

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23rd June, 2008

PRESENT – Councillor Hughes (in the Chair); Councillors Burton, Davies, Francis, Galletley, Long and Richmond. (7)

STATUTORY CO-OPTTEES – None. (0)

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors Armstrong, Lawton, Lister and Thistlethwaite, Canon S. Bamber, Mr. M. Frank, Mrs. V. Mitchell, Ms. S. Robinson and Mr. T. Fisher. (9)

ABSENT – None. (0)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Murray Rose, Director of Children’s Services, George McQueen, Assistant Director (Planning and Resources), Children’s Services, Andrew Dunn, Assistant Director (School Improvement and Development), Children’s Services, David Goodchild, Policy Advisor, Sue Hoare-Leather, Health Improvement Strategy Lead – Obesity, County Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust, Stuart MacKenzie, Health and Safety Officer, Colin Morrison, Health and Safety Manager, Linda Watts, Language for Learning Co-ordinator and Lucy Wheatley, Children’s Health Partnerships Commissioner.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor McEwan, Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People.

CYP4. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meetings of this Scrutiny Committee held on 9th April 2008, 28th April 2008 and 15th May 2008.

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

CYP5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – Councillors Francis and Hughes, and Mr. N. Rees each declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in Minute CYP8 below, as School Governors.

CYP6. TIMINGS OF MEETINGS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2008/09 - RESOLVED – That the timing of ordinary meetings of this Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of this Municipal Year be at 4.00 p.m.

CYP7. DEVELOPMENTS IN DARLINGTON SCHOOLS – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of developments in Darlington’s schools.

The submitted report outlined the position in relation to the proposed amalgamation of Dodmire Infant School and Nursery School, with Dodmire Junior School, the temporary closure of Firthmoor Primary School, and the impact that the recently announced National School Challenge will have on Longfield School Sports College and Haughton Comprehensive School.

Members entered into discussion on the reporting in the press of the proposed amalgamation of Dodmire Infant School and Nursery with Dodmire Junior School, staff awareness in relation to the informal consultation process, and the process and inclusion of representations from the traveller community in the formal consultation process in relation to the proposed amalgamation of Dodmire Infant School and Nursery with Dodmire Junior School, and the reasons for the closure of Firthmoor Primary School and the subsequent cost.

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

(b) That a letter expressing the gratitude of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be sent to each of the schools that accommodated pupils of Firthmoor Primary School during the school's recent closure.

CYP8. SCHOOL BUDGETS OUTTURNS AND PROPERLY ASSIGNED PROJECTS – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of outturns on Darlington school budgets for the 2007/08 year.

The submitted report highlighted the mechanism to control surplus school balances, as directed by the Secretary of State via the recent revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools, and provided a list of all school balances for the financial year 2007/08, and included the balance as a percentage of the budget share. The submitted report also detailed the amount of balance in excess of the allowed threshold for each school and outlined those amounts that each school had declared allocated to properly assigned projects.

RESOLVED – That the reduction in overall school balances over the previous year and the properly assigned sums, as declared by governing bodies, be noted.

CYP9. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2008-2011 – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to consult with Members on the Draft Children and Young People's Plan.

The submitted report outlined the role of the Children and Young People's Plan in the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy vision: One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, and the new Local Area Agreement. The submitted report stated that the Plan had been prepared by the Darlington Children's Trust, and highlighted the consultation that had been undertaken in the development of the Plan.

Members entered into discussion on the deadlines for consultation in relation to the submission of the Plan to the Government Office, the effect that anti-social behaviour has on children and young people, the publication of literature under the 'Click' brand, the inclusion of the work conducted by the Council of School Council's and the Youth Parliament, the engagement of harder to reach young people, the need to capacity build at a Primary level, the accuracy and reliability of statistical information provided by children and young people in relation to emotional well-being, the media perceptions of children and young people, and the need to influence parental responsibility.

RESOLVED – That the Children and Young People Plan 2008-2011 be endorsed.

CYP10. PLAY AND FREE TIME STRATEGY – UPDATE – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of progress in the Darlington Play and Free Time Strategy which was launched in Autumn 2007.

The submitted report outlined the outcomes to be achieved by the Play and Free Time Strategy, and the transfer of responsibility for the strategy from the Assistant Director (Cultural Services), Community Services, to the Assistant Director (Partnerships), Children's Services. The report advised of the successful application for Big Lottery funding, and outlined the progress of three projects developed as a result of this funding. The report stated that the progress of the strategy is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Play and Free Time Partnership, and detailed the involvement of the Children's Trust Development and Commissioning Group.

Discussion ensued on the role of the 'Play Champion', the play initiatives available in the Denes area of the town, and the tolerance of parents in relation to play activities.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report be noted.

CYP11. LANGUAGE AND LEARNING FOR MINORITY COMMUNITIES – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with information on the work of the Language for Learning Service.

The submitted report outlined the impact the arrival of additional families from Eastern European countries had had on effective service delivery, and the need to recruit a Polish speaker to the team. The report outlined the objectives of the service, and the work conducted in schools to assist children and young people for whom English is an additional language.

Members entered into discussion on the wide range of nationalities and cultures represented in Darlington's schools, the support provided by parental and family structures in language learning and how this is facilitated, the required research of provision, and the need for, language learning for adults, and the barriers to the engagement of non-English speakers.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report be noted.

CYP12. CHILDHOOD OBESITY – UPDATE – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on the action undertaken and the action required in relation to childhood obesity in Darlington.

The submitted report highlighted some of the widely acknowledged reasons for obesity in children, the national picture, the methodology used in terms of identifying obesity and the work conducted by the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) in relation to gathering statistical information to measure the level of obesity. The report detailed the results for Year 6 children in Darlington in 2006/07, and provided comparative figures, both regional and national.

The submitted report outlined ‘Tackling Obesity in Children and Young People in County Durham and Darlington: A Strategy for Prevention and Treatment’, which was adopted by the five former Primary Care Trusts (PCT’s) in County Durham, and by Darlington PCT. The strategy is based on both prevention and intervention, and the submitted report outlined the ongoing actions that were being conducted to accomplish this.

Discussion ensued on parental influence in relation to childhood obesity, the impact of deprivation and socio-economic factors on obesity levels, the involvement of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in addressing the psychological factors that lead to obesity, the need for a cautious approach in relation to the data collection and methodology, the involvement of the Children’s Trust, and the promotion of healthy activity, such as cycling.

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

(b) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee receive an update report in six months to monitor the progress of the actions outlined within the submitted report.

CYP13. UPDATE REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCHOOLS – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on health and safety management in schools and outline the progress and future actions associated with the implementation of the Council’s plans for health and safety management.

The submitted report outlined the introduction of the new Corporate Health and Safety Policy, which had been distributed to all schools, and the promotion of bespoke Health and Safety policies which address an individual school’s specific arrangements. The report stated that further risk assessment work had been conducted, and further work was progressing in relation to Slips, Trips and Falls (STF).

The submitted report highlighted that the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Managing Safely Course was now available for in house delivery, and

that the course was available to Head Teachers and their supervisory staff, which included Safety Governors, and the report also outlined the modules available. A brief outline of the key objectives for the forthcoming year was also provided in the report.

Members entered into discussion on the use of the MIDAS qualification in schools, the impact of stress, and the Stress Management Policy for Schools.

RESOLVED – That the progress to date and the planned actions for 2008/09 be noted.

CYP14. SERVICE PLAN PERFORMANCE YEAR-END 2007/08 – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) that summarised the performance of services against service plans for which this Committee has responsibility for scrutinising.

The submitted report stated that aggregated performance for all six service plans was on target, the trend compared with 2006/07 was positive, and, although there were a number of indicators where targets were not being achieved, there were no indicators that gave rise to particular cause for concern.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report be noted.

CYP15. SERVICE PLANNING 2008/12 – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to introduce the service plans for 2008/12, for which this Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for providing challenge.

The submitted report provided an overview of the four services plans for 2008/12, for which the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has responsibility, and stated that these were Children and Families, Partnerships, Planning and Resources and School Improvement and Development.

RESOLVED – That the service plans for which this scrutiny committee has responsibility be noted.

CYP16. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09 – 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 Municipal Year 2008/09.

RESOLVED – (a) That a Task and Finish Group be established to examine the use of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) in the borough, with particular attention being given to whether these are sufficiently accessible to fulfil the recreational needs of children and young people.

(b) That a Task and Finish Group be established to look at the provision of language learning for people of all ages in Darlington.

CYP17. 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 – There were no responses to consider.

CYP18. 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.

CYP19. BEST VALUE - MONITORING OF PROGRESS ON BEST VALUE REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLANS - There was no progress to be reported back to this meeting.