

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Nottinghamshire County Council's Christmas Concert 2011

1. On 13 December 2011, Councillor Philip Owen, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, hosted 'A Christmas Wish' - the annual Nottinghamshire County Council Christmas Celebration. The Chairman of the County Council, Leader of the County Council, elected members and their guests attended the event which took place at the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham.
2. The concert featured more than 200 talented young performers from Notts Performing Arts music and theatre companies and the schools' choir which included students from:
 - Mansfield Notts Performing Arts Centre
 - The Brunts School, Mansfield
 - Tuxford Academy, Retford
 - Outwood Academy Portland, Worksop
 - The Grove School, Newark
3. The concert included traditional and new arrangements of Christmas music and carols with theatrical entertainment provided by a host of Christmas characters. The finale was a new arrangement of Good King Wenceslas which involved all the performers.
4. More than 1,400 people attended the concert with many schools and youth groups in the audience together with friends and family of the performers, as well as elected members and their guests.

County Youth Arts production of 'A Christmas Carol' at The Old Library, Mansfield

5. On Sunday 18 December 2011, Councillor Allen Clarke, Deputy Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services, attended a performance of 'A Christmas Carol' at The Old Library, Mansfield. The performance was given by a group of young people from County Youth Arts Bassetlaw Youth Theatre group.
6. The group had updated the Dickens story to contemporary times with digital projections of the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future. The young actors showed fine ensemble acting and versatility in the performance which took place in a promenade style. For a number of the performers, this was their first production in front of a public audience – and they all did so confidently.

7. Previous performances of the production had taken place at Worksop Library. The Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Keith Walker, and his Lady attended the performance on Friday 16 December.

Mansfield Play Forum

8. Councillor Lynn Sykes, the Deputy Portfolio holder for Children and Young People's Services, officially opened the newly created and refurbished Mansfield Play Forum's 'Play Hub' on the evening of the 30 November 2011.
9. Mansfield Play Forum works in very close partnership with the County Council to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people in their localities. The new 'Play Hub', which is located on Botany Park in Mansfield, will provide local children with accessible play opportunities, and will centralise play resources by bringing together in one place in Mansfield everyone who either works in play, has an interest in children's play, wants play for their children, wants to play, or who makes decisions on play.

SEN Pathfinder Project

10. Since the last update on the SEN Green Paper Pathfinder ("The One Project") during the Autumn term, there have been a number of significant developments. A Project Board has been established comprising senior colleagues from education, health and social care, as well as voluntary sector and parent/carer representation. The board has met regularly since September to develop an infrastructure to support the delivery of the project. A full planning day will take place on the 27 January to establish the various task and finish groups which will formulate a response to the areas that the DfE has asked the pathfinder to test such as personalised budgets, support to vulnerable children and an extended age range for support from 0-25 years. This planning event will also be attended by our nominated Support Adviser from Mott MacDonald, the DfE's preferred provider for pathfinder support.
11. To date, the Project Board has convened competitive interviews, which led to the appointment of a voluntary/community sector partner and a Project Manager for the Pathfinder. The Mansfield-based charity "A Place to Call Our Own" (APTCOO) has been engaged to help develop an independent and transparent assessment and planning process, which parents will have confidence in. Mark Evans, a Project Manager in the County Council's Corporate Services, has been seconded to oversee and steer the work of the Pathfinder. A first cohort of children and young people with complex needs has now been identified and consent from the families to become engaged with the project has been sought. A programme of briefings around this initial cohort for the families and the professionals supporting those families is now being initiated. It is expected that this first cohort will be launched in March. In addition it has been decided to increase the number of cohorts engaged in the project from three to four. The establishment of a fourth cohort will enable there to be a specific focus on the support and provision required for the 14 – 25 age range.

Eastwood Young People's Centre

12. I was pleased to receive a report recently that praised the Council's investment in the new Young People's Centre in Eastwood that demonstrated that the Centre is helping

to reduce youth crime in the area.

13. The Centre which is situated on Derby Road and which opened in September 2011, regularly gets up to 80 young people trying out the various activities on offer, and the latest crime figures for the Eastwood area released by Nottinghamshire Police for the period from September to December 2011 show a 22.9% reduction in anti-social behaviour when compared with the same period in 2010. Local Police officers have attributed this reduction to the presence of the new Centre, and its effective programme of positive activities. For my part, I am very pleased to see the Council's continuing investment in facilities for young people paying such positive dividends.

Update on Academies

14. A further 2 schools have successfully converted to academy status as of 1 January, 2012; namely:

- The Brunts School
- Queen Elizabeth's Endowed School

This brings the total number of academies within the Nottinghamshire Local Authority to twenty.

15. The proposed conversion of a further 11 schools have been approved by the DfE and are expected to be completed this term
16. The legal issue raised nationally by the PFI providers and their funders which delayed the conversion of three schools in Sept 2011 is thought to be close to resolution. Subject to formal agreement, it is hoped that these schools will convert over the next couple of months. In the interim the County Council continues to work with the DfE and the sponsors of these proposed academies to manage the schools and ensure education is not adversely affected.
17. The impact of the support of a highly successful academy provider to a school previously under performing has been well demonstrated recently by the outcome of the latest monitoring inspection of Portland School. Working in close partnership with the Outwood Grange Academy Trust (OGAT), the school was judged at its latest monitoring inspection by Ofsted to be making good progress since the previous monitoring inspection and since being placed in Special Measures. The support of the OGAT academy chain is transforming the life chances of the young people in Worksop. Standards are now rapidly rising in both the town's secondary schools, which had recently been placed in adverse Ofsted categories.

COUNCILLOR PHILIP OWEN
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