

North Yorkshire County Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

21 March 2019

Receipt of Petition “Save North Yorkshire’s Pupil Referral Service”

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise of the receipt of a petition and the consideration which has already been given to the matter which is the subject of the petition.
- 1.2 To ask the Area Constituency Committee to consider a response to the petition.

2.0 The Petition

- 2.1 A petition containing approximately 5,000 signatures was received on 15 January 2019. The wording of the petition is set out below:-

“Save North Yorkshire’s Pupil Referral Service – request that North Yorkshire County Council reconsider proposed changes to funding for Pupil Referral Services in the County.”

- 2.2 The organiser of the petition is Mr Alex Boyce who works at The Grove Academy Pupil Referral Unit in Harrogate and is the leader of the Save the Pupil Referral Service Campaign.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that the Save the Pupil Referral Service Campaign has previously addressed several meetings of County Councillors to explain their concerns, including the meetings of:-

- the County Council’s Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 December 2018, the Minutes of which are available at <http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=31&meetid=3878>
- the County Council’s Executive on 15 January 2019, the Minutes of which are available at <http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=18&meetid=3784>
- full County Council on 20 February 2019 when the County Council set the County Council’s budget for 2019/20, the draft Minutes of which are available at <http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=17&meetid=3772>

3.0 The County Council’s Arrangements for Receiving and Responding to Petitions

- 3.1 The County Council has adopted arrangements for receiving and debating to petitions, the key features of which are as follows:-
- Receipt of the petition is published on the County Council’s website (which has been done in the case of this petition).
 - If a petition contains 500 or more signatures (but less than 30,130 signatories), it will be scheduled for debate at the next meeting of the appropriate Area Constituency Committee.

- At the meeting, the petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition. Subsequently the petition will be discussed by County Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes.
- The petition organiser is offered the opportunity to speak for five minutes to present his/her petition at the meeting. (If the petition organiser would like the local County Councillor, or someone else, to present the petition on their behalf, contact should be made with Democratic Services on 01609 532591 at least ten working days before the meeting and the process will be explained.)
- At the meeting, after the petition organiser has presented his/her petition, the petition will be discussed by County Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes and a decision will be made on how to respond to the petition.
- The following is a list, from the County Council's Petitions Information on the website, of the County Council's possible responses to petitions:-
 - (a) to take the action the petition requests;
 - (b) not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate;
 - (c) to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee; or
 - (d) where the issue is one on which the county council executive are required to make the final decision, the county council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.
- The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this confirmation will also be published on the website.

4.0 Background Information

4.1 The County Council proposed changes to the way provision is commissioned and funded in North Yorkshire for secondary-aged pupils who are permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion. Consultation on the proposals was undertaken.

4.2 County Councillor Patrick Mulligan (Executive Member for Education and Skills) reported on the outcome of the consultation at the meeting of the County Council's Executive held on 15 January 2019, highlighting:-

- the significant pressure on the High Needs Block budget;
- the upward trend in permanent exclusions despite a significant funding investment; and
- the local authority's continued commitment to collaborative working with schools to reduce the number of permanent exclusions.

He advised that schools were seeking a more flexible and responsive offer that could be used to help avoid the need for permanent exclusion, and that the local authority was providing £2.7m a year in funding to the Pupil Referral Service/Alternative Provision providers to undertake preventative work to support young people at risk of exclusion.

4.3 County Councillor Patrick Mulligan also reported to the Executive that, following consultation, the initial proposals had been revised to include an increase in the transition period from September 2019 to September 2020. The proposals, as revised, were agreed by the Executive.

4.4 The County Council's budget, approved subsequently at the meeting of the full County Council held on 20 February, included funding for the Pupil Referral Service/Alternative Provision providers in accordance with the decision made by the Executive on 15 January. Members will recall that two amendments to the County Council's budget were put to, and debated at, the meeting of full County Council on 20 February. Both amendments sought to address concerns about the scale and timescale of the cuts to the PRU. Neither amendment was carried.

5.0 Summary

5.1 A petition was received on 15 January 2019. The petition organiser, Mr Alex Boyce, is entitled to speak for up to five minutes to present the petition to today's meeting. Subsequently the petition must be discussed by the Committee for no more than 15 minutes and a decision made about how to respond to the petition. The response will be published on the County Council's website.

5.2 The Campaign Group have spoken at various recent meetings to bring their concerns to the attention of County Councillors, including the meeting of the County Council's Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 December 2018; the meeting of the County Council's Executive on 15 January 2019 when a decision was made concerning the Pupil Referral Service and Alternative Provision Budget and Fund Modelling; and at the meeting of the full County Council on 20 February 2019 when the County Council set its budget for 2019/20.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 That the Committee receive this petition and consider the County Council's response.

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Background Document: North Yorkshire County Council's petitions information and advice, a copy of which is on the County Council's website at <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/petitions-information-and-advice>