

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee – Statement to Council – 29 April 2010

1.0 Background 2009/10

- 1.1 2009/10 has seen the CYPS Scrutiny Committee work through a challenging work programme covering the full range of services delivered by the directorate. In particular, we have seen the scrutiny of key policy areas which have a significant level of public and media interest.

2.0 Key Areas of Work and Outcomes

- 2.1 Primary school organisation was the first key area of work. The Committee undertook a significant level of work to examine the various proposals put forward by the Independent Policy Commission in June 2009. Part of the process included additional single issue meetings held both at Shirehall and at meetings throughout the County which were attended by various members of the Committee. This process allowed interested parties to participate in the decision making process and made every effort to ensure that all voices were heard. Another outcome was the effective use of expert evidence to both challenge Council proposals but also provide clarity to statistical evidence and the rationale supporting these proposals.
- 2.2 Essential to the effective scrutiny of such a wide range of services remains the use of expert co-optee members and an effective and continuing briefing and training programme. 2009/10 also saw a major change in the membership of the committee that made the use of briefing and training more relevant. Members made full use of the cross-party briefing sessions post election. In addition, senior managers from children's social care teams provided detailed training and awareness of the issues around social care at present.
- 2.3 The scrutiny committee consolidated its position as a major component for listening to the views of young people. Young people, through the Youth Parliament, continue to be represented on the committee for those meetings dealing specifically with youth issues. The Speak Out Group and local area groups have reported on how youth grants have been used, detailing specific projects that have added value to the life experiences of young people.
- 2.4 Budget planning and monitoring continues to be a positive part of the committees work that members believe adds value to the financial planning process. Members have asked that they are given an opportunity to discuss budget proposals for the following year and that this gives rigour to the whole planning process. Members have also taken the opportunity to review current year progress of the budget on a quarterly basis and have used the opportunity to review work areas that have shown overspend, e.g. home/school transport and Looked After Children placements.
- 2.5 This overview has helped to contribute towards the e-auction of transport providers that has led to some £190,000 annual saving.
- 2.6 Significant savings were also achieved from reviewing the block contracts for Looked After Children placements, £820k in 09/10 with similar savings expected in future years.