative measures, such as improved on-line safety;
- the need to recognise that some young people may be less articulate than others or who may have a physical or learning disability which may result in them being less inclined to respond to surveys.

Effective partnership working will be of particular importance as no single agency can be effective on their own at tackling CSE.

In North Yorkshire, whilst effective central control and co-ordination mechanisms will be essential it will also be important to involve local voluntary sector organisations working in local communities and by involvement of young people themselves to tackle CSE.

Member's attention was drawn to recent correspondence from The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP which notified principal local authorities in England that Ms. Louise Casey CB had been appointed to undertake an independent statutory inspection of the situation in Rotherham and to provide advice to all councils on their services particularly for children and young people. Cllr Hall commented that he hoped that the approach taken in North Yorkshire would be identified as a model of good practice in rural areas.

Resolved -

- a) That the progress of the CSE work to date be noted.
- b) That a further update be given at the next meeting of the Committee on the developments of CSE work across North Yorkshire and on the outcome of the Task and Finish Group in relation to the Jay report.

54. North Yorkshire Key Stage Outcomes

Considered -

The report of the Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service on Key Stage Outcomes.

Phil Bennington, Principal Adviser, guided Members through his report.

Members heard that in respect of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2014, North Yorkshire outcomes have risen by over 17% to place the local authority slightly above the national average percentage of children achieving a good level of development. Members welcomed the fact that this returns North Yorkshire to its usual position of being broadly in line with the national average.

At Key Stage 1 (end of Year 2) teachers assess pupil progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Level 2+ is the nationally expected level of attainment and North Yorkshire ranks in the top 30% of local authorities on all the level 2+ indicators.

In respect of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) the key indicator is the proportion of pupils achieving level+ in reading, writing and mathematics combined ("RWM4+"). In North Yorkshire Members heard that whilst outcomes have improved more rapidly than national averages, the headline outcome is 77% - just below the national average of 78%.

At key stage 4 (GCSE) the key indicator is the proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics. Changes to the assessment in some subjects, together with changes to the way that school performance is now determined, mean that 2014 outcomes cannot be compared to previous years. The available unvalidated data shows that 63% of pupils achieved the key indicator – 5% above the national figure and maintaining North Yorkshire's position in the top 20% of local authorities.

Due to the range of qualifications post-16 there is not one key headline as for other key stages. The most usual headline outcomes are the average point scores per entry and the average points per student for A-level and equivalent qualifications. An A* grade at A-level equates to 300 points, A is 270, B is 240, etc. Members acknowledged that North Yorkshire's results have improved at a faster rate than the national and the LA remains in the top 15% of all local authorities.

Members were reassured to hear that for vulnerable groups, work is in hand to close the gap in attainment compared with other pupils.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

55. 2014 Annual Report of the North Yorkshire Director of Public Health

Considered -

The covering reports of the Scrutiny Team Leader and the North Yorkshire Director of Public Health and presentation by the North Yorkshire Director of Public Health.

As part of the discussion key issues raised by Members included:

- Annual Report provides a blue print for a concerted effort, involving all partners, for instance, towards promoting physical activity, promoting smoking cessation, reducing obesity and tackling drug and alcohol abuse.
- the importance of mental health services not only for adults but also for young people. Members highlighted the pressures and dangers which young people face and how these can lead to unreported mental health problems.
- the lack of understanding that young people sometimes display of the long term implications that sexually transmitted diseases can have on their lives. Members also highlighted the problems associated with legal highs.
- the need for a strategic approach and partnership working whilst at the same time incentivising volunteering to take the public health message out to individuals and communities. The feasibility of offering vouchers for swimming baths and for other physical activities was discussed. Members agreed that time-banking could be a useful way of getting young people to take more exercise and participating in sports activities also in promoting those activities to others.
- The prevalence and dangers of self-harming. Members also referred to the need for improved Category 4 (specialist in patient mental health care) across North Yorkshire.

Members were advised that the Health and Wellbeing Board is addressing these issues through an emerging Mental Health Strategy.

Resolved -

- a) The Committee resolved to support the recommendations set out in section 4 of the Director's report.

56. Council Plan - 2020 North Yorkshire Plan

Considered -

The report of the Assistant Director - Policy and Partnerships updating the Committee of responses to the Council Plan consultation 2014 and to consult the Committee on proposed priorities for the 2020 North Yorkshire Plan.

Members noted the low response to the consultation. They commented on the importance of publicising consultations of this nature through a variety of media such as local radio and on the need to give the public an opportunity to respond in a variety of ways.

Members also wondered if there was scope to set priorities which were more geared towards a target audience.

In light of the previous agenda item, Members felt the Council Plan should include a priority to promote Public Health amongst young people. This is a service where there is an opportunity for the County Council to provide leadership.

Resolved -

- a) The report be noted.
- b) The comments of the Committee on the proposed priorities for the 2020 North Yorkshire Plan be forwarded to Assistant Director - Policy and Partnerships.

57. 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.

Cllr Jefferson suggested that a report on the New Psychoactive Substances Strategy and Action Plan 2014 should be included in the work programme.

Resolved -

- a) That the content of the work programme report and the work programme schedule are noted.
- b) A report on the completion of the Prevention Service Review be included as part of the agenda for the meeting in January 2015.
- c) The New Psychoactive Substances Strategy and Action Plan 2014 be included in the work programme.

The meeting concluded at 12:55pm