
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) **Local Democracy Week - Special Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Monday, 15th October 2007** – A Special Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee was held on Monday, 15th October 2007, as part of this Council’s commitment to Local Democracy Week (15th – 21st October 2007). Two school children from each Primary School in the Borough were invited to attend the meeting, and 26 children attended in total. The children enjoyed a healthy Buffet Reception prior to the meeting, where they were able to meet the Mayor, the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and other Senior Members and Officers of the Council. At the Meeting, the children received an overview of the Committee structure and meeting protocols, before receiving presentations from Officers on School Transport Plans and Climate Change. The children and Committee Members then participated in discussion and workshops on these issues, including voting on actions that can be taken to improve school transport and the impact on Climate Change. It was very heartening to see the enthusiasm of all involved.
 - (b) **Visit to the site of the Pupil Referral Unit Development – Monday, 29th October 2007** - Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee visited the site of the Pupil Referral Unit Development on Monday, 29th October 2007. Members were pleased that they were given the opportunity to monitor the progress at the site of the development. It was reassuring to learn that the new Head Teacher, Maxine Hepple, has had an input into the internal adaptations taking place, and interesting to hear further information in relation to the architect’s vision.
 - (c) **Darlington Media Group – Youth Involvement** – Members of the Committee received a presentation from representatives of the Darlington Media Group. Members were informed of the services and facilities offered to you people by the Group, in relation to photography, media and artwork, and the projects that young people have undertaken. Members also viewed a DVD that highlighted three of the projects undertaken by young people.
 - (d) **Relocation of the Pupil Referral Unit and Education Other Than At Schools Services to the Former Rise Carr Primary School Site** – The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report advising Members on the progress of the development of the integrated Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Service through the refurbishment of the Rise Carr Primary School. It was

pleasing to learn that the project remains on schedule, however the Committee will continue to monitor the progress of the development.

- (e) **Update on School Attendance and Exclusions in Darlington** – Members received a report from the Director of Children’s Services to provide an update on the school attendance figures and exclusion levels within Darlington for the last academic year. Members were reassured to note some improvements in the individual attendance figures, however expressed concern at the continuing level of exclusions. Discussion ensued on the use of internal exclusion units to temporarily manage poor behaviour within schools, and Members were pleased to learn of the partnerships formed by schools to provide support on issues of behaviour and persistent absenteeism, and share good practice.
- (f) **Service Planning 2007/2008 and Service Plan Performance 2nd Quarter 2007/08** – The Committee initially received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive outlining the Service Plans that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for monitoring. The Service Plans provide a useful summary of what a service is aiming to achieve and how it links into the Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan. The second report received from the Assistant Chief Executive summarised the performance of services against Service Plans and Performance Indicators for the period 1st April 2007 – 30th September 2007. Members felt that it was appropriate to continue to receive update reports at timely intervals as a tool to inform the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.
- (g) **Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review** – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report that outlined the findings and recommendations of the Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Group, established by this Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 30th October 2006 to gain an overview of the situation in relation to compliance with health and safety guidance and legislation in schools, to consider the sanctions that may be imposed on the Council for any non-compliance, to add value to the work currently being conducted by the Health and Safety Unit, and advise on action to encourage improved performance. Members of the Committee were pleased to learn of the work conducted by the Health and Safety Unit in relation to the School Health Checks and have resolved to receive an update report to monitor the continuing progress in six months time.
- (h) **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:-

- Darlington Assembly
- Committee agenda pre-meeting with Assistant Director of Children's Services
- Democracy meeting/ discussion with young people at the Education Village
- Led delegation visit to the site of the new Pupil Referral Unit
- Monitoring and Coordination Committee
- Corporate Governance Meeting