
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last ordinary meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee:-
 - (a) **PLAY and Free Time Strategy** – A Special Joint Meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee was held on Thursday, 12th July 2007 to discuss the proposed PLAY and Free Time Strategy. Members of both Scrutiny Committees agreed that the Play and Free Time Strategy be supported and that Members of the Scrutiny Committees receive an update report monitoring the progress of the Play and Free Time Strategy in twelve months time.
 - (b) **Enquiry Group 2** – At a Special Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, held on Thursday, 30th August 2007, Members received an overview from David Heaton, Chair of Enquiry Group 2. David explained that, by working with a range of partners and stakeholders, the intention of the Enquiry Group was to identify areas and issues within the Education remit that could be challenged and improved, and to complement the progressive work being conducted by the Director of Children’s Services.

David outlined the main themes that had been identified during discussions with other stakeholders, which included the transition between Primary and Secondary schools, parenting, the disparity between performance in Secondary Schools and the role of Governing Bodies. Members engaged in discussion on a wide range of educational issues, and Members greatly anticipate receiving David’s final report in due course.
 - (c) **Eastbourne Church of England Academy – Project Update** – The Committee continued to receive its regular update from the Director of Children’s Services as to the ongoing progress of the proposed Academy School for Darlington. The Committee were informed of the approval of the Outline Business Case, which confirmed the capital funding allocation for the new Academy to be £15.337 million, the approval of the Funding Agreement, the commencement of the Implementation Stage, the development of the procurement process, the long term programme, staffing implications and developments, and the governance arrangements. It was pleasing to note that the Eastbourne Church of England Academy opened accordingly on 4th September 2007, and the future programme remains on schedule.
 - (d) **Relocation of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Services to the Former Rise Carr Primary School** – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report to inform Members of the progress on the development of the integrated Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Service through the refurbishment of the former Rise Carr Primary School. It was heartening to learn that a Head Teacher for the Pupil Referral Unit has

now been appointed, as has a second Deputy Head Teacher, that the appointed contractors have commenced preparatory work on the site, and that the relocation project remains on schedule.

- (e) **Placement of Youth Offending Service Preventions Officer at Hummersknott and Skerne Park Schools** – The Youth Offending Service Operations Manager submitted a report to update members of the current placement of one Youth Offending Service (YOS) Preventions Officer serving Hummersknott and its cluster of primary schools including Skerne Park, Abbey Juniors, St. Augustine's and Mowen Juniors, and to provide information on recent changes in relation to the cluster arrangements. Committee Members found it extremely interesting to receive information on the work undertaken at Hummersknott and its nearest primaries by the Youth Offending Service Preventions Officer, and were impressed with the use of pod casting as a medium of engaging children in the school transition process. Members have resolved to receive an update report in six months to review the work being conducted by the Preventions Officer.
- (f) **School Performance in National Examinations 2007** – The Director of Children's Services submitted a report to provide Members with an early analysis of performance, based on provisional figures, in the national tests and examinations in 2007. Members were pleased to note the provisional improved performance in a number of Darlington Borough Council's secondary schools, and wished to congratulate staff and pupils on their successes over the course of the academic year 2006/07. Members, however, did note some concerns and look forward to receiving a more comprehensive report at the next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in November.
- (g) **Climate Change** – Members received a report from the Director of Corporate Services advising of the decision taken by the Monitoring and Co-ordination Group on Monday, 23rd July 2007 regarding the work of Scrutiny Committees in relation to Climate Change. It was resolved that one of the themes of the forthcoming Special Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, to be held on Monday, 15th October 2007 during Local Democracy Week, will be Climate Change. It is hoped that this will increase awareness of the issues surrounding Climate Change amongst those children that attend the meeting, provide a platform for enthusiastic and positive engagement, and encourage the involvement of schools in the ongoing Climate Change review.
- (h) **Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review** – The Committee received a report from the Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review Group, updating Members of the Committee on progress made to date. A further meeting of the Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review Group was held on Monday, 24th September 2007, and it is hoped that the finalised report will be submitted to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at our next ordinary meeting scheduled for 5th November 2007.
- (i) **Work Programme 2007/2008** – The Committee considered the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2007/2008, and examined Cabinet's Forward Plan, in order to identify areas of particular interest or concern. The Chair extended an open invitation for the inclusion of additional items on the Committee's Work Programme.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended the following meetings:-

- Monitoring and Co-ordination;
- Meeting with the Policy Unit to discuss upcoming audit;
- Meeting with the Director of Children's Services;
- Attended the Turf-Cutting Ceremony on the site of what will be the disabled adult education centre at the South Park;
- LA School Governors Appointments Committee.