



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

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agenda item number

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

Reorganisation of Secondary Education in Bassetlaw

On 26 November 2007, building works were formally completed on the new Portland and Valley Schools in Worksop – the final two new schools that have been funded through the Bassetlaw Schools' PFI Scheme. They will become fully operational at the start of the Spring Term following a period of decanting and commissioning. Earlier this year students and staff moved into new schools in Retford – at St Giles Special School, Elizabethan High School and Retford Oaks High School, and at Tuxford Comprehensive School. In September, the two brand new Post-16 Centres in Retford and Worksop became operational. After Christmas, when the students and staff move into the Portland and Valley schools, over 6,000 students will be benefiting from being educated in modern state-of-the-art learning environments delivered through the PFI scheme as part of the wider project to reorganise secondary education in Bassetlaw. Following the protracted legal and financial negotiations back in 2004 and 2005, the new schools have been delivered on time and within the overall affordability position previously agreed by elected members.

Review of the special educational needs and inclusion strategy for Nottinghamshire

The County Council has a statutory duty to keep under review its arrangements for special educational needs (SEN) provision. Nottinghamshire's current SEN and inclusion strategy was approved by the County Council in July 2003, following a comprehensive best value review.

Our strategy is, therefore, now over four years old and needs to be reviewed and updated in line with statutory requirements. With that in mind, a review of our SEN and inclusion strategy (known as the 'SEN review') has now begun. The review will take as its context the County Council's statutory duties and key strategic documents, such as *Removing Barriers to Achievement*, the government's ten year strategy for SEN. The review will focus on the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* with regard to children and young people with special educational needs. It will also look at the barriers to achievement for children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities and complex medical needs.

Oversight of the review is being carried out by a board, chaired by the service director for inclusion and engagement and involving stakeholders and partners, such as head teachers, local authority support service managers, school governing body and health service representation. Councillor Jim O’Riordan is attending the board as an observer to ensure links are maintained with Cabinet.

Much of the review’s work will be delivered by four sub-groups which will focus on issues relating to behaviour, resources, support services and inclusive standards. Consultation will be carried out with our partners and stakeholders, through a range of focus groups, district focussed meetings and the internet.

We are hoping the review will be completed by the end of July 2008 and will lead to a report and recommendations for Cabinet consideration. I am keen to ensure all elected member colleagues have an opportunity to contribute to the review. To that end, I am hoping to include a discussion on the SEN review on the agenda for the district members’ forums, starting in January 2008.

Special schools joint conference

Nottinghamshire special schools held a joint conference in Newark on 12 November 2007. There were over three hundred delegates representing all of our eleven special schools. In my keynote speech to the delegates I focussed on three things:

- First was the level of achievement of children and young people in our special schools. The staff in our special schools have demonstrated that they have high expectations for the pupils, not only in terms of their learning but also in their emotional and social development. The fact that OFSTED consider our special schools to be good to outstanding reinforces my view that the schools really are “building on achievement”.
- My second point picked up the review of special schools, called Building on Achievement, and linked this to opportunities, in the current review of our SEN strategy, for our special schools to develop closer links with our mainstream schools, colleges and early years settings. As well as links with other schools I welcomed the close links that the special schools have developed with our SEN strategic services. For example three special school headteachers sit on the SEN review board.
- Finally, the conference gave me the opportunity to clarify how the existence of special schools fits within the context of progressing inclusion. Staff in special schools can be forgiven for thinking that progressing inclusion was incompatible with the future development of their schools. However, we are clear that special schools are very much a part of this Authority’s inclusive provision for children with

special needs and that their combined knowledge and skills is such an important part of that provision.

Young Carers – The Include Project

Young carers are defined by the Carers' Act 1995 as 'children and young people who provide a substantial amount of care on a regular basis'. The care offered can be physical care, emotional support, responsibility for household tasks, financial support or any combination of these. Locally, the following has been added to the legal definition; 'young carers are those whose health or development is being impaired because of their caring role'.

In August 2007, all local authorities were invited to express an interest in taking part in this project, which will be carried out by the Children's Society and the Princess Royal Trust for carers in partnership with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) who are the project commissioners. The project is limited to nine local authorities and we are delighted that Nottinghamshire's bid has been selected for the East Midlands Region. The project team will offer eight days of support to the local authority over nine months in the following areas: Planning and Support, Training, and Information.

The work with the project team will start immediately and includes an interagency conference in March 2008. There will be a further event in June/July to launch the strategy, protocols and good practice guidance. The Strategic Directors of Children and Young People's services, Adult Social Care, and Health have both confirmed their commitment to this project, which will encourage and support the effective implementation of interagency, whole family assessments and service delivery at local practice level and will promote joint working between adult and children's services.

County Youth Assembly

The County Youth Assembly met at Hucknall Interchange on 21 October to discuss and debate how young people can effectively engage in, and contribute to, higher level decision making within the County Council. 35 young people from youth forums across Nottinghamshire took part in positive and thought provoking discussions with the Leader of the Council and myself, supported by Youth Support Service staff. Together, we agreed the following:-

Over the coming months the Youth Support Service and its partners will give priority to establishing a representative consultative structure for young people - a Young People's Board - that provides them with the opportunity to influence County Council decisions on matters that affect them, and are important to them. It is hoped that the Board will have direct links with the Council's decision making structures.

At the same time, the Young People's Board will support young people's active involvement in the Children and Young People's Partnership, and the individual services that work directly with young people.

The Leader and I were impressed by both the enthusiasm of the young people involved, who came from a wide range of backgrounds, and their clarity of thought. We were therefore pleased to sign up to the establishment of arrangements that will provide young people with the opportunity to participate in decisions that will impact upon their lives, and which in consequence will lead to better services for them.

A national award for the trainee scheme

The Children's Service Social Care Trainee Scheme was established in October 2003 in response to the difficulties in recruitment and retention of qualified social workers, particularly in the north of the county. The scheme started with 25 trainees and now has 65. A minimum of 10 trainees will graduate annually and join the workforce as qualified social workers on completion of their degree course.

In June 2007, the practice learning team in partnership with children's social care nominated the trainee scheme for the 'Skills for Care Accolade', which is an annual national award in the social care sector. The trainee scheme was short-listed and to the delight of everyone involved, it won an award for 'Best innovative practice in workforce development across partnership organisations'. The award ceremony took place in London on 25 October 2007 and Errol Henry practice learning team manager, and Kerrie Scraton service manager social care, received the award on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council. We are all very proud of this achievement.

This award reflects the hard work and commitment of all of those people who have made this scheme effective in Nottinghamshire County Council.

Member of Youth Parliament meeting with the Rt Hon Gordon Brown, MP

Josh Davies, the Chair of the Gedling District Youth Assembly, was nominated by Vernon Coaker to be one of 30 young people to travel to London to meet Gordon Brown this month. The young people were taken on a tour of Gordon Brown's home and office and he made a point of thanking them for the work that they were undertaking.

MP's had been asked to nominate a young person who had achieved something positive within their community and Josh was chosen because of the high profile of the recycling work carried out by the Gedling District Youth Assembly. The recycling initiative won the regional award for the BT Seen & Heard awards and all of the members of the Youth Assembly were presented with certificates by Vernon Coaker at County Hall on Friday, 2 November.

Youth Work Week November 2007

The theme for this year was 'All different, all equal', with various events taking place around the County, aimed at raising diversity awareness. Two of the many events held included a Diversity Day at the Acre, hosted by the Kirkby in Ashfield team on 3 November and another at Portland College, run by the Crime and Disorder Team on 10 November.

The event at the Acre involved more than 40 young people, who were engaged in a variety of activities, including arts workshops, black history quiz, African drumming and a drama performance by a group from Hucknall.

Twenty five young people attended the Crime and Disorder Diversity Day at Portland College, taking part in various activities aimed at raising awareness of issues such as homelessness, disability and diversity. The activities included Egyptian drumming and dance, bread-making from around the world, wheelchair rugby and homelessness and origins quizzes.

Bassetlaw Area Children in Need Event

On the night of 16 November I gathered, together with 150 very enthusiastic young people from the Bassetlaw area, to raise funds for the Children in Need appeal. Organised by the Youth Service within Bassetlaw, this was the second time that this event had been held at the Circle in Worksop. In addition to that provided by the Circle, support was given to the event by County Youth Arts and a large number of local firms who provided food and prizes for the event.

Sixteen acts, involving 70 young people from the Bassetlaw and Mansfield areas, provided entertainment which included dance groups, poetry reading and acoustic guitar and all will receive nationally recognised accreditations for their work. The funds raised last year had helped to support a number of local organisations, including women's aid and it is anticipated that this year's event will raise in excess of £1,300.

Youth Service Mobile Provision

The new mobile youth vehicles are in the process of being commissioned at various bases around the County and each district will be in receipt of a new mobile vehicle by the end of December. The Bassetlaw vehicle came into service during the week commencing 19 November, Ashfield was delivered during the week commencing 26 November, Newark and Broxtowe during the week commencing 3 December and Rushcliffe, Gedling and Mansfield during the week commencing 10 December. Local launches are planned for each vehicle within their district and an event will be held at County Hall during January 2008 to celebrate this exciting new provision.

The vehicles have been externally funded through the Youth Capital Fund, at a total cost of £311,908 (£44,550 each). The same source has also been accessed to provide funds totalling £77,774 for the refurbishment of 13 Young People's Centres around the County.

Healthy schools celebration event

Over 30 schools, represented by 140 young children and young people and 70 staff, attended two major events on 20 and 21 November 2007 celebrating their success in meeting the national Healthy Schools Standard. This rigorous quality mark recognises and celebrates a whole school approach to four key themes:

- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
- Physical Activity
- Healthy Eating
- Emotional Health and Well Being

At both events, the first at County hall, the second at Blackburn House, our partners in the Primary Care Trusts organised a wide variety of healthy activities for both pupils and staff culminating in an awards ceremony and healthy lunch! Elected members for each of the schools attending were invited to the events and can I say thank you to those councillors who were able to join us. I was personally delighted to witness the enthusiasm and dedication of our schools in addressing the key issue of health related behaviour in schools and beyond.

Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark award

On 4 December 2007, ten primary and nursery schools were presented with the Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark plaque at a celebration event held at County Hall to mark the achievement of raising basic skills teaching in their schools. This year twelve Nottinghamshire schools have successfully applied for the award: Heatherley Primary, Butler's Hill Primary, Horsendale Primary, St Augustine's Junior, Redlands Primary, Church Vale Primary and Foundation Stage, Arnbrook Primary, St Peter's C. of E. Primary, Lynncroft Primary, Crescent Primary, Carsic Primary and Orchard Special School.

COUNCILLOR JOYCE BOSNJAK

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

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