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**OVERVIEW OF LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last ordinary meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee:-
  - (a) **Transformation of Secondary Education in Darlington – Academy 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 and the Expression of Interest presented to the Special Cabinet on the 13th June 2006.
  - (b) **Musical Learning Opportunities – The Forum** – The Committee had the pleasure of welcoming David Cox, owner of The Forum Music Centre in Darlington, who provided the Committee with a passionate and highly informative presentation on the musical learning opportunities and facilities available at the Forum. A number of areas were discussed, including the vast diversity of courses, from studying traditional and contemporary musical styles to more practical disciplines, such as Stage Management and Sound Engineering. The Committee were also informed of the programmes that The Forum are providing in partnership with the Northern School of Contemporary Music (NSCM). It was extremely pleasing to hear that such learning opportunities are available to anyone of any age.
  - (c) **School Attendance in Darlington** – School Attendance in Darlington has continued to be monitored, and the Committee were please to receive the final school attendance figures for the academic year 2005/2006. Unfortunately, despite the ongoing, noticeable hard work of many officers, the Committee expressed great concern at the overall increase in the numbers of days lost in both Primary and Secondary Schools, especially the large increase in unauthorised absence, and were disappointed to hear of Darlington’s low position in the national school attendance league table. The Committee resolved to continue to monitor school attendance as an ongoing issue, but accepted that many factors well outside the remit of the Council affect school attendance. There is a possibility that the work conducted by the School Attendance Task and Finish Review Group in 2005 will be reviewed and updated.
  - (d) **National Healthy School Status** – Committee Members received a report outlining the National Healthy Schools Programme and the requirements for schools to achieve National Healthy Schools Status. A healthy school promotes physical and emotional health by providing accessible and relevant information, and equipping pupils with the understanding, skills and attitudes to make informed decisions about their health. As children’s healthy eating is a particularly topical subject, Committee Members were pleased to hear that Darlington is currently exceeding progress toward the December 2006 target.

- (e) **Behaviour Support Task and Finish Review Group** – The Behaviour Support Task and Finish Review Group have continued to progress within its remit to add value to the Behavioural Support Services. Since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, the Behaviour Support Task and Finish Review Group has held discussions with Mark Cain and Jo Dawson of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and with Alison Walton, Assistant Director, Children’s Services Department. The Task and Finish Review Group hope to present their findings and recommendations at the next meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.
- (f) **Work Programme 2006/2007** – The Committee considered the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2006/2007 and examined Cabinet’s Forward Plan in order to identify areas of particular interest or concern, and have highlighted a number of items to be included in the ongoing Work Programme for the forthcoming Municipal Year. These include the continued monitoring of school attendance in Darlington and extending an invitation to the new Head Teacher of Eastbourne School to address the Committee. The Chair extended an open invitation for the inclusion of additional items on the Committee’s Work Programme.

**Councillor Cyndi Hughes**  
**Chair of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee**

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

- Attended and addressed the Monitoring and Co-ordination Committee
- Met with the Chief Executive, Assistant Director of Children’s Services and Head of Human Resources to discuss the situation of Looked After Children vis-à-vis training opportunities
- Chaired the pre-Agenda meeting with Children’s Services Policy Officer and Head of Human Resources
- Attended the Children’s’ Services Four Star Award Celebration
- Attended the Governor’s Appointments panel
- Attended the Standing and Advisory Committee on Religious Education