
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council and under my Children and Young People Portfolio, Cabinet has received the following:

(a) Eastbourne Academy

Cabinet agreed to release funds of £261,000 to cover costs associated with developing the Academy project through to feasibility stage.

(b) Children's Services Primary Capital Investment

Cabinet considered information concerning the Building Schools for the Future: Primary Capital Programme and approved a programme and structure for the development of a Primary Strategy for Change.

(c) SureStart Children's Centres, Extended Services and Childcare Capital Strategy

Cabinet considered the progress of existing schemes already included within the Capital Strategy and approved a number of alterations and additional projects.

2. Developments in Children's Services

- (a) On 18th July a Members Appointment Panel interviewed candidates for the post of Assistant Director, Planning and Resources in Children's Services. The successful candidate, George McQueen, joined the authority on 1st October.
- (b) Ms Wendy Aitken took up her new post as Headteacher at High Conniscliffe C of E Primary School on 1st September. Wendy was previously Deputy Headteacher at Reid Street.
- (c) Mrs Pat Armstrong has joined the Authority as Headteacher of Branksome Comprehensive School. Pat was previously Headteacher at Blythe Community College.
- (d) School Improvement Partners (SIPs) are now working in all Darlington schools in close conjunction with local authority lead officers.
- (e) Eastbourne Schools closed on 31st August and re-opened as Eastbourne Church of England Academy on 1st September. Ms Alison Appleyard is its Principal.
- (f) Around 100 delegates drawn from schools in Darlington and across the region met for the 3rd Annual Darlington Data Day at the Croft Hotel on September 14th. This event was organised by Nigel Pell-Ilderton, Lead Officer in Children's Services.

- (g) A draft Parenting Strategy for Darlington has been developed through consultation with parents and agencies currently providing parenting support. This will be presented to the Children's Trust on the 11th October. The strategy will enable parents and families to have better access to the services they need in a timely manner.
- (h) A strategy paper on the principle of locality working has been developed by Children's Services. This defines a minimum core offer and identifies the functions that will be available within each of the five localities. This paper will be presented to the Children's Trust on the 11th October.
- (i) Annual Primary attendance figures, collected by Forvus up to and including 25th May, show an improving picture with an increase of more than 1% compared to 2005/06. Secondary information will not be available until the end of October but the trend in the authority is clearly that school attendance is improving.
- (j) Youth Service and Youth Offending Service joined Children's Services on 1st September. Both teams will continue to enjoy the excellent relationships they have developed with partners within and outside the council and will now be central to developments within Children's Services.
- (k) Primary Capital Programme - This is a Government initiative to renew or replace 50% of the worst condition primary schools nationally over a 15-year period. As a forward thinking local authority which has already substantially invested in the primary school estate, it is probable our funding may be restricted over future years. We are awaiting notification from DfES of the formulaic funding to commence in 2009/10. In the meantime, we were selected as a Primary Capital Programme Pathfinder and secured an additional £6.5m to replace North Road Primary School. This funding will be provided in 2008/9 and consultation with partners and planning on this project has started.
- (l) Other projects previously reported which are ongoing and should be completed soon include:
 - (i) Carmel RC College - a £10m remodel/refurbishment
 - (ii) Cockerton CoE VA Primary School - £3.8m new school build
 - (iii) Federation of Abbey Schools - nearly £480,000 for a new hall
- (m) The £14.5million contract for the refurbishment and remodelling of Hummersknott School and Language College has been awarded to contractors Walter Thompson who started on site in July 2007.
- (n) Work has commenced on the site of the former Rise Carr Primary School building to provide refurbished and extended accommodation for Darlington's Pupil Referral Unit and Education Other Than At School service.
- (o) The majority of school based projects funded through the 2007/08 capital programme have taken place over the summer holiday period. Projects have included, window replacement and electrical work at Hurworth School and also at a number of primary schools. Fire stopping work at Branksome School. Second phase works have also begun on the children's centre at Dodmire Junior School.

3. Developments in the Youth Service

(a) Youth Opportunity Fund

Through the first round of funding in Year 2 of the scheme, 8 projects have been supported using £36,000 of our allocation for Darlington. A second round is scheduled for October 2007.

The small grants programme (up to £2000) continues and has now supported 25 projects to date.

Within the recently announced ten-year strategy (Aiming High for Young people) government has confirmed its intention to extend the programme for a further 3 years.

(b) Positive Activities (Youth Offer)

Work continues on the development of the Darlington Youth Offer, most notably an event for all stakeholders on 15 September 2007. Follow-up sessions with stakeholders have been planned for November 2007 and January 2008.

A report is going to the Children's Trust on 11 October.

(c) Youth Participation

A plan of activities for local Democracy Week has been developed and will include the launch of a Freeport postcard for any young person in Darlington to share ideas, opinions, comments and suggestions. The participation Team are linking with Democratic Services to dovetail all plans.

(d) ReView Project

In collaboration with The Northern Echo, the Youth Service has formally launched the ReView Project as reported in the Echo on 22 September.

The Echo will host a web site where young people can share reviews and opinions on a wide range of issues, topics and activity.

I commend all Members to visit www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/review

(e) Lesotho Project (RAID)

The group completed a highly successful visit to Lesotho in August 2007 and all members of the group have reported on tremendous personal gains in terms of what they saw, what they did and what they learnt about themselves.

The group are now working on a DVD which they will take to schools and youth projects to further develop the message on HIV/Aids and its continued impact on young people across the world.

(f) Summer Project

The Youth Service delivered an extensive programme of activities and events across the Borough over the summer holiday period.

Highlights included:

- (i) Weekly football competitions for 100 young people. A tournament final was held and Skerne Park Youth Club won Senior Team of the Day, Redhall Youth Club won Junior Team of the Day and The Hangout from Nickstream Lane Youth Club won the Fair Play Trophy
- (ii) More than 100 young people took part in the Street Beatz Event which was held in the Market Square. This event, planned by young people and youth workers, introduced young people to a range of street games

- (iii) Fun Days, including a climbing wall, buckin' bronco, giant games, sports and team building, were held in various parks and community centres around the Borough. More than 100 young people attended each of the 11 events.
- (iv) Other groups of young people went on organised trips to Flamingo Land, paint balling, fishing, Mela cultural festivals and outdoor residential activities

4. Visits and Meetings since last Council

(a) Friday 6th July

I attended part of the Children's Trust Development Day held at Morton Park Training Centre, Yarm Road, Darlington.

I met at the Forum Music Centre, Borough Road with its owner, Dave Cox, and two of our Headteachers, Maureen Dixon (Dodmire Infant and Nursery School) and Clare Taylor (St Bede's RC Primary School) to discuss the development of creativity in the curriculum.

I visited the children's residential home in Gilling Crescent to meet with staff on duty and the young residents.

I met with the school council at Reid Street Primary School to hear the views of the pupils at the school on what matters to them both in and out of the classroom.

(b) Friday 13th July

I visited Whinfield Primary School to meet with the Headteacher, staff and pupils

I joined a meeting to discuss International Partnerships at 16 Horsemarket.

I later attended the Forum Music Centre, Borough Road where I enjoyed watching and listening to the young people who the Local Authority have engaged in alternative curriculum provision, as they performed for a VIP audience.

(c) Monday 16th July

I attended the Annual General Meeting of Darlington's Council for Voluntary Service.

(d) Tuesday 17th July

I was pleased to attend the sports presentation evening held at Carmel RC College.

(e) Wednesday 18th July

I sat on the Members Appointments Panel for the interviews for an Assistant Director for Planning and Resources in Children's Services. The successful candidate was George McQueen, who started on 1st October.

(f) Monday 23rd July

I met with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Teesside, Graham Henderson

to discuss opportunities for young people in the region accessing higher education at the University.

(g) Friday 17th Aug

I joined the regular staff meeting of the School Place Planning and Assets team to meet with members of the team and develop further knowledge of their service areas.

(h) Friday 24th August

I attended the Queen Elizabeth 6th Form College where I had an introductory meeting with its new Principal, Tim Fisher.

I visited the children's home in Eldon Street to meet with the residential social workers on duty and the young people in the Local Authority's care.

I later attended the Salters Lane Children's Home for lunch with other members of the Corporate Parenting Panel who had asked to meet with the staff and young people at the home and for a tour of the facilities, followed by the formal meeting of the panel.

(i) Monday 10th September

I attended a meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee (formerly the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee).

(j) Friday 14th September

I attended a meeting with Sue Davison of Community Partnerships.

I visited Hummersknott School and Language College and later met with Murray Rose and the Assistant Directors within Children's Services.

I also attended an enquiry group meeting of the Darlington Partnership with David Heaton and later met with Vivien Bailey, Chief Executive of SMTP.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Cabinet Member with Children and Young People Portfolio