

Leicestershire County Council

Children's and Young Peoples Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYPS O & S)

Chairs Annual Report 2008/09

CYPS continues to be the largest County Council fund holder.

Meetings & Agenda Items

Since January 2008 CYPS O & S has held 9 meetings and issues examined for scrutiny have been:

1. 2008/09 & 2009/10 Budgets
2. Melton and the Vale Schools Re-organisation
3. Extended Schools
4. Anti Bullying Strategy
5. Final Report from the Scrutiny Panel on Key Stage 4 Attendance & Effectiveness of Education for Non Attenders
6. Safeguarding Children
7. Building Schools for the Future
8. School Budget Balances
9. Updates on JAR and the Children and Young Peoples Plan
10. Youth Offer
11. Schools Admission for Children of Parents in armed Forces

There has been a number of briefing papers from the Director

Issues

Safeguarding Children

Since October 08, the national media has been probing and focusing on 'safeguarding children' following difficulties in a London Borough and other English local authorities. This has led Members of CYPS O & S to ask questions on procedures and resources in Leicestershire. The Director has provided re-assurances indicating that results from the most recent OFSTED reappraisals show that Leicestershire provides a good service for its citizens. But the discussions did highlight to Members of our need to have a deeper understanding in the decision making process front line staff have to make. To enable Members to gain firsthand knowledge of the decision making process a detailed briefing/workshop took place on 6th February led by Managers. This was a useful experience for me as I gained a better understanding of the day to day difficulties front line staff have with dealing with children at risk & their families.

The three Spokes have also been invited to discuss and share issues in relation to safeguarding children with the Lead Member and Director.

CYPS O & S also condemned verbal and physical attacks on front line staff during the national media 'interest'. We acknowledge the difficulties faced by staff, and that staff have the full support of Members in carrying out their difficult tasks.

Schools

Whilst most funding for schools arrives directly from Government and that in legal terms the County Council has less responsibility for schools. County does act as a 'service provider' and monitors school performance. However, many parents continue to contact their County Councillors with school related issues, which in turn brings school related issues to Scrutiny.

The three Spokes have discussed the percentage of the scrutiny work program on school related issues – in an effort to make more time available for examination of the wider issues generated by CYPS. The Work Program indicates Members focus of discussion, but we are concerned that other issues may get 'lost' in the scrutiny process.

Wider CYPS Issues

To scrutinise wider issues at our meeting on the 8th October 2008 we invited three representatives of CyCLE the County Council's erstwhile Youth Council to discuss Integrated Provision of Youth Services paper. As far as I am aware this was the first time any LCC scrutiny board had invited teenagers to discuss teenage issues. The witnesses were very robust and forthright, and provided Members with an insight for teenage needs. The time taken was worthwhile for Members and I hope that the teenagers gained experience with dealing with local government bureaucracy!

We have also set a 5 Member Panel to examine in detail the function of CHAMS. CHAMS was criticised during the JAR process. If CYPS is to achieve further "excellent" score' then the CHAMS Partnership and provision will have to be turned round.

Finally

Again I need to thank Officers at all levels for their help during the year. I have found that all questions have been answered and explanations given.

I also want to thank my two fellow Spokes for the past year, Don Wright and John Moore who have provided me with considerable support and help, and we consider ourselves as a Team.

John Legrys Chair Children's and Young Peoples Scrutiny and Overview – February 2009

