

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28th October 2013

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Crumby, Hutchinson, Galletley, E.A. Richmond and Wright. (11)

APOLOGIES - Councillors L. Hughes; Kelley, C. Taylor and L. Vasey; (6)
Mr. Fisher and Ms. Coltman.

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – Mr. Frank. (1)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – Mr. D. Moyes. (1)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Jenni Cooke, Assistant Director, Children, Families and Learning; Rachel Kershaw, Head of School Place Planning and Jenny Lumley, Aiming High Development Manager.

CYP15. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – There were no declarations of interested reported at the meeting.

CYP16. MINUTES – Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 2 September 2013. A brief discussion was held to clarify Members' attendance at this meeting.

RESOLVED – That, subject to a minor amendment to the attendance, the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

CYP17. WORK PROGRAMME – The Director of Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) to give consideration to the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee and to consider any additional areas which Members suggest should be added to the previously approved work programme.

RESOLVED - That the current status of the work programme be noted.

CYP18. SEN UPDATE – Jenny Lumley, Aiming High Development Manager gave a presentation to update Members of this Scrutiny Committee on work and progress of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Pathfinder project.

The presentation gave the background to SEN provision in the Borough and outlined the Government's vision for making improvements to the current assessment system with regard to SEN in Darlington.

Nationally, it has been acknowledged that the current system is not working for families and children and young people with SEN having their needs picked up late and also families having difficulty in finding out what support is available to them from education and health and social care services.

The presentation outlined the Government's vision to improve the present situation with regard to SEN provision and gave an update on what has been done so far in Darlington to address the issues.

The 'vision' includes putting in place support at an early stage; ensuring staff have the knowledge and understanding and skills to provide the right support for children and young people with SEN needs; that parents know what they can reasonably expect local schools, colleges or local authorities to provide; ensure that aspirations of children and young people are raised through an increased focus on life outcomes, including employment; an integrated assessment and a single Education, Health and Care Plan is in place from birth to 25 years for young people with more complex needs; and that there is greater control for parents and young people over the services they and their family use.

The presentation also included government changes with regard to SEN funding and how this will affect schools budgets.

Discussion ensued on training of teachers to identify pupils with SEN; how children are identified at an early age; multi-agency working and use of the Partnership Board; use of personal budgets and direct payments; and the benefits of Education, Health and Care Plans which now include parents and family as part of the Plan.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be extended to Jenny Lumley for her presentation.

CYP19. ACADEMIES/FREE SCHOOLS – Rachel Kershaw, Head of School Place Planning gave a verbal update on the position with regard to Academies and Free Schools within the borough.

There are currently 28 Academies, nine maintained schools, one special free school and one pupil referral unit. Members were also advised that there are two applications due to be submitted to the Department for Education for two free schools within the borough but there is no requirement to consult with the authority.

All schools are members of Schools @One Darlington and meet regularly as a forum to share future plans and work together towards the School Organisation Plan.

General discussion ensued on the availability of school places; how admission numbers can be increased and the impact of parental choice. Members expressed concerns at the potential for a lack of school places in the next five years and agreed to monitor the situation closely.

RESOLVED – (a) That the update be received.

(b) That Members receive a further update after January 2014.

CYP20. CHILD POVERTY REVIEW GROUP – Submitted – The notes of the meeting held on 15 October, 2013.

RESOLVED – (a) That the notes be approved as a correct record.

(b) That the progress of the Review Group be noted.

