

North Yorkshire County Council

Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 10th March 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

Present (in person): County Councillor Barbara Brodigan (Chair)

County Councillors: Bridget Fortune, George Jabbour (substituting for Councillor Tom Jones), David Jeffels, Yvonne Peacock (substituting for Councillor Peter Wilkinson), John Mann, John Ritchie, Mike Schofield and Dave Whitfield.

Co-opted Members: Tom Cavell-Taylor (Parent Governor Representative), David Sharp (Voluntary Sector), Andrew Smith (Church of England) and David Watson (Voluntary Sector)

In attendance: Guy Critchlow, Chair of Skelton Cum Newby Parish Council (in connection with Minute No. 35)

Present (joined remotely):

Councillors Alyson Baker, Stephanie Duckett, Richard Foster (substitute for Councillor Nathan Hull), Cliff Lunn, Heather Phillips (Vice-Chair), Kirsty Poskitt and Co-opted Member Ross Strachan (Secondary Teacher Representative) and, by invitation, County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson (Executive Member for Education and Skills)

Officers: Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service, Patrick Duffy, Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, Howard Emmett, Assistant Director, Strategic Resources, Jane Le Sage, Assistant Director, Inclusion, Amanda Newbold, Assistant Director, Education and Skills and Cerys Townend, Locality Manager, Inclusion

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nathan Hull, Janet Jefferson, Tom Jones, Peter Wilkinson and Portfolio Holder, County Councillor Janet Sanderson (Executive Member for Children and Young People)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

32. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Members joining the meeting remotely. This facility had been offered on this occasion due to the adverse weather conditions.

The apologies are as stated at the start of these Minutes.

33. Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2022

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2022, be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Matter Arising – Minute No. 31, Hovingham Primary School

Councillor George Jabbour updated the Committee on this matter and noted that the recent Members' Seminar had included a useful presentation on small schools.

34 Any Declarations of Interest

There were none.

35. Public Questions or Statements – Skelton Newby Hall Church of England Primary School

The Chair of Skelton Cum Newby Parish Council, Mr. Guy Critchlow, had submitted a statement to the Committee.

Mr, Critchlow attended the Committee and related his statement as follows:-

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee for Young People Overview and Scrutiny. Thank you for allowing me to submit this short statement. My name is Guy Critchlow, and I am the Chair of Skelton-cum-Newby Parish Council. I am here to represent the views of both the Parish Council and the community of Skelton-on-Ure with regards to the future of our village school, Skelton Newby Hall CE Primary School.

The Parish Council has already submitted our response to the consultation on the closure (dated 1st February 2023), which put forward a clear case as to why we believe the school is viable and the opportunity should be given for this to be demonstrated.

Today we would like to focus on our Sustainable Future Plan for Skelton Newby Hall Primary School and to seek the support of this Committee when the school's future goes to the Council's Executive on 21st March 2023.

At the public meeting organised by NYCC as part of the consultation process, the question was asked what the number of pupils would be for our school to be considered viable. The answer given by Richard Noake, Director of Education for the Leeds Diocese, was 35. This is well within the long-term average of this school, which was founded in 1856, when it is well managed and supported.

We made the point in our consultation submission that there are a number of existing and planned housing developments within five miles of this school. Whilst the NYCC figures show that there are sufficient pupil places in aggregate, the parent experience on the ground has shown that this does not equate to availability at each year group level.

We believe Skelton Newby Hall Primary School represents an excellent opportunity to be a nursery and early years setting which can support other local schools and allow this capacity in those schools to be allocated to the older age groups.

As part of this consultation process, we have engaged with Roecliffe CE Primary School and, in our early discussions, we understand that there is a capacity constraint in the nursery & early years which is creating a bottle neck to the older age groups.

There is strong interest from Roecliffe Primary School to work in partnership with Skelton Newby Hall Primary School. Skelton Newby Hall Primary School offers some distinct benefits for Roecliffe School, for example

- *Between 30-50 nursery and early years places which would support a more sustainable pupil pipeline for the older age groups in the school (and other local schools)*

- *A Forest School setting. Amenity space is limited at the school site in Roecliffe and Skelton Newby Hall is a ready-made forest school setting which would be beneficial for all year groups.*
- *Skelton Newby Hall also offers an ideal training space for both schools enabling the growth and development of the teaching and support team.*

We believe that our Sustainable Future Plan will create both a financially and environmentally sustainable future for the Skelton Newby Hall Primary School. With the passionate and strong leadership at Roecliffe Primary School, we aim to create a leading nursery and early years setting as well as one of the most environmentally-led forest schools.

Roecliffe School is an Academy member of Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust, and is waiting to review this opportunity with the Director of Education at the Leeds Diocese.

Skelton Newby Hall Primary School has the full support of the Parish Council, Newby Hall (property owner), and the local community. Unfortunately, we have had no representation on the governing body of the current federation and therefore we had no voice in the proposal to request this consultation. We are asking for your support to allow time, without the Damocles sword of closure, to progress our Sustainable Future Plan for the school in conjunction with Roecliffe School.

Our new county-wide authority, North Yorkshire Council, which comes into being on 1st April, has a clear stated aim. "Local at its heart ... We will work closely with town and parish councils ... to ensure that local priorities drive locally led decision-making and local action". In this instance, the Parish Council was unfortunately one of the last to be informed of the formal consultation and the construct of the consultation and the public meeting has left the school and village community feeling that the consultation process is working back from a decision already made. We hope this is not the case as it would not be consistent with the Government guidance.

The Government's published Code of Practice on Consultation (2008) has seven criteria, the first criterion states, "Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the outcome". This was followed by the publication of Consultation Principles (2018), the second principle titled, "Consultations should have a purpose", which expanded by stating, "Consult with implementation plans when the development of the plans is at a formative stage. Do not ask questions about issues on which you already have a final view".

Our Sustainable Future Plan for Skelton Newby Hall Primary School is not an emotional response to the threat of closure, but a plan which identifies the viability of this school and the value it can continue to add to the local and wider community. It is the first opportunity we have had as a community to input into the future of our school and we hope we can count on your support to allow us to develop this plan.

Finally, we would also ask that during this period, the finances of Skelton Newby Hall Primary School are ring-fenced, and that all school resources are restored and remain at the school site and are not transferred.

We thank you for your time this afternoon and I am happy to field any questions you may have either now or after the meeting.

Amanda Newbold, Assistant Director for Education and Skills, noted the comments of the Parish Council, together with the fact that they had responded to the

consultation, which closed on 24th February 2023. All of the consultation responses would be included in the report to be presented to the Executive on 21st March 2023. when a decision would be taken as to whether to cease to maintain the School. If the decision is to cease to maintain the School, anyone wishing to object to, or make comments on, the proposal would have four weeks from the date of the publication of the proposal to do so.

The Chair thanked Mr. Critchlow for having attended the meeting and informing the Committee of the Parish Council's views.

36. Question from Councillor Andrew Murday

Councillor Andrew Murday exercised his right, as a Member of the Council, to ask a question(s).

Councillor Murday's questions concerned the decision to conduct a consultation about a proposal to close five Children's Centres. His specific interest revolved around the Centre in his division at Pateley Bridge, although the same issues pertained to the other four Centres under threat.

Councillor Murday asked:-

1. In the years prior to closure in 2019, how many people sought help from the Centre?
2. Why has the Centre remained closed whilst the Pandemic has abated?
3. Why have these particular five Centres been selected for potential closure?
4. What methods of assessment will be put in place, if the Centres are closed, to assess the effect of closure?

Stuart Carlton, Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Service, advised that the Executive Member with responsibility for this matter is Councillor Janet Sanderson – Executive Member for Children and Young People. Councillor Murday may wish to seek a written response from Councillor Sanderson to the questions he has raised.

The Corporate Director stressed that the Directorate is only consulting on closure of those Children's Centres where they find there is no longer any use for them. None of the Centres are currently open and there are other buildings nearby, with no detriment to provision. There is a revenue cost associated with the Centres of £140,000 per annum. The question has to be asked why this cost should continue to be incurred when the buildings are of no use, or the service can be provided elsewhere more cost-effectively.

He added that Statutory Guidance from the Department for Education recommends that consultation be undertaken with stakeholders prior to any change. His sense is that this is a straightforward, risk-free proposal, but he will direct Councillor Murday's questions to the Executive Member for a written response.

Councillor John Ritchie mentioned that that he too had concerns about the closures, especially in areas of high deprivation. When Falsgrave Children's Centre closed he had been assured that there should not be a diminution in service but his experience had not been as positive. Members needed to be active in this consultation.

In response to questions from Members, the Corporate Director advised that there are community venue buildings and that these had never been Centres that people can walk into; there is a room in a building.

In response to further questions from Members, not directly related to the Children's Centres, the Director advised that:-

- There have not been any instances of refugee children having gone missing. In the last six years, there have only been two occasions where the destination of young people leaving care has not been known. North Yorkshire does not have any area targeted by criminal gangs. That does not mean we are immune, but we have good relationships with the young people in care.
- The Government White Paper is not being progressed as there is no legislation time for it. It remains the Government's view that all Schools should be part of an Academy by 2030, but this is no longer enforceable, in the absence of legislation.

37. Chair's Remarks

The Chair advised that on this occasion she had no particular issues to update the Committee on.

38 Exclusions and Suspensions

Considered -

A presentation by Jane Le Sage, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Cerys Townend, Locality Manager, inclusion. The presentation is available [here](#)

The key elements of the presentation outlined:-

- Trends;
- The impact of exclusions;
- The support available; and
- Future intentions

Jane Le Sage and Cerys Townend highlighted a number of points including:-

- The difference between exclusions and suspensions – the former is temporary and the latter is permanent.
- In North Yorkshire, permanent exclusions have been below the national average. However from 2022/2023 to date, there has been a marked increase in the permanent exclusion rate – particularly in Primary Schools.
- Similarly, suspensions have increased across Primary and Secondary Schools.
- The trend for repeat suspensions (pupils receiving three or more suspensions) is upward.
- National data shows that exclusion occurs disproportionately in certain groups including boys, some ethnic minorities, those eligible for Free School Meals and children who have Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

- Children excluded or suspended from School do not do as well academically as their peers. For example, only 4.5% of pupils in Pupil Referral Units achieve a good pass in GCSE English and Maths.
- Double permanent exclusion (where a child has been permanently excluded from two or more Schools) tends to have significant adverse impacts on the child and, among other things, correlates with poor mental health in childhood.
- Attendance rates at Pupil Referral Units had reduced since 2017/18 but this has improved over 2022/2023, to date. Attainment is lower compared to overall attainment.
- There is a continuum of provision comprising:-
 - Inclusive Schools
 - Access to Support Services
 - Alternative Provision
 - Targeted Mainstream Provision; and
 - Specialist Placements
- Nurturing best practice is important. This includes initiatives such as *The Ladder of Intervention*, which is designed to increase the capacity of mainstream Schools to meet the needs of their pupils locally and promote inclusion and understanding.
- The Directorate is undertaking a lot of work with partners on early identification and support and has invested in relational approaches. Early identification of need encompasses things such as an Education, Health and Care Assessment. The Inclusion (Pupil Support) Pathway is an example of early help.
- The Inclusion Support Service provides a Core Offer from SEND Locality Hubs; a Training offer to Schools; Intervention Packages; and Partnership Bundles, bespoke to a School's requirements.
- The Preventative Model of Alternative Provision was outlined, together with targeted mainstream provision, which is provision for eight children - six for children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) and two flexible places. Ten have been developed so far with six more in discussion.
- Specialist provision includes two SEMH (Social Emotional and Mental Health) Schools and a new free Special School for SEMH in Northallerton – recently announced by the Department for Education.

The Chair thanked Jane and Cerys for their informative presentation.

A number of questions/comments were made by Members. These are set out below, together with the response of officers in italics.

- Hambleton and Richmondshire is seeing the highest number of suspensions and there are some travelling community in the eastern part. Is this an issue?

We are not seeing this in our figures. There is a danger in grouping the population . Individuals are quite unique in the areas that affect them and how they cope.

- Has the impact of COVID accelerated the situation?
We are seeing people with varying levels of mental health. Covid is undoubtedly a contributor.
- Do we have figures for this academic year?
Not yet. Certainly, our figures were lower than the national average. Then they crept up. They reduced again, as a result of the Secondary Model of Intervention, and are now rising once more.
- Is there a split between Academies and Schools in the number of exclusions/suspensions?
It varies and can be affected by several factors. It comes down to leadership, culture and intent. Children sniff out unfairness and any differences in approach between classes. Punitive sanctions do not work; a whole-School relational approach is what is required.
The relationship of the Local Authority with both maintained Schools and Academies is strong.
- How long does a child stay out of mainstream education?
This depends on the needs of the child but, the longer they remain out of mainstream education, the more difficult it is for them to return.
- Some unregistered Providers produce a quality offer but they are not registered, as they are not linked to OFSTED.
Basic checks are made in the Local Authority Alternative Provider Directory, but it is the responsibility of Schools to revisit these to ensure the provision is safe. This is working well.
- It is good to hear about the Free School intended for Northallerton but let's hope it does not take as long as the one in Selby.
We are working with the Department for Education to progress the Selby Free School.
- In terms of co-ordination with Adult Services, do parents receive support?
Yes, if we are working on a family basis. Close links are maintained with the Early Years Service.
- Are there any other barriers in place that are blocking EHCPs?
The shortage of Educational Psychologists has caused bottlenecks in the system but the situation is now improving.

39. Education Update

Considered:-

A presentation by Amanda Newbold, Assistant Director for Education and Skills and Howard Emmett, Assistant Director, Strategic Resources.

A summary of the points made by the Assistant Directors is set out below but the full presentation can be viewed [here](#):-

School Organisation (Amanda Newbold)

- North Yorkshire has 360 Schools – 143 Academy Schools and 217 Local Authority maintained.
- 17 Primary Schools (9%) have 28 or less pupils and none of these Schools have their own Head Teacher.
- 53% of Secondary Schools have less than 750 pupils, compared to 22% nationally.
- At Secondary level, pupil forecasts show a projected increase in pupils across the county, with the exception of Harrogate. For Primary Schools, numbers are projected to fall, apart from in Craven and Selby.
- Two Schools are currently subject to closure proposals and there is consultation to amalgamate secondary provision in Whitby which would, if approved, result in the technical closure of Eskdale School.

Educational Performance for North Yorkshire Schools (Amanda Newbold)

- The data should be used with caution. It reflects results in 2021/22, but cannot provide information about the factors which may have influenced these results. When forming a view of how well schools are doing, it is important to consider a range of different information sources.
- 84% of all Schools in North Yorkshire have been judged as *Good* or *Outstanding*, compared to 81% in February 2022.
- Of the 96 Inspection Reports in the last academic year, seven Schools were judged to be *Inadequate*.
- In terms of the latest position, of the 37 Inspections since September 2022, that have been published by 31st March 2023, 29 were deemed *Good* or *Outstanding* with 8 *Requiring improvement*. No School was judged *Inadequate*.
- Of the Inspections published since September 2022, 100% of Schools have been judged as having effective safeguarding – this is evidence of the heightened focus on this issue by the Local Authority and Schools.
- The 2022 unvalidated performance headlines indicate North Yorkshire is above the national figures for GLD (Good Level of Development); Key Stage 1, Phonics and Key Stage 4, but below the national figure at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The average Attainment 8 Score for pupils in North Yorkshire in 2022 was higher than the national average. (Attainment 8 is calculated by adding up the points for pupils eight subjects, with English and Maths counted twice.) North Yorkshire has the fifth highest Attainment 8 score within its Statistical Neighbour Group (of 11 Local Authorities), and the 43rd highest score nationally (of 151 Local Authorities).
- Progress 8 scores, which track the progress that a pupil makes, compared to pupils with similar levels of prior attainment, shows that Key Stage 4 pupils in North Yorkshire in 2022, on average, made better progress than across the region. North Yorkshire has the third highest Progress 8 score in its Statistical Neighbour group, and the 50th highest score nationally.

Financial Position for Schools (Howard Emmett)

- 24 out of 209 Schools are forecast to have an accumulated Revenue Budget Deficit at 31st March 2023.
- Schools have experienced significant cost pressures during the current financial year, including pay award, energy inflation and those associated with Covid recovery additional support and catch up.
- A range of financial support for Schools in financial difficulty is provided by the Local Authority. This includes the use of a financial risk rating framework to determine the level of support, challenge and intervention undertaken at individual School level, including the use of Notices of Financial Concern, where this is deemed appropriate.

A number of questions/comments were made by Members. These are set out below, together with the response of officers, where appropriate, in italics:-

- All Members need to apply pressure on their MP because investment in education is an investment in the country's future.
- Looking at the Key Stage 4 figures, small Schools must have helped to achieve this figure.

It is reasonable for Secondary Schools to say that Key Stage 2 results are not good. The reality is that something is not right at Key Stage 2.

- Is there any tangible value on the benefit to Schools of the support referred to by the Local Authority?

We write to the Governing Body and work with them on forecasting deficits caused by falling numbers. Sometimes Schools want to keep a class structure that they probably cannot afford, in the hope that the number of pupils will increase. So the Local Authority encourage the School to consider Federation opportunities to share costs and move from a three to two class structure. We challenge the School and make it clear that there may be intervention.

- Do we use assessments other than Key Stage 5?

Yes, CAT Tests are used to track changes. But perhaps more work is required on taking that earliest opportunity to assist. If there is too much emphasis on Key Stage 5, this can skew things.

- Why are small Schools of such concern?

Numbers are one important factor. Others are finances, leadership and standards. Changes in these factors can be volatile and impact on Schools rapidly. The smaller the School, the more volatile these changes can be. That is why we try to support them.

- Members can assist smaller Schools in a number of ways. For example, by utilising their locality budgets to help and by lobbying their MP.
- A concern is that, in trying to meet budgets, this usually means a reduction in the headcount. Therefore, to what extent can the Local Authority ensure that Schools do not inadvertently exacerbate the situation by taking decisions in a crisis?

Under Local Management of Schools, it is Governors who are responsible for monitoring and oversight of these issues. However, the School Improvement Service is always looking at risks and resilience and allocates a number of Adviser days, so that Schools can be clear on the impact of their decisions.

- The role of Governing Bodies is important in ensuring that mistakes are not made.

Training for Governors is provided to help them hold School Leadership to account.

- As the number of Primary School pupils reduces, the need for Special Schools and provision for children with SEND increases. How are these factors balanced?

This is a banding issue. There is always a debate as to the correct band and there is always an upward drift when banding a child. The Service has performed wonders within the budget.

- Generally speaking, good Schools have good leadership – Head Teacher and Governing Body. Churn can affect this equilibrium. Does there need to be more of a thrust on interventions? Is the Local Authority going to need to be more robust and say it cannot underpin deficits?

If a School carrying a deficit is required to become an Academy, then the Local Authority pick up any deficit.

We have been more interventionist in recent times. There has been an increase in the number of Notices of Financial Concern issued. Schools can expect that the Directorate will use its powers to secure the School's / Local Authority's position.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson, Executive Member for Education and Skills, provided some concluding thoughts on the discussion...

- The use of Locality Budgets for IT is a nice thought and will be welcomed, but it is teaching staff that Schools are missing.
- The presentation on Exclusions and Suspensions was very good. We are concerned about the number of suspensions and are keeping an eye on this.
- We need to nurture our Governors and be proud of them.
- Funding is more of an issue now as, historically, we did well on funding.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Directors for their very full presentation.

40. Draft Work Programme 2023/2024

Considered:-

A report by the Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, which invited Members to consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/2024, as the current Work Programme only goes up to today's meeting.

The Chair suggested that, owing to time constraints at today's meeting, the draft Work Programme be considered further at the Mid Cycle Briefing on Friday 28th April 2023. At this stage, however, she suggested that an update on Foster Carers and Referrals be considered at the afore-mentioned briefing.

Councillor John Ritchie referred to savings in Special Educational Needs and suggested that the impact of this on the level of service being received be considered, together with how we give a voice to the people by, for instance, speaking directly to the parents affected. This could be undertaken via a Task and Finish Group.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme, be considered further at the Mid Cycle Briefing on 28th April 2023.

41. Other business – Jane Le Sage, Assistant Director, Inclusion

The Chair advised Members that this was the last meeting of the Committee that would be attended by Jane Le Sage, Assistant Director, Inclusion. Jane had just attended for the Item that she was presenting. Therefore, the Chair asked that the Corporate Director pass on the Committee's thanks to her for the excellent work that she has undertaken for this Committee and its best wishes to her.

The meeting concluded at 4.10 p.m.

PD

DRAFT