

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5th November, 2007

PRESENT – Councillor Hughes (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Davies, Francis, Galletley, Lawton, Long, Richmond, A. J. Scott and Walker. (10)

STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Canon Sheila Bamber and Mr. M. Frank. (2)

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Murray Rose, Director of Children’s Services, George McQueen, Assistant Director - Planning and Resources, Children’s Services, John Bosson, Policy Advisor, and Anita Hamer, Co-ordinator for Pupil Support Service.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor McEwan, Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People, Richard Grassick and Rosi Thornton, Representatives from Darlington Media Group.

APOLOGIES – Councillor Lister. (1)

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

CYP14. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP15. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 10th September 2007.

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

CYP16. MATTERS ARISING – The Chair of the Committee reported that a training session had been arranged for Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 3rd December 2007, in relation to the Council’s support and challenge to schools.

RESOLVED – That Members note the details of the training session.

CYP17. DARLINGTON MEDIA GROUP – YOUTH INVOLVEMENT (BURMA EXHIBITION) – OVERVIEW - Members of the Committee received a presentation from representatives from the Darlington Media Group. Members were informed of the services and facilities offered to young people by the Group, in relation to photography, media and artwork, and the projects that young people have undertaken. Members also viewed a DVD that highlighted three of the projects undertaken by young people.

Members entered into discussion on the possibility of establishing linkages with the television studio at the Education Village; the possibility of offering placements; the outreach work conducted in relation to photography and art, and the work conducted with those with special educational requirements.

RESOLVED – That the representatives of the Darlington Media Group be thanked for the overview given.

CYP18. RELOCATION OF THE PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT AND EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOLS SERVICES TO THE FORMER RISE CARR PRIMARY SCHOOL – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the progress on the development of an integrated Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Service through the refurbishment of the former Rise Carr Primary School.

Discussion ensued on arrangements for home to school transport of pupils to and from the Pupil Referral Unit, the number of pupils that will be able to attend the Pupil Referral Unit, the nature of the curriculum that will be taught, the level of vandalism at the site, the vision of the architect and the use of staggered pupil drop off and collection times.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

CYP19. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS IN DARLINGTON - The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the school attendance figures and exclusion levels within Darlington for the last academic year.

The submitted report stated that the information presented was based on figures submitted to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for the last academic year up to, and including, 25th May 2007, with the exception of Eastbourne Church of England Academy. The report outlined comparisons between the provisional attendance figures for Darlington and a number the Council’s statistical neighbours, the absence rates in the Borough’s secondary schools compared to previous years, the work being conducted to combat persistent absence, the attendance figures of Looked After Children, the permanent and fixed term exclusions in the secondary phase, the partnerships formed by schools in the secondary phase to provide support on issues of behaviour and persistent absenteeism, and the structure of the new Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee.

Members entered into discussion into the increase in the total number of permanent exclusions, fixed term exclusions, number of pupils with Fixed Term Exclusions and the percentage of the pupil population with a fixed term exclusion across the Borough; the impact that the new regulations regarding exclusions lasting more than 5 days will have on the figures; the requirement for individual schools to determine their own policies on the exclusion of pupils; the sharing of good practice between schools and other authorities; the use of internal exclusion units to temporarily manage poor behaviour within schools, and whether the figures of pupils in these units are recorded centrally; and the partnerships formed by schools to provide support on issues of behaviour and persistent absenteeism.

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

(b) That consideration be given as to whether a Task and Finish Review be commenced to obtain details from schools in relation to the number of students excluded internally.

CYP20. SERVICE PLANNING 2007/08 – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to introduce the Service Plans that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for scrutinising.

The submitted report stated that the Service Plans provide a useful summary of what a service is aiming to achieve and how it links into the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

Discussion ensued on the format of the Service Plans and how these can be used to inform the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

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

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

(c) To have copies of the Service Plans available for Committee Members at all future meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

(NOTE: See Minute CYP25 below)

CYP21. 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.

Discussion ensued on inclusion of Language Learning for minority communities; the Library and Community Learning; the Corporate Parenting Strategy; and Child Health, especially obesity in children.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme be updated accordingly.

CYP22. POLICY REVIEW - (1) Review of Progress on Policy Review Items – There were no reports to consider.

(2) Review Items Final Report Back – Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review Group – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (previously circulated) that outlined the findings and recommendations of a Task and Finish Review Group established by this Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 30th October 2006 to gain an overview of the situation in relation to compliance with Health and Safety guidance and legislation in schools, to consider the sanctions that may be imposed on the Council for any non-compliance, to add value to the work currently being conducted by the Health and Safety Unit, and advise on action to encourage improved performance.

The submitted report outlined the implementation of a School Health Check programme, undertaken by the Health and Safety Unit during the progress of the review, and the subsequent outcomes.

RESOLVED – (a) That an update report be submitted to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in six months time.

(b) That an annual Children's Services Award be created for schools involving Staff and Pupils demonstrating commitment to Health and Safety in schools.

(c) That the recommendations of the Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review Group be forwarded to Cabinet.

(3) Responses of the Executive to Reports of this Scrutiny Committee – There were no responses to consider.

CYP23. 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.

CYP24. BEST VALUE - MONITORING OF PROGRESS ON BEST VALUE REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLANS - There was no progress to be reported back to this meeting.

CYP25. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM – SERVICE PLAN PERFORMANCE 2ND QUARTER 2007/08 – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to summarise the performance against Service Plans for which the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are responsible for scrutinising.

The submitted report provided a summary of performance at the end of the second quarter of 2007/08 (1st April – 30th September 2007), highlighted Performance Indicators (PI's) where targets were not being achieved and suggested services that Members may wish to scrutinise.

Members entered into discussion on how such reports can be best used to inform the Committee.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Committee continue to receive update reports at timely intervals as a tool to inform the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

(b) That the good performance in the identified service areas be noted.

(NOTE: Minute CYP25 above, was taken at the meeting with Minute CYP20)