

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3rd March, 2008

PRESENT – Councillor Hughes (in the Chair); Councillors Francis, Lawton, Long, Richmond, A. J. Scott and Walker. (7)

STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Mr. M. Frank (1)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Mr. R. Egan, Mr. D. Moyes and Mr. N. Rees. (3)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Ruth Bernstein - Head of Libraries & Community Learning Services, Cate Crallan - Head of Special Educational Needs, Andrew Dunn - Assistant Director - School Effectiveness, David Goodchild – Policy Officer, Jan Lefevre - Commissioning Manager and Murray Rose - Director of Children’s Services.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor H Scott.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Armstrong, Davies, Galletley and Lister; Canon S. Bamber, T. Fisher. (6)

ABSENT – Ms. S. Robinson and Mrs. H. Ellis. (2)

CYP41. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – Councillor Long declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in respect of Minute CYP45 as her grandson has a SEN statement.

CYP42. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 14th January and 28th January 2008.

RESOLVED - That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

CYP43. DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES’ TRANSITION COMMISSION – The Director of Children’s Services’ submitted a report (previously circulated) providing Members with an update as to the results of the Director of Children’s Services’ Transition Commission involving primary and secondary schools in the Borough.

The submitted report addressed what transition means for children and young people moving from primary to secondary school and the associated dip in pupil performance in some areas of the town, at an important stage of a child’s life. A number of key questions were detailed in the report together with associated timescales; the report also appended the Transition Action Plan, which was discussed in some detail.

Members entered into discussion on when the transition period commenced, concerns around the admissions policy and appeals procedures, whether performance can be sustained during the transition stage and could the system work in practice, a common transition day and the need to be consistent across all the schools in Darlington, associated behaviour issues during the transition period and the introduction of the Behaviour Action Plan.

Members were pleased to note that there had been a high percentage of children getting a preference this year and particularly a first preference for the local secondary school. It was reported that a detailed report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive a report regarding admission 2008/09.

CYP44. LIBRARIES AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE – The Director of Children’s Services’ submitted a report (previously circulated) to update members on the Ofsted inspection of the Libraries and Community Learning Service.

The submitted report outlined details of the recent inspection, which was the first Ofsted inspection, the first multi remit inspection and the first time that the result of the inspection would contribute towards the Joint Area Review (JAR). The overall rating of the Ofsted inspection was 2 and the JAR contribution grade was also a 2.

The inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the service as “good” and commented on the positive learner experience, the seven key strengths and two areas for improvement were identified. Each of the curriculum areas was also judged and there were 19 strengths and six areas for improvement. The team are now developing an Action Plan to address the areas identified for improvement and to develop the areas of strength.

RESOLVED – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the congratulations of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be passed to the Libraries and Community Learning Service Team.

CYP45. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: THE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN DARLINGTON’S SCHOOLS – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide members with an update on how special educational needs (SEN) of children and young people in Darlington are met. The report provided a background into legalisation and government guidance in respect of SEN and detailed the number of children and young people with SEN in Darlington, the provision available and support/guidance provided to schools. The submitted reported also examined the SEN Inclusion Service priorities detailed in the Children and Young People’s Plan and its progress being made to date.

Particular reference was made to the national average of children and young people from the age of 0-19years having a statement being 1.91% and Darlington being 2%, slightly above the national average. It was noted that inspectors could interrupt the figures as both positive and negative, i.e. as an indication that staff are identifying children and young people who require additional support or help, at an early stage or the contrary. From 2004 to 2008 there was a downward trend of the number of statements maintained for Darlington. This was expected to continue to develop as more of the budget for children and young propel with additional needs will be delegated to schools from April 2008, to support early intervention and inclusive practices.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

CYP46. PLACEMENT OF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE PREVENTIONS WORK IN HUMMERSKNOTT AND SKERENE PARK SCHOOLS – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update members of the current placement of one of the Youth Offending Service Preventions Officer serving Hummersknott and Skerene Park Schools and to provide information on recent changes in relation to the cluster

arrangements. The Committee were pleased to note that full funding has been secured until March 2009, through the Cluster Funding arrangements.

RESOLVED – That the progress made within the current extended service be noted.

CYP47. REFERRAL TRENDS / ORIGIN OF REFERRALS TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform the Scrutiny Committee of referral trends to Children's Social Care; their origins and the processes in place to respond. Further information was table during the meeting in respect of the numbers of referrals.

The submitted report provided analysis of the number of Child Protection Referrals, highlighting that the greatest number of referrals are from the Police, followed by education and latterly health. Members were pleased to note that a quarter of all referrals were dealt with at the initial point of contact. Discussion ensued on the re-referrals of cases, the relatively low numbers of cases as a result of abuse or health needs, how a referral was requested and whether it was possible for the cases to be broken down into age ranges of the children in future reports.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

CYP48. SERVICE PLAN PERFORMANACE 3rd QUARTER 2007/08 – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) summarising the performance against service plans for which this Committee is responsible for providing scrutiny. The submitted report provided a summary of performance as at the end of the 3rd quarter (31st December 2007), highlighted Performance Indicators (PIs) where targets are not being achieved, and where targets are being exceeded.

RESOLVED – (a) That the contents of the Service Plans be noted.

(b) That members note the reporting arrangements that will facilitate scrutiny.

CYP49. THE SCHOOLS FORUM – The Assistant Director, Planning and Resources, Children's Service's submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform members of the work and responsibilities of the Schools Forum. The submitted report advised that the membership of the Schools Forum comprised of Head teachers and Governors from all phases of schools, non-school members and observers from local council and other statutory bodies. The role of Forum is consultative, although, from 2006 decision-making powers were vested mainly in regard to funding matters. The report appended the Minutes of the recent Schools Forum meeting held on 12th February 2008.

Discussion ensued as to how regularly the Schools Forum meet, key issues considered that impact may on the Scrutiny Committee, elected member representations on the Forum and whether a representative of the Scrutiny Committee could be invited as an observer.

RESOLVED – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the membership of the Schools Forum be circulated to all members of the Committee.

(c) That the Director of Children's Services' investigate the possibility of a representative of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receiving an open invitation to attend the Schools Forum, as an observer.

CYP50. THE LOCAL ADMISSIONS FORUM – The Assistant Director, Planning and Resources, Children’s Service’s submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform members of the work and responsibilities of the Local Admissions Forum. The submitted report advised that the membership for the Local Admission Forum included representation for Community and Voluntary Schools, Foundation Schools, Faith Based Schools and Academies. The Local Admissions Forum key role is to ensure a fair admissions system. The report also appended the Minutes of the recent Local Admissions Form meeting held on 12th February 2008.

RESOLVED – (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive the Local Admission Forum’s Annual Report at a future meeting.

CTP51. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that further consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme and review topics for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

Particular reference was made to the number of reports considered at every Scrutiny Committee meeting, which provided regular updates on Capital initiatives, and the Chair suggested that one report be produced that included details of all projects, which would be a more effective use of the agenda. Further discussion ensued on the inclusion of the JAR inspection and the subsequent Action Plan, Language Learning for minority communities, services for 14-19 years, 2008/09 Admissions, sustainable schools, children’s homes, vocational training, Ofsted report and the Pupil Referral Unit.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Work Programme be updated accordingly.

(b) That a report considering School Developments in Darlington be considered at all future meetings of the Committee, which encompasses updates on all ongoing developments.

CYP52. POLICY REVIEW – (1) Review of Progress on Policy Review Items – There were no reports to consider.

(2) Review Items Final Report Back – There were no reports to consider.

(3) Responses of the Executive to Reports of this Scrutiny Committee – Health and Safety in Schools Task And Finish Group – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to report the decision of Cabinet following its consideration of the final report of the Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED – That the comments of the Director of Children’s Services and the response from the Cabinet be noted.

CYP53. EXECUTIVE CALL-IN – (1) Call-In Items Relating to Key Decisions of the Executive - There were no call-in items..

(2) Other Call-In Items – There were no call-in items.

CYP54. BEST VALUE – MONITORING OF PROGRESS ON BEST VALUE REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLANS – There was no progress to be reported back to this meeting.

(NOTE: Minute CYP47. above, was taken at the meeting prior to Minute CYP43.)