

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9th November, 2009

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

APOLOGIES – Councillors Davies, Francis, Lister and J. Lyonette. Mr. M. Frank, Mr. T. Fisher, Ms. Robinson and Mr. C. Taylor. (8)

ALSO – Councillor Chapman (Cabinet Member) and Ms. D. Leigh, Interim Principal, Darlington College of Technology.

STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Canon Bamber. (1)

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

ABSENT – Canon S. Bamber, Mrs. V. Mitchell, Ms. S. Robinson (3)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Murray Rose, Director, George McQueen, Assistant Director (Planning and Resources), Simon Honeywell, Inclusion Officer – Pupil Support, Anita Hamer, Targeted Services Partnership Manager, Gemma Petty, Ashley Hill, Locality Co-ordinator and John Steel, Lead Improvement Officer, Learning Technologies Team all within the Department of Children’s Services.

CYP34. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP35. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 14th September and the special meeting held on 12th October, 2009.

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

CYP36. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN USING THE INTERNET – EMERGENCY REPORT - The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (circulated at the meeting) and John Steel, Lead Improvement Officer, Learning Technologies Team gave a presentation to advise Members and raise awareness of the risks that children and young people face when interacting with the internet and to advise on what is being done in schools and colleges to keep children and young people safe.

In Darlington we obtain our internet provision through a regional network funded through a consortium of local authorities, the Northern Grid. This internet provision provides the most stringent of filtering and security systems to safeguard, as far as possible, its users against accessing internet content that display: As part of its security policies, social networking sites such as ‘MySpace’, ‘Facebook’ Bebo, Twitter, etc. as well as ‘Chatrooms’ and ‘instant messaging’ sites, like MSN which have become so very popular with young people, are routinely blocked. These elaborate filtering and security systems deployed in schools are rarely replicated at home.

From starting school, through well-embedded Personal Health, Citizenship and Social Education strands of the National Curriculum and programmes such as SEAL (Social and Emotional

Aspects of Education) our schools routinely begin to introduce children into ways of keeping safe, however, Members were concerned to learn that there is no specific advice in the national curriculum and the council relies on advice from other resources. Teachers are also supported by age-appropriate resources developed by the UK law enforcement agency CEOP – the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre and the Learning Technologies Team and Children’s Safeguarding Teams work very closely to develop training programmes and identify an eSafeguarding named person on every school to lead on training and for the first time this year every family with a child entering secondary in Year 7 received a ‘Know it All’ dvd produced by Childnet which provides a wealth of information and advice.

Following discussion it was proposed that Committee members undertake a Task and Finish Review Group, in order to make appropriate recommendations to cabinet regarding the provision of internet safety advice to all children, young people, parents and carers in Darlington.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to John Steel for his interesting and informative presentation.

CYP37. THE DARLINGTON COMPACT – The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report (previously circulated) to enable Members to scrutinise the draft Darlington Compact in advance of its submission to Cabinet on 1st December, 2009.

The Darlington Compact is an agreement between the public and third sectors about how to work together effectively to deliver the best possible services and outcomes for Darlington and for this Scrutiny, focusing on how the Darlington Compact will impact on services for children and young people.

RESOLVED – That the report and draft Darlington Compact be noted.

CYP38. SCHOOL ABSENCE FIGURES 2008-09 – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the levels of school absence and inform Members of the actions that the Council are undertaking to improve the situation.

The submitted report highlighted that absence rates have stalled in the period September to Easter with performance dipping slightly overall, although the number of persistent absentees continues to decrease in both secondary and primary phase. It was also reported that this authority continues to work with schools through the Secondary and Primary Behaviour and Attendance Networks to share good practice and update them on new initiatives.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP39. SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS 2008/09 – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members of this Scrutiny Committee on the fixed term and permanent exclusions with Darlington for the academic year of September 2008 to July 2009.

It was reported that there was a rise in permanent exclusions amounting to 8 more than in the previous academic year although the overall trend is down. There has also been no permanent exclusions from the primary schools.

It was also reported that the number of fixed term exclusions in secondary schools has reduced falling from 875 in 2007-08 to 734 in 2008-09, amounting to a 16.1% reduction. It was of particular interest to note that Eastbourne C of E Academy (now St. Aidan’s C of E Academy),

has reduced fixed term exclusions from 283 in 2007-08 to 82 for 2008-09. In the primary phase there have been further reductions in both fixed term exclusions and days lost.

Particular reference as also made to the 'Turnaround' provision for primary students which has impacted on fixed and permanent exclusions with reductions in both which opened in January 2009.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP40. COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to bring to Members the annual report on comments, compliments and complaints received and managed by the Department of Children's Services. The Council is required by law to have management arrangements in place for considering children's social care representations, including complaints, under the Children Act 1989.

It was reported that between 1st April, 2008 and 31st March, 2009 45 complaints were received and dealt with under the statutory children's social care procedure. 92% of the complaints received were resolved at Stage 1. 10 compliments were received by the department and the Director of Children's Services advised Members that new systems had been put into place for recording compliments which hopefully will be reflected in next years report.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP41. EXTENDED SCHOOLS ACTIVITIES – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an update on the work taking place in schools around Extended Services both nationally and across Darlington to promote the delivery and signposting to extended services.

It was reported that 33 schools (84%) in Darlington are providing full access to the core offer, which is the government set core of services they would like to see all schools offering. It was also reported that all schools were working towards developing their extended services to achieve full core offer status by September, 2010. Services included in the core offer are offering of a varied menu of activities, childcare, parenting support, swift and easy access and community access to school facilities including adult learning, ICT and sports facilities.

Members questions related to community access to school facilities and in particular Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's).

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP42. PREFERENCES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES SEPTEMBER 2009 – Following a request by a Member of this Scrutiny Committee at a recent meeting, the Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise on the pattern of parental preferences for secondary places for 2009/10 school year.

The submitted report highlighted the first, second and third preferences parents made and also gave an indicated of the number of places offered at schools where no parental preference was recorded.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CYP43. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to the appointment of a non-voting co-opted Member to this Scrutiny Committee. It was reported that Siobhan Lund had expressed an interest in joining this Scrutiny and had knowledge of important issues affecting children with special needs and their families.

RESOLVED – That Siobhan Lund be approved as a non-voting co-optee on this Scrutiny Committee.

CYP44. WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 – Pursuant to Minute CYP64/Apr/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 remainder of the Municipal Year 2009/10.

The submitted report gave the background to the work programme and it was requested that Members give consideration to a schedule (also previously circulated) which had been compiled detailing the dates of meetings of this Scrutiny Committee together with those plans, strategies and reviews which could be considered at each of those meetings.

Following discussion on the Work Programme and the items to be programmed, reference was made to include a report on the 16-19 agenda, the provision of Children’s Residential Services with a possible Task and Finish Review, a visit to the Redhall Turnaround Centre and following discussions at Monitoring and Co-ordination Group some potential joint working around children and young people’s health issues.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme 2009/10 be noted.

CYP45. POLICY REVIEW - (1) Review of Progress on Policy Review Items – There was no progress to report.

(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.

CYP46. 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.