

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November, 2010

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Curry, Davies, Francis, Long and Richmond. (7)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Burton, Cossins, J. Lyonette; Mr. Fisher, and Ms. Lund.(5)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – Mr. Egan, Mr. Moyes, Mr. Rees and Mr. Taylor. (4)

ABSENT – Councillor Galletley, The Ven. S. Bain, Mr. M. Frank, Mrs. Mitchell and Mr. Grant. (5)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor C. Hughes. (1)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services, George McQueen, Assistant Director Planning and Resources, Wendy Ripley, Assistant Director Schools, Improvement and Development.

CYP30. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – – Councillor Davies declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in Item CYP34 below as she has been seconded to the Young People's Learning Agency and took no part in the discussion thereon.

CYP31. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 20th September and the Special Meeting held on 11th October, 2010.

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

CYP32. ADMISSIONS TO SCHOOLS : SEPTEMBER 2010 – With the permission of the chair this Item was withdrawn and will be submitted to the next ordinary meeting of this Scrutiny.

RESOLVED – That the report be withdrawn.

CYP33. MID YEAR SAVING AND IMPACTS FOR SCHOOLS – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members with information on mid-year budget cuts it was necessary to make as a result of in-year grant reductions and the on-going effects for schools.

It was reported that the Cabinet at their meeting on 28th July, 2010 agreed spending reductions in the 2010-11 revenue budget totalling £1.213 million, of which £539,000 related to Children's Services. The Children's Services Department reviewed service levels and considered areas where achievable savings could be found with the least impact on front line services and reductions of £730k had been made accordingly. The submitted report gave full details of the reductions that have been made through the reduction of the Schools Commissioning Budget; a reduction in the amount provided to schools to facilitate extended services; the restructure of the Pupil Referral Unit; a vacant post in the delivery of 14-19 services will remain vacant; the deletion of a middle management post in Children and Families Services; two posts to be removed from the ContactPoint; a reduction in services and two Lead Officer posts to be

removed from the structure in School Improvement and Development; following two members of staff leaving at the end of the academic year a restructure of the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Service will be undertaken; signalised pedestrian crossings have been provided outside some schools in the last year removing the need for school crossing patrol officers; the reduction of road safety campaigns in schools; reduction of funding for the Youth Capital Fund; and the reduction of the Harnessing Technologies Grant.

This Scrutiny will continue to receive reports on changes brought about by the need to re-design services to meet with new financial models and will be closely monitoring the potential impact on service provision.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People emphasised the need to focus also on the impact on young people and not just schools and that Members may want to consider the potential impact and risks of the spending reductions.

Members also extended their thanks to officers for their hard work in attempting to achieve a balance of savings and maintaining a necessity of service, however, expressed their concerns for the future.

RECEIVED – That the report be received.

CYP34. ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the legislation introduced by the Academies Act 2010 which makes provision for Community and Aided Schools to take Academy status, providing certain criteria are met.

Academies are publicly funded independent schools, free from local authority and national government control and have greater freedom on how they use their budgets. The Academies Act 2010 also makes provision for setting up ‘Free Schools’ which are all-ability, state funded schools, set up in response to parental demand. Free schools are governed and financed in essentially the same way as Academies and can be set up by any suitable proposer, where there is evidence of parental demand such as a petition or declaration from interested parents and requires approval from the Secretary of State, who will consider each proposal on its merits. All Free Schools will be accountable like other state schools via inspections and tests.

Members discussions ensued on the establishment of ‘Free Schools’ and how these will be operated; safeguarding issues and overall responsibility for the welfare of the young people; specialist school funding; and the system for calculating the benefits to schools in becoming an academy or free school.

Member also discussed with officers School Place Planning and the systems in place for making projections and officers outlined the work being undertaken with the Roman Catholic Diocese on school place planning and also how ‘free schools’ could affect successful school place planning in the future.

RECEIVED – That the report be received.

CYP35. WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11 – Pursuant to Minute CYP76/Apr/10, 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 2010/11.

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 it was suggested to include Support for Young People who are Carers and a Task and Finish Review on joint services across neighbouring local authorities to assist maintenance of service levels, given the current need for all local authorities to find savings.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme 2010/11 be noted.

CYP36. OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE PROVIDED TO DARLINGTON'S COMMUNITY SCHOOLS BY THE IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE – With the prior approval of the Chair to the matter being treated as urgent to give consideration at the earliest opportunity, the Director of Children's Services submitted a report (previously circulated) to advise Members on the role of School Improvement Partners nationally, give consideration to their functions and those of Lead Officers in the Schools and Improvement and Development Service and how they support and challenge Darlington's community schools and Pupil Referral Unit.

The submitted report also highlighted the focus of the activities that the School Improvement and Development Service have undertaken this term.

Members discussed the possible future impact on the service as a result of the change in Government in May 2010 and the awaited decision from the Department for Education on the future of the role of the School Improvement Partners and the extent to which local authorities will provide school improvement services. It was highlighted that Darlington schools have already established a mechanism to plan and fund support for each other, through the schools' commissioning board activity carried out as part of the self-help activity and there is a general willingness to share expertise among the schools and that this extends to schools within the Tees Valley.

Members discussion also ensued on the future of the Pupil Referral Unit and it was confirmed that the Unit will be able to continue to provide support for those schools requiring 'intensive' support. Members agreed that this Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor the impact on the service.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

CYP37. 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 final reports.

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

CYP38. 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.

CYP39. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT – The Chair announced to the Committee that this would be the last meeting for Mr. Chris Taylor, the Primary Head Teacher representative as he was shortly to retire from his position as Head Teacher at Mowden Infant School.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to Mr. Taylor for his commitment to the Committee over the recent years and to wish him well in his forthcoming retirement.