

# **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**21 July 2021**

## **STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

### **YOUNG PEOPLES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

#### **Outdoor Learning Service**

1. I reported last time on the committee's interest in Outdoor Learning Provision and plans for the two key properties - East Barnby and Bewerely Park. We were happy to support the Executive's decision that, rather than mothballing, both sites be protected as soon as possible. At our last meeting, we considered what the intended longer-term strategic review must address, and how it will go about its work.
2. The project to ensure a long-term sustainable operating model inevitably started with a comprehensive assessment of those two key properties. Progress has also been made in consulting with young people, schools, users and staff local representatives. Many individual conversations and meetings have been held with staff groups, NY Sport, Head Teacher Network and School Governors.
3. We could see that there has been an effective data gathering exercise, assessing the customer base, use of the service, activities offered and costings.
4. We are pleased with how the project has progressed thus far. Whilst the committee has not pressed for involvement in the next steps - Modelling of options and Preparation of the Outline Business Case, it does intend to consider proposals as they emerge in September this year before the Executive decides the future of the service.

#### **SEND Strategy Update**

5. The committee has maintained a close interest in the SEND Strategic Plan for Education Provision 2018-23 since being involved in its formulation. At our last meeting we looked again at trends in numbers and type of SEND, how the locality based infrastructure was settling in, and, more broadly, the means by which the SEND Strategic Plan was being implemented.
6. The increase in numbers is dramatic. As of the end of March 2021, there were 3574 EHC plans funded by North Yorkshire. This is a 102% increase on the same point in 2015. Total EHC plans funded by North Yorkshire have increase two-fold between 2015 and 2021.
7. The percentage of children with EHC plans in schools in North Yorkshire has historically been lower than the national rate. In 2020, 1.5% of children in mainstream schools in North Yorkshire had an EHC plan, the rate nationally was 1.8% (1.7% in Yorkshire and Humber). The rate in North Yorkshire in 2021 is now 1.7%
8. The percentage of children recorded as SEN Support has also been historically lower, 11.2% in North Yorkshire mainstream schools in 2020 compared to 12.1% nationally

(11.4% regionally, Yorkshire and Humber). The rate in North Yorkshire in 2021 is now 11.5%.

9. Fundamental to responding to this increase is the locality based approach. We supported the introduction of SEND hubs when originally proposed in the strategy; we can see now how effective these have been. The approach has resulted in increased support for families - alongside Early Help, Children and Families and NHS colleagues.
10. The system of locality boards is operating successfully, allowing local leaders to be involved in developments at local level and ensuring 'join up' across education leaders. They are providing the framework to enable dialogue and collective responsibility for performance at local level, sector led improvement and shaping provision and developments in the area on an ongoing basis.
11. Locality Inclusion Panels, which take responsibility for oversight of educational provision for vulnerable children at primary and secondary, are progressing well and, as intended, are addressing need directly.
12. The establishment of Parent Carer Voice in 2019 as the recognised SEND Parent Forum is ensuring we have a locality based model of parent/carer groups in partnership with the local authority. The level of user involvement in key reviews of services e.g. social care support for disabled children, development of the new SEND Local Area strategy, is especially welcome.
13. The investment in capacity for Specialist Provision will increase Special School places to over 1000 by Sept 2021, representing a 25% increase since 2017. Capital investment has been made creating Mowbray School at Ripon, with Selby Free School now at design phase, and £ 250k investment in Springwater on track for delivery Sept 21.
14. Overall, members were impressed at what has been achieved in developing the continuum of education provision across the county for now and the future.

### **SACRE Annual Report**

15. A number of members of this committee serve on the North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. At a recent SACRE meeting, its Annual Report for the School year 2019/20 was agreed for publication.
16. The SACRE Chair and supporting officers wanted to raise awareness of the work SACRE does. The Annual Report was an ideal starting point and was therefore taken to a members' briefing in May.
17. We will arrange a similar exercise again next year – possibly at a full committee meeting. This would certainly raise awareness and the profile of SACRE, and it should allow for a more in-depth, informal discussion on matters relating to Religious Education. The overriding view was that the investment the council makes in supporting SACRE is good value, especially as RE has a key role to play in encouraging a broad and meaningful understanding of different faiths and views.

18. So the agreed action was:

- **Raising the profile** – this committee take the Annual report next year. Having a slot in the members seminar programme was also suggested.
- **Scrutiny Work** – should at some point the committee look at wider issues around community cohesion, in a county with not a great deal of racial diversity, what role can RE play promoting tolerance and tackling racism and hate crime.
- **Joint working Opportunities** – being alert to the benefits and opportunities of helping each other out on areas of mutual interest.

### Looking Ahead

19. Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used by the Department for Education (DfE) to describe parents' decisions to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school. In 2019, the committee concluded that the directorate had a good understanding of the issues associated with EHE, and robust procedures and practices. Since then we have seen a significant rise in the numbers of parents opting for EHE.

20. I have asked that the committee be enabled to review:

- the circumstances around these figures;
- the steps taken to strengthen our capacity to support and assist parents to make an informed choice; and
- known factors behind the notable increases in numbers of parents opting for EHE during the Covid 19 pandemic and the questions that poses for the authority.

21. We have asked for an update on the latest financial position in relation to local authority maintained schools and an overview of the management actions undertaken during the financial year to date to support schools in financial difficulty. More widely, we also want to revisit an analysis of the areas presenting with the most significant financial pressures facing CYPS and the management action that has been taken in response to the pressures.

22. Items in the planning stage for our next meeting in September are:

- The Medical Education Service more than one year on from when the service was reshaped.
- Annual Attainment report.
- Shaping future education provision and the issues and challenges for school place planning in North Yorkshire.
- Professor Maggie Atkinson, Chair of North Yorkshire Safeguarding Partnership returns to present her Independent Scrutineer's Annual Report.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR JANET JEFFERSON**

6 July 2021