
OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of the Council the following were the main areas of work under my Education Portfolio:
 - (a) **Task and Finish Review Group – Library Standards – Final Report –**
Consideration was given to Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee’s recommendations on the Final Report of the Library Standards Task and Finish Review Group; I would like to thank Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee for undertaking this review. Firstly I would endorse the Committee’s recognition of the work of all library staff. I would highlight that inline with the Scrutiny Committee recommendations Cabinet agreed that the mobile library is to be replaced as a matter of priority; and that the e-library is to be developed to meet rising use and expectations. Beyond that Cabinet felt it prudent to await the outcome of the consultation that DCMS has initiated with regards library standards.
 - (b) **Strategy to Promote and Support Improvement in the Education of ‘Looked After’ Children –** I have pleasure to announce that approval has been given to a joint Education Department and Social Services Department Strategy to promote and support improvement in the education of ‘looked after’ children. In broad terms the strategy is about seeking equality of educational outcome for looked after children; this is both a local and national issue. It is proposed that Cabinet will monitor the attainment of ‘looked after’ children on annual basis.
 - (c) **Darlington 14-19 Area Wide Review Action Plan –** The 14–19 Area-Wide Review Action Plan was endorsed. The Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley (LSC) and this Council, in collaboration with a wide range of strategic partners, prepared the Plan. It is a response to the 16-19 Area-Wide review undertaken by the LSC and an audit of 14-19 provision commissioned by the Director of Education. The vision of 14-19 education and training in Darlington is that “All partners in the provision of 14-19 education and training work together effectively to enable the young people in Darlington, irrespective of background, to access high quality learning opportunities that will raise both aspirations and standards, meet individual needs and encourage lifelong learning”.
 - (d) **Proposal to Close Harrowgate Hill Infant School and Harrowgate Hill Junior School and Open Harrowgate Hill Primary School –** It was reported to Cabinet that on conclusion of the consultation period, no representations had been received. In line with delegated powers, the Director of Education will now implement the proposal. The new primary school will open in September 2005. This will be a brand new building; the ‘first sod’ was cut that same week.

- (e) **School Holiday and Term Dates 2005/06** – Approval has been given to changes to previously agreed school term dates for the academic year 2005/06 commencing in September 2005. This step has been taken to bring Darlington Schools into line with changes made by neighbouring authorities. Schools have expressed their support and gratitude for facilitating the arrangements to coincide with our neighbours.
 - (f) **Adult and Community Learning 3 Year Development Plan** - A 3 Year Development Plan for Adult and Community Learning, which covers provision for adult and community learning and family learning. The Plan also refers to provision funded through Single Regeneration Budget, European Social Fund and Neighbourhood Learning in Disadvantaged Communities, and to provision of partner organisations in Darlington funded by LSC, including the local FE College. The main changes to note to the previous Adult Learning Plan are the transfer from a contracted out service to a direct delivery service – which will greatly improve the quality of the service; and the addition of Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities funds to support learning in the most disadvantage wards in Darlington.
 - (g) **Sure Start Local Programme Wave 5** - I have pleasure to report Cabinet has given approval to the formal release of that Capital funding obtained from the European Regional Development Fund for the Wave 5 Sure Start Local programme, as part of the Darlington Targeted Communities Package. The release of this funding will enable building of the new Sure Start Centre to commence at Mount Pleasant School. Some £630,000 will be spent on this centre.
2. Also since the last Council meeting, I have attended the following as Member with Portfolio for Education:
- (a) Corporate Parenting Panel
 - (b) School Organisations Committee
 - (c) Connexions Board
 - (d) SACRE
 - (e) Briefings with the Director and Assistant Directors
 - (f) Haughton Education Village, and Harrowgate Hill Primary School

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Education Portfolio