

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TASK AND FINISH REVIEW

**10.30pm - Wednesday, 16th August 2006
Committee Room 3, Town Hall**

PRESENT – Councillors Armstrong, Copeland, Francis and Long; Alison Walton, Assistant Director, Children’s Services Department and Paul Dalton, Democratic Support Officer.

The following issues were discussed:-

- **Pupil Referral Unit (Rise Carr Development)** - Alison Walton began by providing some background information regarding the development of the new Pupil Referral Unit at the Rise Carr School site. The school itself closed last year and in summer 2005 the Local Authority decided to redevelop the building and relocate the EOTAS into one building.
- The target date for completion of the redevelopment is Autumn 2007 (Either September 2007 or Half Term 2007).
- Alison showed the Group rough plans of the development and talked the Group through the plans. It is intended that the 2 existing school buildings will be joined together by a reception area, a sports hall and a lunchtime dining area. The existing school buildings themselves are Listed Buildings and therefore there are limitations on what developments can be made. It is anticipated that classrooms will be designed smaller with lower ceilings as an enclosed space is more comforting and welcoming. Expansive space can encourage anxiety.
- It is hoped that the new facilities will be used to provide for the local community.
- The purpose of the development is to reflect the changing face of the EOTAS Service. Previously the service would look after the needs of 20-30 children, however now the service is looking after the educational interests of up to 120 children. The increase in children reflects the increase in the number of exclusions, the number of children who are not allowed to attend mainstream schooling and children at risk.
- The facility itself will not be ‘state of the art’ – if the facility was it would not encourage children to reintegrate with mainstream schooling, and families would prefer children to attend the Pupil Referral Unit rather than mainstream schools.
- The facility will include some separate areas for those children who are particularly ill or anxious about attending school, however where possible staff want to encourage integration between children. There will also be a ‘time out area’ and a ‘life skills area’.
- Alison Walton confirmed that the facility would have been more expensive to construct from new, as opposed to converting the Rise Carr School.
- Overall the present position – the plans are due to be ‘frozen’ (finalised), a full asbestos survey is imminent, the project will be going to Planning Committee shortly and works will then be put out to tender. Alison is attending a Community meeting on the 6th and 7th September 2006 to obtain feedback.

- Ultimately 70-80 children will be able to be accommodated at any one time within the facility.
- **Departmental Approach** – Alison confirmed that the Children’s Services Department is looking to develop a multi-agency team to assist in working with stakeholders. Alison confirmed that £150,000 had been allocated to the development of this team over the next 3 years.
- **‘Skills Plus’** – Alison reported back on the progress of the ‘Skills Plus’ initiative, which encourages pupils’ who have become disengaged and disinterested in the mainstream curriculum, to engage in a more vocational qualifications which are provided alongside core subjects at the Darlington College. It was reported that approximately 70 pupils’ attended the Skills Plus initiative this year and that the majority stayed and achieved qualifications and subsequently signed up for Further Education.
- There are 140 places available on the ‘Skills Plus’ initiative this September and **all** schools will be asked to identify those pupils’ they wish to put forward for the scheme. Alison confirmed that schools would be provided with support in respect of selection criteria. The co-ordinator for the scheme is Liz Hemmingway.
- It is hoped that this initiative will also lead to less KS4 children being excluded, less children finishing schools without qualifications and that providing such opportunities will encourage children to mature quicker.
- It is important however that schools offer support and that pupils’ are not abandoned by the school.
- **Summary** – Alison summarised her presentation by reiterating the 3 main initiatives:
 1. the development of the ‘Skills Plus’ Scheme;
 2. the development of the Multi-Agency Team;
 3. and the workshop taking place in Autumn 2006 for Head Teachers to discuss a uniform and consistent approach toward exclusions.