

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Durham Johnston Comprehensive School, Crossgate Moor, DH1 4SU on **Monday 2 March 2020 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor H Smith (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Potts, P Atkinson, B Bainbridge, D Bell, B Coult, C Hampson, I Jewell and M Simmons

Parent Governor Representative:

Mrs J Norman

Co-opted Members:

Mrs J Norman and Ms R Evans

Also Present:

Councillors E Adam, S Dunn, L Brown and E Scott

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, J Blakey, J Charlton, R Crute, K Hopper L Mavin and M Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendanace.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

Councillor Coult declared an interest in item no. 9.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Mr O'Sullivan, Head Teacher, Durham Johnston Comprehensive School, welcomed the Committee and introduced students from years 7-13 who were currently studying at Durham Johnston Comprehensive School.

The Chair welcomed the students in attendance and gave a brief description of the business of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She encouraged them to ask questions should they wish following each of the presentations.

The Chair welcomed Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who had been invited for the item on climate change.

6 Scrutiny in Durham

The Corporate Scrutiny and Strategy Manager in highlighting the role of Overview and Scrutiny engaged the young people in a quiz which provided details on the system of National and Local Government within England and details of the methods available to scrutinise these systems (for copy see file of minutes).

7 Schools Engagement for Climate Emergency

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, which provided an update on the engagement and opportunities for schools and young people to engage in climate change activities (for copy see file of minutes)

The Committee received a presentation by R Hurst, Education Advisor, Education Durham (for copy see file of minutes), which gave details on how human activity was contributing to climate change and what methods were being used in County Durham, which had declared a climate emergency.

The Education Advisor confirmed that there were projects and opportunities for schools to reduce their carbon footprint. All schools had the opportunity to sign up to the DCC Energy Management Service Level Agreement. Schools were able to monitor their energy use and would could access support services from the Outdoor Sustainability Education Specialists (OASES) and the Energy Team at County Hall. There were 240 schools signed up to the agreement which was 90%.

The Education Advisor continued that there were various ways schools could control energy use, such as setting timers, upgrading lighting to LED, and engaging

with staff and students with regards to greater energy efficiency. The Enlighten Project was funded by Salix which was a 0% loan for 8 years and the idea was that savings from the conversion would pay for the works.

The Education Advisor responded to a number of questions from students.

In response to a question regarding the type of energy used and what schools and students could do to reduce energy consumption, the Education Advisor confirmed that schools energy consumption was mostly provided by fossil fuels and simple changes to behaviour could assist in reducing climate change. He advised that people should think about the way they travelled, use alternative transport if they could, and think about how the products we bought and food we ate were produced.

In response to a question with regards to what action was being taken in order to assist in the conversion to electric cars in future, the Education Advisor confirmed that the Council had rolled out charge points in most of their buildings and intended to upgrade schools and communities. Using Scaling On Street Charging Infrastructure (SOSCI) local authorities were working together in the north of England to provide on street residential chargepoints at community locations. This was an area with a large proportion of terraced housing so consideration was being given to householders who did not have driveways. New technology to potentially provide electricity through street lighting columns was also being considered. Councillor Scott confirmed that rapid charging ports were being installed in Neville's Cross.

One of the Students asked for comments on the number of youth strikes in relation to climate change in County Durham. The Education Advisor described this as a contentious subject and whilst he was thrilled to see students being passionate, he could not support or encourage children walking out of school and would advise them to look at other ways to campaign and raise awareness within school. He also would ask them to consider the location of the strikes and the impact of emissions when travelling to locations. He encouraged the students to look at how they could make more efficient choices as individuals, how they could encourage family members to change, and how they could encourage their school to make changes.

A student asked whether Durham Johnston were signed up to the Enlighten Project and the Head Teacher confirmed that he had been unaware of the scheme prior to the meeting, but he intended to make enquiries. The Education Advisor confirmed that a full refit of a new building would take approximately two weeks, but older buildings took longer as they were more likely to have structural issues such as asbestos contamination.

In response to a question about the Councils ability to choose their own source energy, the Education Advisor confirmed that energy suppliers were tendered

through North East Procurement Organisation. Low carbon energy providers were used where possible but there would be a significant cost increase associated if the Council were to go 100% green.

A question was raised with regards to the environmental impact of electric cars and whilst there was evidence that batteries had a life span of five years for car use, there were ongoing research projects into how they could be reused or collated to store energy. Manufacturers were encouraging people to lease vehicles therefore batteries would be widely recyclable, however electric cars would be replaced by new evolving technology, such as hydrogen powered vehicles.

With reference to Earth Hour, one student suggested increasing the regularity of switching off to four-weekly and the Education Advisor confirmed that advertising had began for 2020 but this was a global campaign, but perhaps schools could look at taking individual action more regularly.

With regards to cycling initiatives in County Durham, the Education Advisor confirmed that Durham had a good network of cycle paths and was part of the National Cycling Network and advised that contact details for the Sustainable Travel Officer would be forwarded to the school who would pass on the information.

In response to a question regarding the installation of solar panels, the Education Advisor confirmed that the key consideration was whether they could be south facing. A lot of schools had them installed but there were no longer government incentives as they were not as expensive as they had been in the past and they were reliant on the sun for power, but it still made sense as a long-term investment. The Education Advisor confirmed that a wind farm in the North Sea from the Redcar area to the Hull area that could generate enough power to cover the whole of North Yorkshire or 10% of the UK's electricity, was being constructed but would take 20 years to complete. Investigations were being carried out on storage methods such as compressed air.

Resolved

That the report and presentation be noted.

8 Education Attainment and Standards 2019

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided a full summary of educational outcomes in County Durham 2019 and related updates on the focus and provision of education services (for copy see file of minutes).

R Crane, Head of Education responded to a number of questions from young people.

In response to a question with regards to Careers Advice, the Head of Education confirmed that Careers Advice should be offered in KS3 in schools – it was important that dedicated advice and support was offered and usually an interview was offered to students. This was an area which was required under Ofsted framework and inspectors ensured students were informed and schools held to account.

In response to a question from a student about where does students from County Durham fit in relation to taking A 'levels and apprenticeships The Head of Education confirmed that there was a mix of students in County Durham, some take a traditional A level route while others followed the apprenticeship route.

With regards to stress and exams, one student said in addition to GCSE and A Level stress, there were year 8 children worried about end of year tests. The Head of Education confirmed that it was essential that schools had the right support in place and were able to accommodate young people during exam periods and this applied to primary schools too.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 What is there for young people to do in County Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided details of things for young people between 11-19 years, including those with additional needs such as SEND (for copy see file of minutes).

The Committee received a presentation from M Stenton, Head of Early Help, Inclusion and & Vulnerable Children (for copy see file of minutes).

S Blakeman, Education Development Advisor, confirmed that information from student voice survey had indicated that 19% of children were not engaging in the broad range of activities and asked three of questions of the young people to find out their opinion on the range of opportunities in County Durham.

1. What is there for you to do in County Durham?
2. What other opportunities might you like?
3. What barriers might prevent young people from getting involved?

In relation to question one Students suggested that children were able to access the Music Service; activities held by AAPs and in school. Drama offered in school provided opportunities to perform outside of school. Extracurricular activities available in school were quite good and included 6th form committees and societies. School and Public Libraries provided a large selection of books which many people

would not be able to afford to buy. There was also a range of sporting activities both in and out of school.

In relation to question two a student commented on the lack of facilities for young people in Durham City, there were many coffee shops but most young people ended up walking aimlessly around the city. At Maiden Castle there were sports facilities but to hire such as the 3G pitch cost £40 per hour. Activities were expensive and therefore only affordable for more affluent families. There should be a timetable of activities during weekends and holidays which cost £5 maximum, so that children could use pocket money to attend.

Durham University offered a number of workshops, but they were not always attended by less fortunate students.

Barriers included lack of information, cost, and social stigma.

Students confirmed that social media (in particular, Instagram), was the preferred method of communication, however the Head Teacher reminded Members that children under 13 were unable to access it and they advised parents against allowing children under 13 to use social media.

The Education Development Advisor confirmed that a Countywide Youth Council was being set up and would consist of two electorates from each Secondary School within the county. Meetings would be monthly and the Agenda would be drafted by young people, discussing issues which were important to them. The first meeting would be on 22 April and include items such as Climate Emergency, Budget and events would take place to include Primary and Secondary Schools. In addition to the Youth Council, the first ever Youth Awards would take place at the Radisson Hotel in Durham.

Resolved

That the report and presentation be noted.