

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Consett Academy, Ashdale Road, Consett, County Durham DH8 6LZ on **Monday 2 November 2015 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor C Potts (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors D Bell, D Hall, C Hampson, D Hicks, S Morrison, M Nicholls, L Pounder, H Smith and M Stanton

Welcome to Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Consett Academy

The Head Teacher Mr Reynolds welcomed all to the Consett Academy and advised members it was both a pleasure and a privilege to be working in a building such as Consett Academy which creates an excellent learning environment not only for children and young people in Consett but for the whole community. Mr Reynolds went on that he was a firm believer that schools were not just 9-5 establishments but were for the benefit of the whole community.

The Chair thanked Mr Reynolds and welcomed members and young people to the first meeting of children and young people's overview and scrutiny committee to be held out in the community. Mr Reynolds invited members of the committee to take a tour of the school following the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Armstrong, K Dearden, D Hall, K Hopper, P Lawton, J Measor, M Simmons and P Stradling.

Co-opted Members Mrs G Harrison and R Patel.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Minutes of the special meeting held on 25 September and of the meeting held on 5 October 2015

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 September and 5 October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any

There were no declarations on interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

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

6 Media Relations

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred Members to recent press articles relating to the remit of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for copy see file of minutes). The articles were:-

- The North East Schools summit had heard that exam pressure, the rise of social media and the back drop of austerity are contributing to a toxic environment for young minds. The summit also heard about the 'worrying surge of young people admitted to hospital for self-harm.
- Anti-bullying app launched in schools across the UK.

Resolved:

That the content of the presentation be noted.

7 Update on Progress of Recommendations of Self Harm by Young People Review Report

The Committee received a joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Children and Adult Services which updated members on the progress made against the recommendations from the review of Self Harm by Young People (for copy see file of minutes).

The Public Health Portfolio Lead (CAS), referred members to page 19 of the report and the recommendations that the review group had made. Progress against each of the recommendations were contained within Appendix 3 of the report and details were reported in relation to each. The Portfolio Lead explained that the County Durham Children and Young People's Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience Plan covered all aspects of the review's recommendations and responsibility for the progress would be taken by the Children and Young People's Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience Group.

A pupil of the Sixth Form Centre asked whether the training that was referred to under recommendation 3 was accessible for all teachers. In addition it was asked what ages the team were working with as mental health could affect children of all ages. In response the Public Health Portfolio Lead advised that training would be made available to all teachers and was currently in the process of being rolled out across the county. With regard to the identified age groups affected by mental health it was reported that children from the ages of 9 and upwards had been identified as being at risk, however it was known that those children ages 14-15 years were the most vulnerable to mental health issues.

Councillor Nicholls asked how confident the team were that they would be able to fulfil recommendation 5 and secure adequate funding to do so. In response it was reported that the team were confident that this recommendation could be achieved and made reference to £1.4m which had been secured for County Durham and would be coming through as expected.

Councillor Potts then asked the pupils present whether they felt that there was a greater understanding amongst young people of mental health and self-harm. In response the pupils advised that young people were now greatly influenced by social media, however this could be used positively in order to generate a greater understanding of those suffering with mental health issues and was a successful tool in spreading information and help on these matters.

Councillor Potts thanked the Public Health Portfolio Lead and asked that an update be provided in 6/12 months.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and update against recommendations be noted.

8 Welcome to Overview and Scrutiny by the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

In the absence of Councillor J Armstrong (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny) the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager provided a presentation relating to the role of Overview and Scrutiny in Durham, providing details regarding the structure of the council, the six altogether better themes of the Council Plan; its Cabinet, Members and in particular the role of scrutiny in holding the executive to account (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

9 Help and Support to Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

The Committee received a joint report and presentation of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Children and Adult Services which provided the Committee with information in relation to the help and support the County Council provides to children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Principal Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs and Disability Officer provided a presentation which gave detail regarding:

- What is autism?
- Causes and prevalence (affects people of all abilities and can co-exist with other conditions)
- Terminology and forms of autism – understanding a broad range
- Implications for those on the autism spectrum
- Key areas of difference.

It was reported that not all people with autism want to be diagnosed. In some cases parents did not want to pursue this course of assessment which could be complex. In County Durham there were two teams set up to assist with diagnosis, Social Communication Assessment Teams (SCAT) and Multi Agency Assessment Teams (MAAT). In addition the region offered a Centre for those more complex cases.

Further details were reported with regard to key legislation and guidance documents and it was noted that Autism Act 2009 was the only disability specific law in England.

Moving on to the educational needs of those with Autism details were provided regarding:-

- Graduated response to meet a range of needs
- Capacity building for all schools
- Support for individual children
- SEN Support plans
- Additional support through Education Health Care Plans and Statements
- Enhanced mainstream provisions (Primary and Secondary)
- Special Schools including those with specific autism provision
- Independent special schools
- FE Colleges (mainstream and special)

Members were advised there was lots of support in schools such as visual timetables, many of the children and young people affected did not require a special educational need statement. The committee was given information that in County Durham Easington Colliery primary school, Bishop Barrington and Wellfield secondary schools provide specialist support for children and young people with autistic related conditions, colleges of further education in County Durham also provide specialist provision for young people with autistic conditions.

The Principal Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs and Disability Officer advised that there was money in school budgets for all these areas of support, and could be ran discreetly alongside normal schooling provisions.

In conclusion the Principal Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs and Disability Officer advised that Health has a key role to play in diagnosis and ongoing support for those on the Autistic Spectrum. Partner organisations and services such as; paediatrics, CAMHs, speech and language and occupational therapy assisted in providing those services. In addition the Disabled Children's Team had a role to play in supporting partners.

Councillor Morrison asked whether anything was being done to raise awareness amongst children and young people who didn't suffer with Autism. The Principal Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs and Disability Officer advised that this was not currently being undertaken however could be explored. In addition she advised that a facility was in place called 'Circle of Friends' who led group intervention for those who were struggling with inclusion and this further educated those without Autism to gain a better understanding of the disorder.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

10 Fixed Play Strategy Update

The Committee received a joint report and presentation of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director Neighbourhoods Services which provided detail regarding the Fixed Play Strategy for County Durham (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Strategic Manager - Culture & Sport provided an overview of the distribution of play in County Durham and the recent survey of fixed play provision. He advised that 15 settlements within the County had been identified as having below the core offer and with such were prioritised for development. Each of these sites required significant investment in order to provide the minimum standard. In addition the survey had identified 80 sites which were above core offer and the council would continue to maintain these sites for the future, with the exception of 10 which were beyond economic repair and had been identified for either transfer to Parish / Town Councils or to be removed.

Moving on, details were provided with regard to ongoing work to improve and maintain the County's fixed play provision and it was reported that a funding strategy had been developed including 106 monies, member initiatives and existing capital sums a new capital bid has been submitted for the next 2 years. totalling £520k and it was hoped that match funding would be achieved via AAP's and Members. In addition the team would be working on planning new fixed play sites and reference was made to Ebchester where planning had been ongoing for some time now.

With regard to the sites requiring investment, it was reported that the following had been identified:- Ebchester, ready to proceed once capital bids approved Crook and Shildon, members have requested that investment be prioritised to the twons central parks Blackhall, this settlemet requires teenagre provision and at present there is no agreement with Parish Council on suitable site. Castle Eden, the council does not own any land to site a play area., Burnopfield, Consett, Easington Village, Chester-le-Street, Flinthill, Perkinsville, Stanley, Station Town, Wellfield and Wheatley Hill, are all currently at the first stage of consultation.

In conclusion the Strategic Manager - Culture & Sport advised that Durham County Council were committed to improving children's play and increasing participation in physical activity. Reference was made to the significant investment that had been made at the Riverside in Chester-le-Street with the installation of a splash pad. This site had proved extremely successful with over 200,000 hits on facebook and during August a weekly attendance average of 903 children and young people enjoying the facilities.

It was also reported that the staff involved in this project had been nominated for a Great Staff Great Stuff award.

A student from the Sixth Form Centre asked whether there was any maintenance regime in place to prevent sites from becoming beyond economic repair. In response the Strategic Manager - Culture & Sport advised that the council held responsibility for 176 sites across the County and although this was challenging in terms of maintenance all sites are inspected regularly. With this in mind it was acknowledged that the county would benefit from fewer sites of better quality, where standards could be maintained and regularly monitored.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

11 Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2014-15

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services and Director of Public Health County Durham which presented the Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2014/15 for information and the Boards' achievements, in addition to its future work programme (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.