

MINUTE EXTRACT

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24th April, 2006

PRESENT – Councillor Hughes (in the Chair); Councillors Armstrong, Copeland, Francis, Galletley, Mrs. Hart, Long, Richmond, A. J. Scott and Vasey-Smith. (10)

STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Reverend Wardale

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTEES – Mr. K. Cotgrave, Mr. R. Egan, Mr. T. Fisher and Mr. D. Moyes. (4)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor McEwan.

APOLOGIES – Mr. D. Chambers and Mrs. H. Ellis (2)

ABSENT - Mr. M. Bennett and Ms. S. Robinson (2)

LLL64. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS – Councillor Copeland declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in Minute 66 below as Chair of Governors at Eastbourne School.

LLL66. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN AN ACADEMY FOR DARLINGTON - The Director of Children’s Service submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting comments on the contents of the draft Expression of Interest for an Academy School in Darlington (also previously circulated), prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 9th May, 2006.

Discussion ensued on the content of the Draft Expression of Interest and in particular to the possible impact of the Academy on surplus places in Darlington; a number of anomalies in the figures contained in the document; the ethos behind the proposed specialisms for the Academy i.e. Technology and Citizenship and the need to ensure that the learning provision offered in these subjects covered a wide spectrum ranging from academic to vocational provision; the need for the Local Authority to press for openness and transparency in making public the list of Academy benefactors; work undertaken to elicit the views of other Authorities in the area on the Academy proposals; the work still to be done regarding sponsorship deals; the aim that all schools in the Borough would be high performing schools within 3 years and effective ways of measuring their performance; the vision of the Local Authority to have 7 high performing Secondary Schools in the Borough which all belonged to a family of schools; how proposals for 150 extra places in years 10 and 11, to come from the Academy and other secondary schools, some of which would remaining on the roll at their originating schools, would be managed financially; and the level of authorised and unauthorised absence at Eastbourne School.

Particular concern was expressed at the lack of detailed content in the Expression of Interest, but the Director of Children's Services reported that the Department for Education and Skills had advised on the content and format of the Expression of Interest and more detailed information would be contained in the Feasibility Study, which would be compiled should the Expression of Interest be successful. As the Church of England's portion of the Expression was left blank the Committee was unable to consider it during deliberation.

The Director of Education, the Church of England Diocese of Durham Board of Education and the Council's Director of Children's Services were present at the meeting to hear the views of the Committee and answer questions on the draft Submission. The Director of Children's Services undertook to take into account the Committee's comments when the finalised Expression of Interest was compiled.

The Chair suggested that an invitation be extended to the new Head Teacher of Eastbourne School to talk to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee; that Members of the Committee visit the proposed Academy site; and the Director of Education, the Church of England Diocese of Durham Board of Education together with proposed sponsors of the Academy be invited to attend a future Committee meeting to talk about their vision for the School.

RESOLVED – (a) That Cabinet be informed that the majority of Members of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee indicated their support for the content of the Expression of Interest.

(b) That the Committee looks forward to considering the detailed proposals to be contained in the Feasibility Study should the Expression be successful.