

North Yorkshire County Council

Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 24th June 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: County Councillor Heather Phillips (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

County Councillors: Alyson Baker, Eric Broadbent (substitute for Councillor Stephanie Duckett), Barbara Brodigan, Bridget Fortune, Nathan Hull, David Jeffels, Janet Jefferson, Cliff Lunn, Tom Jones, Andy Paraskos (substitute for Councillor Peter Wilkinson) Kirsty Poskitt, John Ritchie, Mike Schofield and Dave Whitfield.

Co-opted Members: Tom Cavell-Taylor (Parent Governor Representative), Anna Kirkham (Parent Governor Representative), David Sharp (Voluntary Sector), Andrew Smith (Church of England), Ross Strachan (Secondary Teacher Representative), David Watson (Voluntary Sector)

Officers: Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service, Patrick Duffy, Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, Howard Emmett, Assistant Director, Strategic Resources

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephanie Duckett and Peter Wilkinson and Portfolio Holders, County Councillor Janet Sanderson (Executive Member for Children and Young People) and County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson (Executive Member for Education and Skills)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1. Welcome and apologies

Councillor Heather Phillips advised that, as Vice-Chair, she was chairing the meeting as the Council has not yet appointed a Chair. The Chair will be determined at Council on 20th July.

She looked forward to working with Members.

She welcomed people to the meeting and Members introduced themselves.

2. Membership

Considered –

A report by the Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, which confirmed the membership of the Committee and asked the Committee to formally approve Anna Kirkham as a Parent Governor Representative on the Committee.

Resolved –

That the report be noted and that Anna Kirkham be appointed as a Parent Governor Representative on the Committee.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2022

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2022, be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4 Any Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5. Public Questions

There were no public questions or statements.

6. Chair's Remarks

Nothing to report on this occasion.

7. Overview and Scrutiny at North Yorkshire County Council

Considered –

A report by Patrick Duffy, Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, which outlined:-

- how the overview and scrutiny function works in North Yorkshire;
- why it is important; and
- the role that Committee Members play.

He highlighted the following points:-

- Scrutiny is on a statutory footing.
- This Committee is one of five Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- The Scrutiny Committees provide a key check and balance.
- In addition to the formal Committee meetings, there are Mid Cycle Briefings which meet several weeks before the Committee. They enable the Chair, Vice Chair and Spokespersons for each Committee to meet in private to discuss the work of the Committee – particularly the Work Programme.
- It has been the practice with this Committee to invite all Members to the Mid Cycle Briefings. This would continue.
- As well as the formal meetings and Mid Cycle Briefings, there are other approaches that can be taken to scrutiny – such as the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to look at a particular topic and report back on its findings.
- The report outlined some of the areas that were considered by the Committee in the last year to give the Committee a flavour of the subjects discussed.

In response to a question from a Member, the Principal Democratic Services Officer confirmed that Education and Skills is within the remit of the Committee.

NOTED.

8 Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Considered -

A report by Karen Atkinson, Stronger Communities Delivery Manager and a presentation by David Sharp, Chief Executive, North Yorkshire Youth and David Watson, Chief Executive, North Yorkshire Sport (who are Co-opted Members of the Committee), which updated them on this Programme.

By way of background, Karen Atkinson referred to the following:-

- In 2021, the Department for Education provided funding to all local authorities to deliver a programme of school holiday activities, alongside a food offer for children eligible for means tested free school meals (fsm).
- The Council delivered the 2021 programme through internal officer support and direct award of grants to a voluntary sector consortia, comprising North Yorkshire Sport, North Yorkshire Youth and Rural Arts, operating under the branding of North Yorkshire Together (NYT), who co-ordinated the service provision.
- A further 3 years funding will be made available for the Programme, from Easter 2022 to January 2025. The Council has been allocated a grant of £1.3615m for the financial year 2022/23.
- There will be an open procurement under the light touch regime. It will be a competitive process with a total value up to £500,000. The successful supplier will start on 1st October 2022.
- Due to the time restraints between receiving final notification from the DfE in December 2021 and the operational needs to start planning the 2022 Programme in January 2022, it has not been possible to run the procurement in advance of the 2022/23 programme starting. To avoid potential service interruption and risk non-delivery of both the Easter and Summer Holiday Programmes, it has been agreed to extend the arrangements with the existing co-ordination until the end of September 2022.

David Sharp and David Watson then delivered a presentation. The presentation is available [here](#)

They advised that North Yorkshire Together is a partnership between three Charities – North Yorkshire Youth; Rural Arts and North Yorkshire Sport. The Programme is branded as FEAST, which stands for Food, Entertainment, Arts and Sport Together.

In terms of delivery of the first year of the Programme:-

Easter 2021

- 47 projects, across all county districts, providing places for 12,144 pupils in receipt of fsm
- 7 providers offered specific provision for SEND, offering 1,226 places.

Summer 2021

- 63 projects, across all county districts, providing places for 42,456 pupils in receipt of fsm.
- 12 providers offered provision for SEND, offering 6,868 SEND places.

Everyone who attended received a meal.

The FEAST Programme has provided around 21,000 activity packs and NYT have provided 30,000 to 40,000 activity packs across all of its initiatives.

Whilst all of the targets have been met, the Programme has not been without challenges. These include the social stigma of accessing the Programme; engaging young people to participate; and rurality.

Work continues to overcome these challenges but there is no easy fix. This work includes creating a strong brand; sourcing alternative funding grants; seeking to increase the number of providers for children aged 11 plus; and encouraging providers to invest in the right kit.

In terms of the future for North Yorkshire Together and FEAST, FEAST has a two and a half year contract to continue with this work and support for Afghan Refugees continues to September 2022. Other opportunities to provide support to young people are being pursued.

A number of Members commented favourably on the value of this initiative.

The following questions/comments were made by Members:-

- Councillor Janet Jefferson commented that the number of providers in Scarborough seemed low. She asked if Schools had been involved and felt that £500,000 for a feasibility study was a lot of money being taken away from the provision, potentially. David Watson confirmed Schools had been involved and advised that NYT is keen to develop capacity at a local level via, for instance, Village Halls - but this will take time. Howard Emmett, Assistant Director, Strategic Resources, further advised that the £500,000 refers to work on co-ordinating provision; governance and processes – rather than a feasibility study.
- Councillor Ritchie asked how the Programme links in with children in care. He also noted that 78% of those eligible on fsm are not taking part and felt this was worth further investigation as to why. David Watson advised that NYT were seeking to address this, but it should be borne in mind the timescales were very tight. NYT are managing to get vulnerable children to attend and they do not have to attend.
- Councillor Barbara Brodigan wanted to know what outreach tactics are used to engage with young people and hard to reach groups. David Watson responded that the thrust was to provide a service, rather than undertake targeted work. However, NYT are looking at bringing on board providers with mobile provision and linking in with youth work. The lifting of the initial burdensome restrictions should enable greater flexibility.

The Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Service stressed that the service was never intended for those not in education, employment or training. Knowing how little notice had been given to Authorities and how quickly the Programme had to get up and running, a lot had been achieved. Yes, we want to improve the targeting of children on fsm but this has been difficult, with not being aware what the next stage of provision for the Programme might be.

- Councillor Kirsty Poskitt said that the organisation she works for benefits from the provision and has worked with Afghan Refugees and York City Council to target particular activities. She asked if any information is known about what will happen beyond September, in respect of Afghan Refugees. David Sharp said that NYT want to work together with the organisations concerned to maintain some provision.
- A Member asked how social media is being used to engage with the young people. Karen Atkinson advised that NYT is very active on social media. Monitoring is undertaken of its impact, in terms of how this translates into joining activities.
- In response to a question from a Member, David Watson advised of the monitoring of providers that takes place to ensure standards are met. This includes unannounced visits.
- Councillor Dave Whitfield wondered whether it might be worth asking all young people in Secondary Schools what activities they would like to see included. David Sharp advised that the views of young people are sought, but to ask everyone could build expectations unfairly, as the service cannot be provided universally. He added that some funding has been levered from Sport England to do more social media work.
- Dr. Tom Cavell-Taylor sought information as to whether contact had been made with providers who have regular out of term clubs, as the young people need something every day of the year. David Sharp confirmed NYT has a good network that it liaises with. The hard part though is getting the rooms. The intention is to continue to expand the Programme to provide the support that the young people deserve.
- The Chair asked if individual Members would be able to meet with officers to discuss provision in their area. Karen Atkinson confirmed that officers would be happy to do this.

The Chair thanked Karen Atkinson, David Sharp and David Watson for their presentation.

9. Being Young in North Yorkshire

Considered:-

A presentation by Stuart Carlton, the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Service, which advised the Committee about this Strategy and the progress being made.

The presentation is available [here](#)

Before commencing his presentation, the Director referred to the discussion on the previous Agenda Item. It had been an easy decision to support the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, as he recognised that partners were well placed in the community. The Programme is a good example of why the Directorate do these things in partnership.

The three main priorities currently are:-

- Social Emotional Mental Health
- Child exploitation and contextual safeguarding
- Online safety

The Director advised that Being Young in North Yorkshire is the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategy for Children and Young People. The Strategy has been developed using data and feedback gleaned through engagement with Schools, such as the Growing up in North Yorkshire Bi-Annual Survey of pupils.

The vision is that *All children are Safe, Happy, Healthy and able to Achieve in North Yorkshire.*

The Strategy does not intend to capture everything that is being worked on – it homes in on local collaboration. The Director highlighted that good progress has been made against each of the themes. For example:

A Safe Life

- Reduction of children in care from 443 in 2019/20 to 427 in 2020/21. This is a key priority, as children need to live in family networks.
- Just one custodial sentence for a young person in 2021 - down from 27 in 2018. This year, we are on course to have no custodial sentence for any young person. The premise is that most young people in crime grow out of it. Being in *the system* is bad for them so we do everything we can to keep them out of it.

A Happy Life

- Many of our children in care (75%) live with a North Yorkshire County Council Foster Carer. There has been a big growth in kinship placements, which is a good outcome.

A Healthy Life

- The proportion of 5 year olds with tooth decay in North Yorkshire, at 20%, is lower than the national average (23.4%) and the Yorkshire and Humber average (28.7%).

Achieving in Life

- There has been a return to a more expected trend in children being electively home educated (EHE). In 2021 the number of EHE pupils increased by 5.7%, compared to 21% the previous year. New steps are in place to help ensure the decision is being taken for the right reasons.
- Exclusions continue to fall – and we are working hard to keep them down – if children are not at school they are not learning.

Members raised a number of questions/comments as follows:-

- Councillor Janet Jefferson referred to some of the positive policies now in place as a result of the work of this Committee and the willingness of the Director to take suggestions on board, such as Schools *Ladder of Intervention* (to support schools and settings in adopting early intervention for children with Social Emotional Mental Health and/or at risk of exclusion.)
- In response to a comment by Councillor Nathan Hull, the Director advised that the rate of Care Leavers not in Education, Employment or Training is higher than most of our neighbouring authorities. The Directorate is in constant contact with Care Leavers and a huge package of work is being undertaken.

- Andrew Smith, Co-opted Member, asked what the Director feels is his biggest challenge. The Director responded that this is the increasing demand in children's mental health services - a significant challenge. In addition, exploitation (County Lines, for example) is a concern, in that *we only know what we know*. Young people now have access to a frightening array of information.
- Councillor Whitfield stressed the key role of youth work in combatting County Lines and anti-social behaviour. The Chair agreed and added that it is up to Councillors to lead by example. The Director acknowledged the importance of youth work, but there are difficult choices to be made by Authorities, given a finite amount of resources.
- Councillor Kirsty Poskitt mentioned that she had become a young people mental health first aider and would encourage people to do this. She asked whether there is a timeline to get Mental Health Support Teams into Schools. The Director responded that this is a matter for the Government, but he will continue to press them on this.
- Councillor Barbara Brodigan referred to the link between disengagement and anti-social behavior – social inclusion is far less expensive than social exclusion.
- Councillor Tom Jones referred to the impact that Covid-19 has had and the loss of social skills. A large cohort of people remain nervous.
- A Member wanted to know if consideration has been given to a programme to test some of the underlying issues that may arise from Elective Home Education (EHE). The Director said that all parents have been approached, with some successes. A new step in the process has been introduced, whereby professionals meet with parents and the School prior to the final step to EHE being taken. Ultimately, however, he has limited power in this area. The bar for a suitable education has been set too low but he can only act within the law and only intervene if there is a genuine safeguarding concern.
- Councillor John Mann wondered whether it would help to engage people if they were offered more courses for vocational education. The Director's view was that, with post-16 provision, choice can be an issue and that such courses would help more in terms of aspiration.

The Director said he would be happy to update the Committee on further progress in due course.

The Chair thanked the Director for updating the Committee.

10. Work Programme

Considered:-

A report by the Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, which invited Members to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2022/2023, taking into account the outcome of discussions on previous Agenda Items and any other developments taking place across the county.

The report also sought Members views as to whether they wish to meet in person or remotely.

He highlighted the following:-

- This is a key document for the Committee as it captures the areas that it wishes to consider over the course of the next year.
- He had inserted Items that have been tended to be considered annually, or topics which Members had previously expressed an interest in.
- Members should bear in mind that there are only four meetings per year. Therefore, it is important to be realistic as to how much can be considered at each meeting.
- Members are welcome to contact him at any time with suggestions as to Items.

Councillor John Ritchie felt it would be helpful if the Work Programme included work on looking at the impact of inflationary pressures on school budgets on, say, the quality of school dinners – particularly in the most deprived areas. This could include Scrutiny of Health Committee.

The Chair felt that it would be best to wait until the Chair is appointed until confirming Items such as this on the Work Programme.

Councillor Dave Whitfield felt that consideration of how actions link to climate change should be included.

In terms of future meetings, Councillor Ritchie's view was that the Committee should meet in person. Whilst the Committee did not make a formal decision on this aspect, no one dissented with this view. Therefore, the feeling of the Committee was that meetings be held in person.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme as it currently stands be noted.

11. Other business which the Chair agrees should be considered as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances

There was no urgent business. However, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Councillor Janet Jefferson for the good work she had done as Chair of the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 12 noon

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