

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 April 2010

ANNUAL REPORT

Report of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To approve the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee report as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2009/10 that is to be presented to Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 In previous years each scrutiny committee has published an individual account of the work conducted by the Committee in an annual report, and was presented to Council. The annual report reflected the committees work programme and included achievements, highlights and policy review work.
- 2.2 This year for the first time the annual report will be a single combined report of all seven Scrutiny Committees. The annual report will outline the development in the scrutiny function and provide snapshots of the outcomes achieved during the last year.

3. Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee 2009/10

- 3.1 The draft Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee report is attached at Appendix 1 for member's consideration. The report provides a brief snapshot of the some of the main work undertaken by the Committee during 2009/10. It should be noted that the report is written from the perspective of the Chair of the Committee reflecting over the year.
- 3.2 Some of the main themes covered in the annual report revolve around the following issues:
 - Schools Performance
 - Children's Safeguarding
 - Behaviour and Attendance
 - Library services
 - Policy Review: 16-19 Education and Training.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Committee has delivered another ambitious work programme in 2009/10, which is reflected in the annual report. The Scrutiny Committee has worked well with Council Directorates, stakeholders and partner organisations to deliver the work programme and the Scrutiny Committee has tackled a number of key issues throughout the

year and looked to work with officers and stakeholders to provide solutions and improvements to services delivered across the city.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members approve the Children, Young People and Learning report 2009/10 for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/10.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 2009/10 Agendas

Contact Officer: Karen Brown, Scrutiny Officer, 561 1006
karen.brown@sunderland.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1: ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Report: Children, Young People & Learning Scrutiny Committee 2009/10

Chair: Cllr Paul Stewart **Vice-Chair:** Cllr Graham Hall

Committee Members: Councillors Richard Bell, John Kelly, Tom Martin, Dennis Richardson, Dianne Snowdon, Philip Tye, Bob Francis, Robert Oliver, Ivan Richardson. Co-opted Representatives Malcolm Frank, Christine Hutchinson, Marilyn Harrop, Howard Brown, Stuart Laverick, Gary Holmes, Dorothy Butler, Pat Burn, Audrey Johnson.

As ever, the scope of the Scrutiny Committee gets broader and the landscape of children's services ever more challenging. Inevitably this year there were many more issues that members were keen to include in the work programme for a scrutiny focus but we have to be selective.

We started the year by questioning the Director of Public Health about the implications for Sunderland's schools caused by an outbreak of measles in a neighbouring authority. 11,000 children and young people had not been vaccinated mainly as a consequence of the now discredited concerns regarding the potential side effects of the MMR vaccine.

I am pleased to note that our revised remit brings libraries back under our scrutiny. We held a meeting in the central library and scrutinised the review of fees and charges including the concessionary rates and entitlements to them. We will be seeking to be consulted on further reviews to the fees and charges.

This is a transition year for major changes in the provision of 16-19 education and training and we have been monitoring the transition process to assess how ready we are for the changes. While this is a tremendous opportunity for a fully integrated service, at this stage there are still uncertainties and anxieties about what the future holds.

We have started to negotiate a new role for scrutiny members in monitoring how the local authority supports schools causing concern. Members will now receive termly summary reports based on known concerns, shared intelligence and Ofsted inspections.

The Committee is consulted on a number of statutory plans and this year set up a working group which involved members in the development of those plans at an early stage. We looked in detail at the development of a Behaviour and Attendance Strategy and attended consultation events on the revised Children and Young People's Plan.

A key role for the Scrutiny Committee has been to receive briefings on the roles and responsibilities of the safeguarding team. The Committee reviewed the actions taken by Sunderland Children's Trust to the Laming Report in taking forward the recommendations. We also received a detailed report on support for children in care which re-opened out earlier discussions on the

capacity of social workers and the pressures faced following the recommendations in the Laming report.

Youth Work provision from 2010 to 2013 to the value of £2.25m is being commissioned this year and there were twenty-four contracts out to tender. For the first time, members were involved in the commissioning process and helped in the appointment of contracts.

Young people's accommodation continues to be a cause for concern, in particular, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, and support for homeless young people. The Committee asked the Children's Trust to consider the policy used to identify suitable housing for young people and to review the criteria used to make decisions.

We were very pleased to note that the targets for NEETs had been achieved for the first time. This was achieved through intensive and collaborative work and we congratulate all those involved in their efforts. It was noted that the number of permanent school exclusions has increased from 13 to 22. Although it was appreciated this is still very low, the Committee will be carrying out scrutiny of this area in the next year.

Our co-opted members continued to play an active and valuable role in the Committee and, more so than ever, their insights are valued when we are considering external plans and strategies. The City of Sunderland College hosted a visit by members of the committee to meet senior staff and talk to students which helped provide useful background and context to our review of 16-19 education.

We have tried to balance the work programme across the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan to reflect a broad review of strategic priorities. In the next year we will be seeking to clarify our accountability role in relation to other Boards and Forums in the City which have responsibility for delivering the priorities for children and young people.

Cllr Paul Stewart

Chair of the Children, Young People & Learning Scrutiny Committee