

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1 of the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on MONDAY, 14th MARCH, 2011 at 5:30pm

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Bonallie, Francis, G. Hall, MacKnight, D. Richardson, D. Trueman and Williams together with Ms. J. Bell, Ms. R. Elliott and Mr. H. Brown

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Oliver and on behalf of Mrs. S. Duncan, Ms. H. Harper, Mrs. M. Harrop and Mrs. C. Hutchinson

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 10th February, 2011

2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 10th February, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to an amendment in the first paragraph on page four whereby the Murray Report is changed to the Munro Report.

Declarations of Interest

Item 4 – Reference from Cabinet – 9th March, 2011 – Children and Young People's Plan Annual Report 2010

Councillors MacKnight and Stewart declared personal interests in this item as members on the board of IMPACT.

Item 6 – Sunderland Youth Offending Service – Achievement of Outcomes 2010-2011

Councillor Francis declared a personal interest in this item as he served as a magistrate.

Item 7 – Commissioning of Youth Work Contracts

Councillor Williams declared a personal interest in this item as the Chair of Oxclose Young Peoples Project who delivered services in the Washington area.

Reference from Cabinet – 9th March, 2011 – Children and Young People’s Plan Annual Report 2010

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the Committee’s advice and consideration on the report considered by Cabinet on 9 March, 2011 presenting the Annual Report for 2010 of the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP).

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Sandra Mitchell, Head of Performance Improvement and Policy, presented the report advising that the report that had been presented to Cabinet had sought approval to the Annual Report of the CYPP 2010 which set out 10 priorities, action and progress made. All of the priorities had either been completed or changed in accordance with national policy/local delivery and incorporated where appropriate into the CYPP 2010-2013 Delivery Plan. She advised that there had been no issues of significance to report back from Cabinet and informed the Committee that their comments would be reported to Council on 23 March, 2011.

Councillor Stewart referred to page 28 of the agenda and asked how the Family and Parenting Service ensured that information and guidance was provided to the most relevant families and individuals. Ms. Mitchell advised that the information was provided through a number of services including Children’s Centres and directly through the Family Information Service (FIS). She advised that all staff were aware of what was available and people would be signposted to the most relevant advice for them.

Ms. Julie Firth, Youth Offending Service Manager, also commented that it was a multi-agency strategy so the information was available over a wider range of service providers and partner agencies and all those involved were aware of what was available and very committed to delivering the advice and guidance.

In response to comments from Councillor Richardson regarding reducing offending amongst young people in care and how there was still too many young people in care going through the courts for minor issues that parents would usually deal with directly, Ms. Meg Boustead, Head of Safeguarding, advised that following discussions at the last meeting of the Committee more in depth work had been undertaken on this issue. It was intended that a meeting be held with the Committee to look at the issues and reasons for them in more detail and have discussions around how to address them.

With regards to a question from Councillor Hall as to the procedures for dealing with young people who have been suspected of criminal or anti social behaviour, Ms. Firth advised that there was a triage scheme in place whereby there was a member of staff in the custody suite who would assess and signpost any young people that were brought in. If the young person then engages with the services offered they aren’t charged but if the services are not engaged with they move to the next stage and are formally charged with their offence.

The young person will then be reprimanded if they have not been charged before by the police. Any offence committed after this by the young person results in a final warning being issued, with any further offences being considered by the courts system. She explained that there were some balances to be weighed up for each individual case so if it had been a particularly serious offence it could entail the individual being dealt with directly by the court.

Councillor Stewart referred to page 30 of the agenda and how the Connexions Learning Difficulty and Disability (LDD) Personal Advisers got involved with pupils with difficulties who may be in mainstream schooling. Ms. Mitchell advised that the Advisers worked with any young people with recognised learning difficulties or disabilities to help to support them through transitional plans into education, employment or training. She was confident they were engaging with young people across the city but she would look into the issue further and get a response circulated to Members.

The Chairman having thanked the Officer for her report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the content of report be received and noted and the comments made by reported orally to the meeting of Council to be held on 23rd March, 2011.

Policy Development and Review 2010/11 : Draft Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report and report for circulation (copy circulated) which set out the draft review report on the findings of the Committee's policy review topic this year of Learning at Work : The Role of Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships in Tackling NEET's.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that the report provided in detail the evidence, research and conclusions drawn throughout the review process and asked Members for any comment on the relevance, clarity and accuracy of the report content. He advised that the review had clear links to the Council's Strategic Priorities, in particular around prosperous city and learning city priorities, and also linked to Corporate Priorities on delivering customer focussed services and improving partnership working.

The Chairman asked that any comments Members wished to make on the draft report be fed back directly to the Scrutiny Officer by 29th March, 2011 to ensure they were included in the final report. The final report would also include a number of recommendations based on discussions that had taken place on the away day the Committee held at the Hylton Skills Campus. The final report would be submitted to the next Committee meeting on 7th April, 2011 for consideration and endorsement.

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Any comments on the draft report be fed directly to the Scrutiny Officer by 29th March, 2011 for inclusion in the final report;
- (ii) Consideration be given by the Committee to themes and issues for recommendations to be included in the policy review report; and
- (iii) The final review report be presented to the next meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee on 7th April, 2011.

Sunderland Youth Offending Service – Achievement of Outcomes 2010-2011

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise Members that a presentation would be given to the Committee by Ms. Julie Firth, Youth Offending Service Manager.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Firth gave a presentation to the Committee which provided Members with an overview of the achievement of outcomes by Sunderland Youth Offending Service against the service core aims of preventing offending and re-offending as set out in the statutory Youth Justice Plan 2010-2011.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes)

Ms. Firth took Members through the presentation, which had particular relevance for the Council's Strategic Priority for a safe city and the Corporate Improvement Objectives that relate to improving partnership work to deliver one city and customer focussed services. The presentation set out:-

- the extent to which outcomes have been achieved by Sunderland Youth Offending Service were defined by performance against statutory performance indicators;
- from a service user perspective, demonstrating customer focussed services; and
- how value for money had been achieved in service delivery.

Mr. Brown referred to the use of custody at 2.6% at the end of 2009/10 against a national average of 5.7% and Ms. Firth advised that this was 2.6% of those young people having disposal through the courts system.

He also sought clarification on the statement that the safeguarding, risk of harm and risk of re-offending scores were above national average and Ms. Firth advised that this meant that Sunderland scores were higher than the nationally set targets.

In response to comments from Councillor Hall around keeping young people out of the courts system, Ms. Firth referred him back to the triage system that had been explained under the previous item, but advised that it was Northumbria Police who

would decide which offences were considered by the courts. The police and the CPS would then make recommendations as to which route in the triage system the young person should take.

Councillor Hall then asked if early intervention with the family had had much effect on the numbers of young people offending or re-offending and was advised that the FIP had show fantastic outcomes in helping families realise the impact of offending and re-offending and suggested that some examples of the work of the service be provided to Members outside of the meeting. She explained how they used the negative cost tool which identified the costs that would be related in the likelihood of an offence occurring. The service had helped 29 families between October – December, 2010 which had saved the equivalent of £270,000 that it would have cost in other agencies services had they not been.

In response to a query from Ms. Elliott regarding getting the young people into a training scheme or work, Ms. Firth advised that the service worked extremely hard to get them into placements. She commented that they had taken a sample of young people who they had intervned with and found that 70% of them were still attending the placements that had been found for them six months later.

Councillor Stewart commented that this Committee had considered reports year on year showing ongoing improvements to the service and asked if there were any barriers or areas of support they needed that the Committee could help with. Ms. Firth commented that the service were part of an effective partnership with other agencies who all had a real commitment to work towards continually improving, although they were sure that in the current economic climate they would face new challenges over the next 12 months.

Councillor Stewart having thanked Ms. Firth for her presentation and report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the work of the Sunderland Youth Offending Service in preventing children and young people in Sunderland from offending and re-offending be acknowledged and supported.

Commissioning of Youth Work Contracts

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) in response to a request from the Scrutiny Committee for an update of the progress and impact made since the implementation in April 2010 of the Commissioned Youth Work Contracts and procurement of Youth Services.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Sandra Mitchell, Head of Performance Improvement and Policy, presented the report advising that the commissioning of Youth Services within the five regeneration areas was delivered by ward based contracts for a two year period from 2010 to 2012, with the option to continue to 2014 following a performance and funding review.

Ms. Mitchell advised the Committee that the service had had a visit from HMI the previous Thursday and Friday where they had been looking at commissioning in the city and how it had been carried out. She advised that the informal feedback from the visit had been extremely positive but formal feedback would not be available for a couple of weeks, which would then be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for formal consideration.

Councillor Hall asked if there were specific details of what was available in each Ward as he felt it may be beneficial for all Members to know. Ms. Kath Butchert, YDG Manager, advised that the information was available and would be circulated.

Councillor Hall queried the definition of the 6,040 young people who were identified as having participated in 2009-2010, and was advised that the definitions were set by Government. Young people who had participated were defined as those young people who were recorded as attending regularly, the 16,563 who were in contact were those young people who had only attended on one or two occasions. Recorded were those young people who agreed that they had received a learning outcome by attending and Accredited young people were those that received a national qualification through the provision, such as the Duke of Edinburgh award.

In response to a further query from Councillor Hall regarding any providers that may have been decommissioned, Ms. Butchert advised that there had been one provider in the Coalfields area who had been decommissioned last year as they had been unable to meet the necessary standard, even after support had been given to them. Councillor Richardson commented that this gap in provision had since been taken up by another provider with no break in the continuity of service to the young people and the new providers could not be spoken highly enough of.

Councillor Hall asked how the youth provision was marketed to young people and their parents so that they were aware of what was available in their area. Ms. Butchert advised that it was provided to them in a number of ways and explained that it was a key part of the 'Let's Go Sunderland' website which was aimed at young people and parents. She also advised that information was provided in schools and community centres and Northumbria Police were provided with cards that they issued to young people that contained up to date information on what was available.

Councillor Williams commented that there were lots of informal activities taking place in areas which were seen as youth work but were only entertainment and not organised, accredited activities and there was a need for people to be able to differentiate between the two.

Councillor Francis asked if the service had figures from the voluntary providers that supported the Duke of Edinburgh awards and was advised that they had not researched the level of awards being given through groups such as the Scouts or Girl Guides as they were not funded by the Council but that they did an invaluable job in helping many young people undertake the awards.

Councillor Bell referred to appendix four of the report which set out how ward contracts were performing in relation to their targets and was advised that it was most likely that work was undertaken throughout the year with the young people to

encourage them to use facilities and any young people completing any accreditations would do so within the last quarter of the year. Therefore the actual figures would increase during this last quarter to reach the targets that were set.

Councillor Stewart asked if there were any providers that were raising concerns or being closely monitored and Ms. Butchert advised that all of the contracts were functioning well and were consistently monitored robustly. On occasions when there were any dips in the level of service being offered they would work with the agency to support them in areas they may need to improve.

In response to a question from Councillor Stewart around contractors providing the services they had promised to in their initial bids, Ms. Butchert commented that this was an area that needed to be looked into. She stated that she could quite easily give examples of good provisions and successful individuals but that she could not say overall that all had definitely met their targets and this was a piece of work that would need to be undertaken.

He then referred to Appendix 3 of the report and the significant difference between the target figures and the actual outturn figure which was much greater. Ms. Butchert advised that these were government set targets and that Sunderland had well exceeded them for a number of years now and by a significant amount.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Butchert for her attendance at the Committee and having learned of her upcoming retirement in Easter, thanked her for all the hard work she had provided to the youth services over her time with the Council and to this Committee and Members. The Committee wished her well in her retirement, and it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the information in report be received and noted.

Annual Report

The Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought approval of the Annual Report of their Committee as part of the overall scrutiny annual report 2010/11 that would be presented to a future meeting of Council.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

7. RESOLVED that the report of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee be approved for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 March, 2011 – 30 June, 2011

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider the relevant items of the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1 March, 2011 – 30 June, 2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

8. RESOLVED that the Executive's Forward Plan for the current period be received and noted.

Work Programme 2010-2011

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching the current work programme for the year 2010-2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

9. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme be received and noted and items as discussed previously in the meeting be added where appropriate.

The Chairman then drew the meeting to a close having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

(Signed) P. STEWART,
Chairman.