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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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

**(a) Procedures and Protocols for Local Authority Engagement with Schools**

Cabinet noted the development of formally defined Procedures and Protocols for Local Authority Engagement with Schools, following new requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and approved the adoption of these Procedures and Protocols to allow the Local Authority to challenge and support schools appropriately.

2. Developments in Children's Services

- (a) Children's Services submitted a bid for Beacon Status in the category 'Care Matters: improving the outcomes for children in care', and services were visited by assessors in November as a result of our successful shortlisting for the award.
- (b) On Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October, representatives from Children's Services and Darlington schools met as part of the Director's Commission on Transition between key stages 2 and 3. The commission will report at the end of December.
- (c) Eastbourne Church of England Academy celebrated its Foundation Day on All Saints Day, 1<sup>st</sup> November with a visit from the Bishop of Durham, and the Academy's joint sponsors, Mr and Mrs Crossland.
- (d) The newly appointed Headteacher for the Pupil Referral Unit has taken up post on a part time basis for 2 days each week and will join the Authority full time in February.
- (e) Attendance rates in Darlington for all schools show an improvement over the previous year, with absence being reduced by 1.4%. Secondary absence has reduced by 1.7% and primary by 1.2%.
- (f) The roll out of Common Assessment Framework is being accelerated. This will enable children and families to gain 'swift and easy access' to services. A comprehensive training plan has been developed – this will include a twilight briefing planned for Councillors on 22nd and 30th January 2008.
- (g) A 'Parenting Strategy' has been developed. This went to Cabinet on 13th November. This strategy will ensure that services working with children and families can access a comprehensive and consistent programme of parenting support.
- (h) In October, as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) announced the funding allocation for the first three years of the Primary Capital Programme, a national funding pot under which a

substantial proportion of primary schools will be rebuilt, remodelled, or refurbished over a 15 year period.

The amount of additional funding the Authority has been awarded under the Primary Capital Programme is:

£6.5 M for 2008/09 (allocated to rebuild North Road Primary School as a Pathfinder part of programme)

£3.0 M for 2009/10

£5.4 M for 2010/11

**£14.9 M in Total**

In order to secure the release of this funding, a 'Primary Strategy for Change' must be submitted to the DCSF by the end of March 2008. This Strategy is currently being developed by officers and a consultation programme is underway with key stakeholders.

### 3. Developments in the Youth Service

#### (a) Youth Opportunity Fund

The second funding round in October supported 5 projects (via funding of £31,867) out of 8 applications. A further round is scheduled for December 2007. 31 projects and events have now been supported via the small grants programme (up to £2000).

#### (b) Positive Activities (Youth Offer)

Two stakeholder sessions have now been held – attendance has improved and a wide range of agencies have discussed and considered vision, aims, ambition, quality standards and mapping. A final session is scheduled for January 2008.

#### (c) Youth Participation

The Youth Service, in conjunction with Democratic Services, held a series of different events across Local Democracy Week (12<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> October). These included briefings on the Hear by Rights standards, Tea with T3, development work on a Charter Mark for organisations, democracy road show and a lively debate with students at the Education Village. The week also saw the launch of the freepost feedback postcard for young people and the opening of nominations for candidature to the UK Youth Parliament elections (scheduled for February 2008).

Youth Service staff are liaising with key teaching staff in all schools across the Borough to develop a Council of School Councils and give student representatives to have a regular forum for debate, discussion and action. An inaugural meeting is scheduled for December 2007.

A proposal paper on the development of a Consultation and Engagement Strategy (for the 0-19 age range) went to the Children's Trust Board in October and the Trust Board has asked for this to be appropriately developed.

(d) Headline activity

A range of opportunities was made available to young people over the October half term holiday period. These included a fun day in North Lodge Park to officially launch the Area Youth Forum; participation at a 'Healthy Eating' event in Gateshead; and Skate Network event in North park (and ongoing development of the Skaters Network).

To mark national Youth Work Week and its theme of All Different All Equal, 60 young people from across the Borough attended an evening event at the Education Village on 7<sup>th</sup> November participating in a range of workshops covering race awareness, food, music and dance and the impact of discrimination on young people.

A 10-week peer-mentoring course has recently been completed by a number of young parents who now have plans to develop a support and information newsletter which will be used with other young parents.

4. Visits and Meetings since last Council

(a) Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September

I launched the Youth Offer Stakeholder Event at the Dolphin Centre.

(b) Friday 21<sup>st</sup> September

I visited the education centre for children with Down's syndrome, at the Education Village, to see the inspirational work being done to stimulate and educate children with this condition.

Whilst at the Education Village, I also attended an official presentation in recognition of the Village having been shortlisted by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, for the top prize at the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Awards.

I later chaired the Local Authority Governors Appointments Committee.

(c) Monday 24<sup>th</sup> September

I met with a representative from IDEa, in response to a request to chair the North East Network of Lead Members for Children.

(d) Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October

I chaired the termly briefing session for Local Authority Governors.

(e) Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October

I attended a meeting at Dolphin Centre where feedback from the Darlington Partnership Enquiry Groups was given to a wide audience. I was shadowed by a Politics student from the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College.

Later that day I attended an environment event run by Groundwork at Redhall.

(f) Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October

I visited the Youth Service team at Eastbourne, and went on to view the Children's Centre at Maidendale House.

I had pleasure in leading the civic delegation from our twin town Amiens, on a tour of the buildings and facilities at the Education Village.

(g) Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October

As part of Local Democracy Week, I attended a 'Tea with T3' event in the Council Chamber where members of the Children's Trust, Members and officers met with members of T3 to discuss how the Children's Trust can work together. T3 is a group of young people who represent youth groups, school councils, and the like.

(h) Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October

Still part of Local Democracy Week, I attended a question and answer session held at the Education Village, which gave young people the opportunity to raise with senior Members from the Local Authority issues which affect them, and their suggestions for improving young people's lives in the Borough.

I later met with the Principal of Eastbourne Church of England Academy.

(i) Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November

I chaired a North East regional network event for Lead Members for Children's Services and Directors of Children's Services. This was an important opportunity to share areas of best practice and discuss current polity initiatives.

(j) Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November

Together with the Director of Children's Services, I jointly opened the annual Children's Services conference at Darlington Football Club's stadium. This year's theme was 'Stories of Leadership, Stories of Change'. The event was well attended and received, and included keynote speakers from across the range of children's services, all at the very top of their relevant fields. Feedback from those who attended was that the conference was very well organised and planned, and delegates came away inspired. Throughout the day it was a pleasure to be 'shadowed' by an A Level Politics student from the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College.

(k) Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November

I was delighted to attend the Annual Prizegiving celebrations at Branksome School.

(l) Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November

I attended the inspection / assessment visit from IDeA for the Beacon award for the category of 'Care Matters: improving the outcomes for children in care', hosted at

Harewood House.

I later visited Corporation Road Primary School, to meet with the Headteacher, staff and pupils.

**Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Cabinet Member with Children and Young People Portfolio**