



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 28 June 2007

agenda item number

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

Take Your Councillor to School Day

32 schools participated in May's Take Your Councillor to School event. County Councillors spent up to a day in a range of school settings at the invitation of, and guided by pupils. Amongst other things colleagues met with student councils, toured premises and enjoyed nutritious school dinners! Councillors and schools alike found the visits highly valuable. Understanding democracy is a cornerstone of citizenship education and headteachers have reported to me just how useful it was having an elected member working collaboratively with children and young people. Members themselves have similarly commented favourably about the experience. I myself visited two schools, Robin Hood and Manor. I met with the school councils at both and was shown around by pupils. I had lunch at Manor with two pupils involved in the healthy eating project and at Robin Hood was shown photographs of various activities involving pupils, pride of place were shots of their visit to County Hall earlier in the year. I promised both schools, I will be back!

Ofsted Conference

I was pleased to attend the Invitation Conference of the Ofsted office for the Midlands, held in Nottingham on 6th June. The meeting was between senior officers of Ofsted and lead Members and senior officers from the Children's Services Departments of the Local Authorities of the Midlands. Ofsted has now partially decentralised to have three regional offices. The one for the Midlands runs down as far as Southend!

Ofsted was reformulated in April of this year as a new organisation replacing four inspectorates. It now covers the regulation and inspection of day care and children's social care, the inspection of LA services, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work based learning and adult education. One of the key questions to emerge from the meeting was whether Ofsted is now properly structured to reflect this greater diversity of role. Most LA representatives were disappointed to find that the new Ofsted still separates 'education' and 'children' in the roles of its most senior officers. When challenged on this issue the answer was that the organisation could only withstand so much change at any one time and the matter was liable to be revisited.

The two directors, one for education and the other for children, were keen to stress how they wish to work collaboratively with LAs. For example, they said that they would value communication from LAs about reasons to re-time inspections for schools or settings, where there is good cause.

LA representatives were given a copy of the new Ofsted Strategy Plan 2007-2010 and asked to comment upon it. This would, I think, have been a more valuable exercise had we had the document in advance rather than finding it tabled on the day. Perhaps the most important outcome of the meeting was the commitment to make the event an annual one so that there is regular exchange between the new Ofsted and Local Authorities.

Hillside Primary and Nursery School – official opening ceremony

An official ceremony to mark the opening of Hillside Primary School in Hucknall will take place on Tuesday 19 June 2007. The new school is a result of the amalgamation of Spring Street and Whyburn Primary Schools, both of which were unsuitable for the delivery of the modern-day curriculum; Spring Street was located in a Victorian building with no playing field and Whyburn was in need of considerable refurbishment and upgrading. Built on the former Whyburn site, Hillside Primary now boasts 13 brand new or fully refurbished classrooms, a new hall, admin and staff suite, kitchen and community room and excellent parking facilities. Key players including Sara Williams from Nottinghamshire County Council, George Love of Morrison Design, Howard Bodill of Bodill Construction and Head Teacher Dot Smith worked together to ensure the great success of the project. Guests of honour including Councillor Joyce Bosnjak will be attending the ceremony which will feature performances from the pupils and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque by Councillor John Allin.

Porchester Junior School – official opening ceremony

An official opening ceremony to mark the extension and modernisation of Porchester Junior School took place on 7 June 2007. Pupils entertained the audience with poetry and musical performances. Guests of honour included Councillor Jim O'Riordan and Councillor John Allin, who unveiled a plaque to commemorate the event. Acknowledgements were made to the Head Keith Harrison, Building Surveyor Mike Moody, and Contractor Robert Woodhead Ltd for their valuable contributions towards the success of the project. The building has been hailed as a prime example of how old and new can work in harmony, the use of sympathetic materials and scale complimenting the original 1909 building rather than overshadowing it. The school now has a bright new modern school hall, ICT suite, larger classrooms, new school kitchen, secure reception and excellent new toilets.

Entry to Employment Celebration Event

This annual event took place in the Assembly Rooms at County Hall on 8 June 2007. It was organised by the young people and I was invited to be the key note speaker. The achievements of 140 young people were celebrated,

with certificates being awarded by Councillor Allin for Open College Network, National Test, Key Skills and Personal and Social Development awards. The morning was enjoyed by all who attended and was a fitting acknowledgement of all the work undertaken by the young people to reach this point.

Under 14's County-wide Sports Event

This all-day event is to take place at Bull Farm, Mansfield on 30 June 2007 and will include young people aged between 9 and 14 from all over the County. They will be able to take part in a variety of activities, including Football, Basket Ball, Boccia, Tag Rugby, Tri Golf, Running, Welly Wanging, Tug of Rope, Sack Races and Egg and Spoon races. Medals and certificates of Participation will be presented at the end of the day and the event will count towards an accredited award for each of the participants.

Elected Members' Visit to Environmental Education Provision in Derbyshire

The Environmental Education Support Service provides a range of environmental education opportunities to schools including two residential and four day-visit environmental education centres. From time to time Members have been invited to view the work of the Service.

The most recent visit was on 24 May 2007 where the aim of the visit was to illustrate the quality and value of this provision in extending classroom based learning, by developing pupils' understanding of environmental issues, personal and social skills, self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation for learning. It also served to help Members understand the unique nature of this provision, which links directly with pupils' curriculum and is highly valued by schools.

During the day Members had an opportunity to visit the two Derbyshire centres, see pupils from Toothill Comprehensive School, Bingham and Samuel Barlow Primary School, Clipstone involved in outdoor activities and view the surrounding Peak District environment.

You will recall that Nottinghamshire, as part of its response to the consultation that has now become the Learning Outside the Classroom manifesto, undertook to commit to the manifesto's intention. During the course of the day's visit elected members attending witnessed the formal signing of our pledge, which says:

Nottinghamshire County Council's Adventure and Environmental Education Support Services in partnership will provide:

- Information advice and guidance on all aspects of learning in the outdoor environment, and a programme of focused activities and opportunities to youth groups, schools and colleges across Nottinghamshire.
- Continue to develop our working outside the classroom curriculum, expanding the opportunities offered to young people in Nottinghamshire by:

- Providing a broad and balanced programme of activities and opportunities for groups linking learning with the outdoor experience through a variety of resources.
- Assisting schools and youth groups to meet their learning targets through the medium of Adventure and Environmental Education, ensuring that outdoor educational opportunities make a positive difference to the lives of young people.
- Helping to foster young people's understanding and appreciation of the environment including safeguarding it for future generations.
- Continuing to promote curriculum- based programmes designed to address the specific needs of schools and youth groups, promoting experiential learning in a variety of out of classroom locations.
- Supporting adults working with young people to increase the frequency of outdoor learning in their programmes, by providing information advice and guidance on all aspects of the learning outside of the classroom, and offering a range of training opportunities for staff to demonstrate good models of practice including the safe planning and accreditation of outdoor learning.

COUNCILLOR JOYCE BOSNJAK

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

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