

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 22nd APRIL, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Francis, G. Hall, Kelly, I. Richardson and Snowdon together with Mrs. P. Burn, Ms. R. Elliott, Mrs. C. Hutchinson, Professor G. Holmes and Mr. S. Laverick

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors T. Martin and Oliver and Mrs. D. Butler and Mr. M. Frank.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 11th March, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 11th March, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Chairman's Welcome

Councillor Stewart welcomed and introduced Ms. Rose Elliott who had recently been appointed to the Committee as a Voting Parent Governor Co-Opted Member.

Report on the Phoenix Project

The Chief Executive submitted a report which provided Members with background information on the Phoenix Project and advised that a representative would be attending the Committee to give a presentation and answer Members questions.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. John Ord, Watch Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and Ms Hannah Scorer, participant of the Phoenix project gave a presentation to the Committee providing members with an understanding of the programme and the positive impact it has had on the young people who have participated.

Mr. Ord advised that the project had been running since 2000, when it had been the first project of its kind nationally. Since then, the project had helped to reduce crime and disorder and anti social behaviour through targeting young people who were 11-17 years of age and seen to be at risk of offending and having them take part on the course.

Over the past ten years the project had developed quite radically and partnerships had strengthened with the Youth Offending Services having a worker seconded into the Fire and Rescue Services. A further two courses had been introduced as 'follow on' packages so that the service now offered three courses. The original five day course which they would complete and get a certificate for, then if the young person stayed out of trouble they would be invited back to take part in the two follow up reward courses.

Mr. Ord advised that the introduction of the two reward courses had proved successful in ensuring that the young person would continue to stay out of trouble to ensure they got invited back to the Respect course three months after the original course and then invited to the Advance course another six months after completing Respect.

Ms. Scorer informed the Committee that she had completed all three of the courses and they had helped her turn her life around. The Phoenix project had shown her that she was capable of achieving more than she was and it convinced her to stay out of trouble so that she could continue on to the other courses. She advised she had been working as a part time chef but was changing to specialise in hairdressing and had secured an apprenticeship and would also be continuing to work with the Phoenix project as a mentor to future young people.

Councillor Richardson commended Ms. Scorer for the achievements she had made.

Ms. Burn commented that the presentation had shown the success of diverting young people into other activities and away from possible anti-social behaviour or youth disorder.

Mr. Ord advised that at the end of each of the courses the young people carried out a fire drill as part of their passing out event and expressed that Members of the Committee were welcome to come along to the next one to get a better understanding of what the course covers. He advised that he would provide the Scrutiny Assistant with future dates for circulation to Members of the Committee and then they could attend a date suitable for themselves.

Councillor Hall commented that there were a lot of youngsters nowadays that did not get hands on experience of activities and that this was a project that helped to deliver this. Mr. Ord agreed and stated that a lot of young people were not academically minded and that projects like the Phoenix and the Duke of Edinburgh

allowed more practically minded young people to be involved in something of interest to them, which could then lead on to the young person seeking out NVQ qualifications or apprenticeships.

In response to a question from Councillor Stewart around when the young person realised there was a chance for them to change their lives, Mr. Ord advised that this usually occurred during the first five day course that they undertook. The reward of future courses helped to keep them from misbehaving in the future and keep them on track.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Ord and Ms. Scorer for their report and presentation and looked forward to visiting the project in the future, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Performance Report Quarter 3 (April – December 2009)

The Acting Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with a performance update relating to the period April – December, 2009.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Judith Hay, Head of Positive Contribution and Economic Well-being, and Mr. Andrew Baker, Information Manager, presented the report to the Committee advising that this quarter report included:-

- progress in relation to the LAA targets and other national indicators;
- progress in relation to the Alcohol and Young People Policy Review Recommendations; and
- results of the annual budget consultation which took place during October/November 2009.

Ms. Hay advised that those indicators which had declined between 2008/09 year end and 2009/10 quarter 3 were outlined from paragraph 3.1.4 of the report.

Ms. Hutchinson referred to paragraph 3.1.5 of the report and the stability of placements for looked after children and asked for the reasoning behind the slight rise, as the young people the Committee had met had identified a stable placement as being of importance to them. Ms. Hay advised that the rise could have occurred for many reasons such as the young person being in a children's home but then needing to be moved. She advised that Sunderland did well with regards to this indicator but that in some extreme cases measures had to be taken where young people were moved from their placements.

Councillor Kelly referred to indicator NI112 and the under 18 conception rate and commented that there was still a way to go in addressing this issue. Ms. Hay advised that the national support team were meeting the following week to discuss

how best to move on the link between teenagers having alcohol and then sex and that it was an issue of concern.

Councillor Kelly went on to comment that it was an issue that had been raised at the Washington Area Committee and that they were seeking further information and figures around under 18 conceptions that were related to alcohol use. Mr. Baker advised that only figures around the two issues separately would be available.

In response to a question from Councillor Snowden around NI117 and the number of 16-18 year olds who were NEET, Ms. Hay advised that the figures changed on a weekly basis and it was about hitting and maintaining the target of 9.5 or better. She advised that there was a significant number out of the NEET cohort that were in apprenticeships and at risk. The LSP were working with partner agencies for them to take on young apprentices and pay the £95 a week. Ms. Hay advised that this had recently been subject to a select committee meeting and would give the Scrutiny Assistant copies of the information for circulation to the Committee.

Mr. Laverick commented that he was always interested to learn from good practices elsewhere in the country and asked if the Council had the chance to share their practices and mechanisms with other councils that were performing well. Ms. Hay advised that Officers consistently watched who was performing well in the league tables and this week Oldham had shared their model of a one stop shop, with a number of agencies being their to help rather than having to refer a young person to them and the service were looking at incorporating a similar approach.

Councillor Hall referred to the NEET figures and welcomed the downward trend but commented that this was only short term and asked where young people in training or on courses at the end of these. Ms. Hay informed the Committee that of the NEET cohort only 1.9% were continuously NEET with the rest being in and out of training, employment or education. She commented that the local authority were responsible to work together with partners to ensure that young people have a pathway from leaving school to ensure that they do not become NEET.

Councillor Kelly shared the concerns of other Members that there needed to be safeguards put in place to ensure that young people currently undertaking apprenticeships or training had real jobs to go into when they were completed. Lots of aspirational jobs were being created but there was a need to direct the young people into them as he felt that was link being lost between trainers and employers. Ms. Hay advised that the LSP were clear that they could do a lot with employers with regard to this issue but that the Council could do a lot within to ensure jobs were being provided after training where available, and that this issue was being constantly addressed and looked at.

Councillor Stewart commented that the Committee had heard at their last meeting about the role the Council were taking the lead in rearranging structures to provide career paths for apprentices and young people in training so that they could be an example of good practice for other agencies and partners to follow.

Councillor Richardson suggested that it was important now for assessors and verifiers to be directing young people into areas of training which would be beneficial

to the future of the city rather than directing them into the routine subjects that may be an easy option for them. By looking at future job possibilities training could be arranged in line with them so that young people stood a chance of a real job at the end of courses or apprenticeships. Ms. Hay agreed and advised that they were already mapping out opportunities through the economic masterplan and directing young people towards them through the relevant training.

In response to comments from Councillor Francis around maintaining a young person's interest and raising their self esteem and ensuring that they are not left without a clear path to follow, Ms. Hay advised that they were trying to keep young people motivated from leaving school into their chosen future of training, further education or employment. A lot of young people could lose interest before college starts over the summer and once that happened it was difficult to reengage with them so they aimed for them to stay motivated and on track.

Councillor Stewart referred to NI102a and the achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers at KS2 widening, and commented that a lot of good work could be undone if this was not monitored. Mr. Baker advised that the free school meals indicator was not very strong and had limitations as to what could be measured and that a better indicator was the attainment at KS2.

Ms. Burn referred to NI90, take up of 14-19 learning diplomas and commented that the target was set exceedingly high, Mr. Baker advised that the take up of the diplomas was increasing but he would have to come back to the Committee with further information around it.

In response to Councillor Richardson and the figures with regards to permanent exclusions, Mr. Baker advised that the number of exclusions had increased but it was still a very low figure in relation to other local authorities.

Councillor Richardson continued to ask if there was any reason behind the increase from 13 to 22 and Mr. Baker advised that every permanent exclusion had reasons recorded for them but he would need to report this back to the Committee as he did not have the detail with him. The Chairman asked if this could be reported back early in the new municipal year as the increase and reasons behind them had been questioned at Committee meetings before.

Councillor Stewart referred to the increase in the take up of school meals and felt that this was a significant improvement and that the staff involved should be congratulated.

3. RESOLVED that the continued good progress made by the Council and the Sunderland Partnership and the areas requiring further development to ensure that performance is actively managed be received and noted.

Participation of Children and Young People, Including TellUs4 Survey

The Acting Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) in order to update Members on the participation activities involving young people, led by Children's Services, including the TellUs4 Survey.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Judith Hay, Head of Positive Contribution and Economic Well-being, gave a presentation to the Committee which covered the outcome from the Tellus4 Survey, the expansion on the work of the Participation Strategy Officers and how participation informs policy development.

She advised that 67 schools had been invited to take part in the survey but only 22 of them had. The Tellus5 Survey had recently been rolled out and the service was trying to encourage schools to be more involved in getting pupils to complete it.

Councillor Kelly referred to youth provision in the city on a Friday and Saturday night and commented that he was surprised that so many had answered that they did not use them. He referred to the 9:00pm finish that a lot of the activities had and commented that young people would not just go home following an event. Ms. Hay commented that the youth villages had hoped to run up to 10:00pm but they had found that residents in the area did not want this so the end time had been pulled back to 9:00pm. Now that the youth villages had been running for some time, residents may be more confident that it would not bring anti social behaviour to the area and be willing to extend the finish time.

Councillor Kelly suggested that the issue be looked into now that the contracts for youth provision had been commissioned to external agencies. Ms. Hay advised that there were two mobile buses being introduced in May to be used to respond to local need and that they could look to see what could be done with regards end times of events. As a point of information she informed Members that the youth villages did take two hours to take down and therefore this would have to be taken into account also.

Councillor Stewart commented that councillor Kelly had a valid point and asked if other ways of working could be looked at such as using detached youth workers.

In response to a query from Councillor Richardson, Ms. Hay advised that in the first instance, it had been the residents in the immediate locality of the youth villages that had had strong views over them finishing any later than 9:00pm. In addition, she advised that the service and agencies involved had looked at all possible areas for the villages to be situated and following health and safety guidelines had agreed on the sites that they now used.

Councillor Richardson went on to ask if the young people using the village had been advised that if they behaved well there could be the possibility of extending the time that the village ran and was advised by Ms. Hay that they got back specifics of the young people who used the villages so they could see who was attending regular

evenings. Then if any anti social behaviour was reported the information held by the village was cross referenced with that collected by the police to see if the young people involved had attended the youth village in the area.

Councillor Snowdon advised that she had attended a youth village event at the Stadium of Light and it had been positive to see so many young people giving their input into the future of them. Ms. Hay stated that 60 young people had been invited to the event and 110 had actually turned up.

Councillor Snowdon referred to the survey and asked if it was paper based and as a school governor how could she encourage the school to get involved. Ms. Hay informed Members that it was an on-line survey and that the Head teacher was advised of the survey so governors could speak with them directly. Councillor Stewart advised that he was also a school governor and suggested if it was raised at governor's meetings as an agenda item it could be recommended from them then for the school to participate, which Ms. Hay agreed would be extremely helpful.

With regards to increasing participation in the survey, Mr. Baker advised that it had been moved to the autumn term and that last time not all schools had been asked. He agreed there was definitely more work to be done in promoting the survey. This year they would be advising schools that they would be receiving their results back for their school and that things were being done on a national level so that next year it would be more advantageous for the schools to encourage participation.

Councillor Stewart commented on question 14a. and the Friday and Saturday night provision and asked if the figures could be skewed as some areas may not have any, Mr. Baker advised he would be unable to find this out as they were not party to who had responded or from which area as the survey was designed so that individuals were not identifiable and data was not recorded on a personal level.

In response to concerns from Councillor Bell around the winter youth village programme as he was aware that there was a number expected to go, Ms. Hay advised that next municipal year there were a range of activities for young people to be offered and that she could provide the Committee with a report of how effective these were in the future.

With regard to the differing groups that involved young people such as the Youth Parliament, Councillor Stewart asked how many of them were made up of the same young people or if each had a unique cohort. Ms. Hay informed Members that a number of young people were involved in more than one group but that of the young people consulted with through the youth villages 40% had never attended before so they were continuing to capture new views.

Councillor Hall asked if there was the option to make the survey statutory rather than optional so that a valid input was received across the board and results would be more reflective of the true picture and was advised by Mr. Baker that a few years ago a lot of negative feedback had been received from schools when the Audit Survey had been heavily suggested to be completed. It was more important to better promote the benefits of the findings to the schools and letting them know that they would now be receiving feedback on those surveys filled in by their pupils.

Ms. Elliott asked if the advantages of the new Tellus5 survey could be shared with the Committee and Mr. Baker advised that in the first year the schools would be receiving feedback on the information from their own pupils as he had previously mentioned. Schools would then be able to compare their feedback with that of other schools to see how well they were doing and give more value to their feedback as an indicator for them.

4. RESOLVED that the content of the report be received and noted.

Request to Attend Conference

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) asking the Committee to consider nominating delegates to attend the 8th Annual Safeguarding Children Forum taking place on Thursday, 10th June in central London.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman advised that there was a NEET conference to be held in London on 29th April, 2010 and any Members wishing to attend should contact the Scrutiny Officer directly.

5. RESOLVED that Councillor Bell attend the 8th Annual Safeguarding Children Forum on 10th, June, 2010 and that it be agreed that any Member wishing to attend the NEET conference contact the Scrutiny Officer directly.

16-19 Education and Skills Reforms - Draft Final Report

The Committee submitted their draft policy review report (copy circulated) which followed the review of 16-19 education and skills reforms.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the draft policy review report following the Committee's review of 16-19 education and skills reform be agreed.

Annual Report

The Committee submitted their annual report (copy circulated) which would, if approved, form part of the overall scrutiny annual report 1009/10 that would be presented to Council.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Annual Report be approved.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1 April, 2010 – 31 July, 2010

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 April, 2010 – 31 July, 2010.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

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

Work Programme 2009/2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching the current work programme for the year 2009-2010.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

9. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme be received and noted.

Retirement of Ms. Patricia Burn, Co-opted Member to the Committee

Councillor Stewart advised the Committee that this would be the last meeting of Ms. Burn who was retiring from her position of Co-opted Member to the Committee and thanked and appreciated her contributions and involvement throughout her years of service and wished her well for the future.

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

(Signed) P. STEWART,
Chairman.