



**MOCK MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 NOVEMBER 2011**

NOTE – this was an informal meeting as part of the national 11 Million Takeover Day.

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J D HOUGH (VICE-CHAIRMAN IN THE CHAIR)

Councillors P A Carpenter and J R Hicks.

Councillors Mrs P A Bradwell (Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Learning) and A P Williams (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Learning) were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance: Keith Batty (11 – 19 Principal Advisor), Peter Duxbury (Executive Director Adults and Children's), Ged Forster (Head of Sixth Form – Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle), Andrew Garbutt (County Participation Lead), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Graham Reeves (Participation Officer), Emily Sealey (Activity Coordinator – Action for Young Carers) and Graham Watts (Democratic Services Officer).

Young people in attendance: Theresa Doughty, Abigail Elkington, Beth Fowler, Olly Phillips, Rebecca Walters, Catherine Ward and Josh Waring.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C J Davie, M Exton and R A Shore.

Sonia Czabaniuk, Chrissy Goodhall and Helen Wydell also submitted their apologies for absence.

2. PRESENTATION ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Committee's Scrutiny Officer provided those in attendance with a comprehensive presentation on the way in which overview and scrutiny operated at Lincolnshire County Council and how it linked in with the authority's decision making structure.

3. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POST-16 LEARNING PROVISION IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report by the Committee's Scrutiny Officer, which invited those in attendance to discuss the outcomes and recommendations of the final report arising from the scrutiny review into improving access to post-16 learning provision in Lincolnshire.

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It was noted that a Task and Finish Group comprising of five non-executive County Councillors and a Church Representative Added Member undertook a review into improving access to post-16 learning provision in Lincolnshire. The review was carried out between December 2010 and August 2011, during which an online survey was conducted through schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. The survey generated 772 responses from young people. The Task and Finish Group also held interviews with relevant staff in Children's Services at the County Council and CfBT, and met with 44 vulnerable young people. Two focus groups were also held, one with business representatives and one with post-16 learning providers, to discuss the findings of the review and how the issues raised could be solved. George Farmer Technology and Language College in Holbeach was also visited by members as an example of a successful vocational sixth form.

A final report was produced by the Task and Finish Group containing fifteen recommendations, a copy of which was circulated at the meeting, which was approved by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 September 2011. The report was also considered by the Executive at its meeting on 4 October 2011 where the recommendations were supported in principle.

A number of barriers and issues in relation to post-16 provision in Lincolnshire were raised from the review, as listed in the report. Those in attendance were invited to discuss these barriers and issues, further to which the following points were noted: -

- young people often found it difficult to get employment as work places preferred to employ people that were older and had more experience;
- there was a minority of people that found academic learning difficult and would experience better success taking part in vocational learning at an earlier age. Staying on at a sixth form or college would not be the best way forward for some 17 or 18 year olds. In view of this, it was extremely important for all young people to be given proper advice and guidance on all possibilities that were available to them;
- advice and guidance should be realistic, focussing on how to achieve a certain career path, what qualifications or courses a young people would need to fulfil their aspirations and what jobs would be available at the end of undertaking the qualifications;
- independent advice was extremely important as lots of options for young people were currently overlooked due to biased advice and guidance offered by schools;
- advice and guidance should also be introduced earlier so that it could help shape decisions around which GCSEs a young person chose to work towards;
- suggestions were put forward of holding events for young people, similar to those of graduate fairs but with a perspective on careers and post-16 options. The young people in attendance agreed that such events would be extremely useful, however, the main problem would be transport in terms of how the young people would get there and who would pay for their transport;
- the cost of transport was one of the biggest barriers for young people, particularly for those living in rural areas. Reference was made to London, where all students between the ages of 16 – 18 received free public transport.

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It was agreed that this should be the case for all young people but the County Council did not receive enough government funding for such a scheme to be replicated in Lincolnshire;

- there would be real problems in Lincolnshire if the government's increase in the participation age was not supported by providing a means of transport for young people to and from their sixth-forms, colleges or work-based learning placements;
- in view of the increase in participation age, it could be argued that child fares on buses should be extended from the age of 16 to the age of 18;
- there were occasions where young people perfectly suited specific jobs, but did not have the confidence or capability to write a suitable letter of application or Curriculum Vitae, or conduct themselves very well in an interview. Careers advice and guidance should be extended to incorporate lessons on developing these skills;
- it was important for young people to understand the basic requirements of working life, such as consistently arriving to work on time and punctuality;
- academic post-16 courses should be more inline with university courses so that there was more of a link.

AGREED

That the report be noted and the points raised, as outlined above, be circulated to all members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

4. CONSULTATION ON THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S PLANS TO REMOVE THE STATUTORY DUTY ON SCHOOLS TO DELIVER WORK-RELATED LEARNING IN KEY STAGE 4

A report by the 11 – 19 Principal Advisor was considered, which invited those in attendance at the meeting to consider a response to the government's consultation on the removal of the statutory duty to include work-related learning in the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

It was noted that, should this statutory requirement be removed, the requirement on schools to deliver careers education, enterprise education, work experience, school-business links and elements of citizenship would also be removed and subject teachers would no longer be expected to show relevance of lessons to working life. It was emphasised that many schools would continue to provide some or all of these experiences, but they would no longer be compelled to do so.

The proposal to remove the statutory requirement for work-related learning was partly based on the findings of a report conducted by Professor Alison Wolf into vocational education and training. Professor Wolf's argument was that very few young people moved into employment at the end of Year 11 and fewer still would do so when the participation age for education and training was increased. She suggested that more effort should be put into getting extended work experience for young people aged 16 to 19 as they were closer to entering employment. As a result, alongside the consultation about the removal of the requirement for work-related learning in Key

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Stage 4, the government had also published a parallel consultation on 'Study Programmes for 16 to 19 year olds'.

Copies of the following documents were appended to the report: -

- 'work-related learning for all at Key Stage 4: guidance for implementing the statutory requirement from 2004';
- the Department of Education's consultation: 'removing the statutory duty to deliver work-related learning in Key Stage 4'.

Those in attendance at the meeting were asked to consider whether work-related learning should be removed as a statutory duty. It was noted that a number of points raised as part of the previous item also related to this issue, further to which a number of additional observations and comments were made as follows: -

- it would be more useful for young people if work experience was more closely related to jobs that they wanted to do, rather than just be about experience of work in general. This could also be further developed to link into vocational courses;
- the government's recent increase in floor standards to 50% of pupils in schools having to achieve five GCSEs A* - C including Mathematics and English was worrying, particularly in view of the fact that some young people struggled academically;
- skills such as team work and communications should be taught in schools, to assist with the development of young people in preparing them for the world of work;
- in reiterating a point from the previous item, some young people found academic learning difficult and would experience better success taking part in vocational learning;
- barriers were often put in place to prevent young people undertaking practical activities when on work experience due to strict health and safety regulations at some placements;
- the young people in attendance at the meeting indicated that their work experience placements had helped them decide whether or not they wanted to pursue particular career paths. In view of this it was agreed that work experience was an extremely useful tool in helping young people determine their options in terms of clarifying what they wanted to do in the future and rule out certain career paths;
- in addition, it was agreed that Key Stage 4 was the ideal time to undertake work experience as it provided young people with enough time to decide upon GCSE options and a preferred career choice;
- young people were expected to study towards too many GCSEs, with examples given of people working towards 13 or 14. It was felt that most colleges, universities or employers would usually require 5 or 6 GCSEs at grades A* – C at the most, dependent on the course or job being applied for;
- examples were given of problems that young people had in balancing GCSEs and further educational courses with extra curriculum activities and work experience.

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A number of questions were set out in the report to assist with responding to the key messages of the consultation document. The following statements were made in relation to each question: -

- a) the current work-related learning entitlement had been valuable;
- b) it was the view of those at the meeting that schools would not continue with work experience;
- c) it was not right to move major components of the work-related learning requirement, specifically work experience, into Key Stage 5.

In closing it was noted that the comments raised at this meeting would be fed into the next formal meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, who would be contributing to the Council's response to the consultation. School Councils and the Lincolnshire Youth Cabinet were also encouraged to provide separate responses to the government's consultation which closed on 6 January 2012.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the points raised, as outlined above, be forwarded to the next formal meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting closed at 12.35 p.m.