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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. The report outlined the feasibility stage, the tendering process and the construction stage. The report also confirmed the appointment of a Project Manager and the establishment of a Project Board.
  - (b) **Creative Partnerships – The Education Village – Art Specialism** – The Committee had the pleasure of welcoming Carolyn Barker, Head of Phase Two at the Education Village, who provided the Committee with an overview of the Creative Partnership working that has been conducted at the Education Village, and the activities facilitated by the Art College. Members received information relating to the need for education in creative thinking, and the encouragement of innovative and original thought processes. The Committee were extremely pleased to note the themes currently being promoted at the Education Village, particularly through the work of ‘Steam Shed’, an inclusive theatre group, and through use of a television studio.
  - (c) **Eastbourne School** – The Committee also welcomed Mrs. Elaine Richardson, Head Teacher of Eastbourne Comprehensive School, to a meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, held on the 11th December 2006. Members received a summary of Mrs. Richardson’s background and highlighted her drive to raise the image and the profile of Eastbourne School in the community. Mrs. Richardson outlined the key priorities for improvement in attainment, attendance and behaviour, and answered concerns on the behaviour of school children off site during the lunchtime period, exclusions and staff morale.
  - (d) **Children’s Services Capital Update** – Members received a report from the Director of Children’s Services providing a mid year update on the Children’s Services Capital Investment Programme.
  - (e) **School Performance in National Tests / Examinations – 2006** – A report was submitted to the latest meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee informing Members of the performance of pupils from Darlington in National Tests and Examinations in 2006. In some areas pupils from Darlington exceeded the National Average, however in others pupils fell below the National Average. Overall Darlington’s GCSE results in 2006 at 5 Grade A\* - C are 57.9%, which is an increase of 1.1% on last year. It is pleasing to note that Darlington rank first in order amongst

Tees Valley authorities, and fourth in the whole of the North East.

- (f) **BookStart** – Members received a report highlighting the BookStart initiative, which is run by the charity Booktrust, with funding from the Department for Education and Skills, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Sure Start Unit. The report outlined how BookStart packs are distributed, and the involvement of this Council in the scheme. It was extremely heartening to hear that funding had been made available to employ a BookStart Co-ordinator, whose role will be to work with the Council's partners, and families, within the town to increase the number of BookStart packs given to children and to ensure that events at the library fit in with BookStart activities.
- (g) **Service Planning and Monitoring** – Members of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee received an overview of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the linkages between Scrutiny Work Plans and the Corporate Plan, the Community Strategy and Service Plans. Members of this Committee also received a demonstration of PerformancePlus, the Council's computerised performance management system. A Task and Finish Review Group has been established to investigate methods of this Scrutiny Committees involvement in Service Planning, and how this Committee can monitor relevant Service Plans. The Task and Finish Review Group will hold its initial meeting, with Advisors from the Policy Unit, on the 6th February 2007.
- (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 has been arranged on Tuesday, 30th January 2007.
- (i) **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. 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:-

- Chairs Briefing Meeting in preparation for Scrutiny Meeting on the 29th November 2006.
- Special Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting on the 5th December to discuss Performance Indicators and our Work Programme.
- Meeting with the Director of Children's Services for an update on the Academy timetable.