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**14 – 19 EDUCATION IN DARLINGTON**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) -Councillor Stephen Harker, Education Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - Geoff Pennington, Director of Education**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To ask Cabinet to endorse a proposal to establish a loose Federation to be known as the Darlington 14 –19 Trust to co-ordinate the development and management of the provision of 14 – 19 education in the Borough.

**Summary**

2. The Government is promoting changes to the way in which education for 14 – 19 year olds is provided, including the curriculum they are offered. In Darlington, it is proposed to establish a loose federation, to be known as the Darlington 14 – 19 Trust, to co-ordinate and develop learning opportunities for young people aged 14 – 19. The Trust would comprise the seven comprehensive schools in the Borough, plus Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Darlington College of Technology, Beaumont Hill Special School and Technology College, EOTAS, the Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Connexions and the Council.

**Information and Analysis**

3. The Government published a policy document 14 – 19 : Opportunity and Excellence, in January 2003. The document set out short and long term objectives for reforming 14 – 19 education. To date, there have been changes in the curriculum to be offered to 14 – 16 year olds, for example not requiring all students to study a modern foreign language. There is also a review headed by Mike Tomlinson, former HMCI, into the reform of the examination system.
4. The response in Darlington has been to commission a consultant to explore the opportunities available to develop a robust and integrated approach to 14 – 19 provision, which would enhance students' education opportunities. In addition, in preparation for an Area Wide Inspection, the Tees Valley LSC commissioned an Area Wide Review of post-16 provision in Darlington. The two pieces of work have been brought together to ensure cohesion in developing an action plan to deliver the key developments that have been identified as necessary to progress 14 – 19 education in the Borough.
5. The key proposal is to establish a loose federation – the Darlington 14 – 19 Trust. The Trust would comprise schools, Colleges, EOTAS and other organisations referred to in

paragraph 2 above.. The Council would be represented by the Director of Education (or his nominee).

6. Members of the Trust would enter into a 'Trust Covenant' confirming their engagement in the process and agreeing to the communal principle and broad thrust of the action plan.
7. The Trust, as a loose federation, would not have any formal or legal standing. It would be a sub-group of the Darlington Learning Partnership and would, in respect of 14 - 19 matters, act as its executive arm. The statutory responsibilities of all trust members, be they schools, colleges, the Council or Tees Valley LSC would not be affected by the Trust. In essence, the Trust exists to provide a vehicle for partners to work together to ensure coherent and expanded educational opportunities for young people in the Borough, to avoid duplication in provision and to provide a means of pooling funding where necessary. Key elements of its role are to:-
  - (a) plan the 14 – 19 curriculum in such a way that the individual's needs are placed first;
  - (b) target funds on identified barriers to learning;
  - (c) facilitate the deployment of key teachers across the Borough;
  - (d) develop specialist centres of excellence, including vocational centres;
  - (e) work towards a common timetable 14 – 19 across the Borough.
8. Funding for the Trust's activities would be drawn from existing funding streams and from bids for additional funding to DfES, LSC etc. A small management team, including an Executive Officer, would be created by seconding staff from partner organisations.
9. The headteachers of the Borough's secondary schools and the principals of the colleges have all supported the proposals. School governing bodies are being canvassed for their endorsement this term. As part of the Area Wide Action Plan following the Area Wide Review, the LSC is also expressing support for the proposals. It is anticipated that the Trust, subject to all partners agreeing, will begin to operate from September 2004. It is not however, expected that major changes in the way provision is made will be possible before September 2005 due to the long lead in times for major changes to curriculum provision and delivery.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

10. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with all of the key partners.

### **Legal Implications**

11. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

12. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

## **Council Policy Framework**

13. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

## **Decision Deadline**

- 14.. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

## **Conclusion**

15. The Darlington 14 – 19 Trust is an exciting example of partnership working. It offers a way forward to ensure coherence, value for money and innovation in providing educational opportunities for young people in the Borough. By establishing a loose federation they key roles and statutory duties of partners are retained and respected.

## **Recommendation**

16. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) Members endorse the proposal for the Darlington 14 – 19 Trust set out in the report;
  - (b) empower the Director of Education to facilitate its establishment.

## **Reasons**

17. The recommendations are supported because the Darlington 14 – 19 Trust affords an opportunity for collaborative work to deliver better educational opportunities and outcomes for young people in the Borough.

**Geoff Pennington, Director of Education**

## **Background Papers**

- i. An Opportunity for Excellence – Richard Knott
- ii. 14 – 19 : Opportunity and Excellence – DfES
- iii. Area-wide Review – Action Plan (Draft)

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