

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the **Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF** on **Wednesday 6 December 2017** at **10.00 am**

PRESENT

Councillor G Renner-Thompson
(in the Chair for items 56 - 59 and 61 - 63)

Councillor T Cessford
(in the Chair for item 60)

COUNCILLORS

Cessford T
Richards ME

Stewart G

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

Hodgson A

Lennox D

TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Lyst R
Payne S

Sanderson J
Woolhouse R

OFFICERS

Aviston S
Johnson A
Little L

Head of School Organisation and Resources
Interim Director of Children's Services
Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor W Daley
Councillor B Pidcock
J Guthrie
P Rickeard

Deputy Leader

Unison
Church of England Dioceses of Durham and
Newcastle

Press/Public: 4

56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from J Lang, K Nisbet, K Stow, M Swinburn, R Wallace and J Warner.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Renner-Thompson declared that he had previously been involved in discussions about education in Belford and reminded that whilst he had taken legal advice that he would be able to participate in the discussion he would step down as Chair for that item.

58. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The published Forward Plan for December 2017 to March 2018 (attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix A**) was presented.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

59. APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY CHAIR

A temporary Chair was required to be appointed for the item as the Vice-chair was not present. Following this it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor T Cessford be appointed temporary Chair for the 'Education in Belford' item.

REPORT FOR CONSIDERATION BY CABINET

60. REPORT OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Outcomes of Consultation on Proposals for Education in Belford

The Cabinet report (attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix B**) set out the results and analysis of the informal consultation process undertaken by the Council on the proposal to reorganise the system of education in Belford. This consultation was carried out at the request of the Governing Bodies of St Mary's CE Middle School, Belford and Belford First School. The report also requested Cabinet to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal. A Johnson, Director of Education and Skills and S Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources introduced the report to the Committee with Councillor Daley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services in attendance.

The following was noted in response to questions from Members of the Committee:-

- It was clarified that there was no specialist SEND provision at either school with support for any SEND pupils provided in a mainstream setting. The

continuity of such support for these pupils would be carefully managed. The Committee were reminded that a wider consultation on SEND was taking place across the County at the present time.

- Whilst there was no plan to change the catchment area of the schools, data in respect of the Duchess High School in Alnwick showed there was sufficient capacity should parents wish to apply to this school at the end of year 6.
- Officers were unaware of any further correspondence to governing bodies from the Regional Schools Commission other than the letter referenced on pages 5 / 6 and there had been no response from the Regional Schools Commission to the consultation.
- It was confirmed that Ellingham CE Primary and Duchess High School were aware of the consultation and should have been included in the list on page 18 of the report. Cabinet would be advised of this oversight.
- Free transport would be provided to the closest school, however should parents choose to send their children to an alternative school then, in line with the Council's School Transport Policy, no free transport would be provided. No exception could be made in this instance to allow free transport for pupils choosing to attend Duchess High School as this would have major implications for the abovementioned policy.
- It was likely that the school would close with a deficit and a provision for this would need to be made through Schools Forum or the Council's budgets to allow for this.

In discussing the recommendations as outlined in the report, Councillor Renner-Thompson proposed that number 3 implications for home to school transport should be further examined to minimise disruption to students moving to a 2 tier system. There was no support for this proposal and the motion fell.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report and note that Ellingham First School and Duchess High School had been aware of the consultation.

REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY

61. WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT

The Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme and monitoring report was attached to the signed minutes as **Appendix C**. Members were advised that an additional meeting had been scheduled for 14 December 2017.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

INFORMATION REPORTS

62. POLICY DIGEST

This report, available on the Council's website, provided details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which might be of interest to Members. Any Member who would like a printed copy should contact the Democratic Services Officer.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

63. URGENT BUSINESS

Mr Hodgson expressed concerns regarding the draft Corporate Plan Document which was considered by Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC on 4 December 2017 in respect of the second paragraph on page 9 which stated that "the latest GCSE results have starkly illustrated that the current approach is not working and that our young people have been let down". He considered that Councillor Oliver should be requested to attend this Committee to justify the comments and to advise on what was not working. He highlighted the fact that Queen Elizabeth High School in Hexham was in the top ten in the Country for GCSE and A Level results. Councillor Daley advised that the document was a draft and that further amendments were proposed. He acknowledged that educational outcomes differed across the County with some results showing that children were not achieving and felt that this was not acceptable. All Schools needed to have the best outcomes for children. He would take on board the concern regarding the phraseology in the document. He further advised of the possible opportunity to replicate the London Challenge with the North of Tyne Devolution.

Members were reminded that the Director of Education and Skills Annual Report would be considered by the Committee at their meeting in January.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____