
OVERVIEW OF LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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 –** Members had the pleasure of welcoming Richard Joynt, Representative of David and Anne Crossland, the co-sponsors of the proposed Academy, to its meeting on the 5th February 2007. Richard provided the Committee with an overview of the Crosslands vision for the proposed Academy for Darlington. Members learned a but about the reasons why Mr. and Mrs. Crossland wish to be sponsors, their desire that the proposed Academy lead in moral and spiritual learning, and how the Crosslands and the Church of England see their future work together as joint sponsors.

The Committee also received its regular update from the Interim Director of Children’s Services as to the ongoing progress of the proposed Academy School for Darlington. The report outlined the tasks required to complete the feasibility stage for the proposed Academy and highlighted that this Authority is considering opening the Academy in its current buildings in September 2007, both ahead of the original timescale and the proposed new build. Committee reiterated its desire to be kept informed of progress made.
 - (b) **Racial Incidents in Schools: Academic Year 2005-06 –** A report was submitted to the latest meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee informing Members of the number, nature and outcomes of racial incidents in schools during the academic year 2005-06. In the academic year 2005-2006, there were a total of 77 racist incidents in schools, and this consisted of 60 incidents in Primary Schools and 17 incidents in Secondary Schools. Members of the Committee were pleased to be joined by David Plews, Policy Advisor (Social Inclusion), and Mandy Payne, Police Hate Crime Officer, who provided useful insights during the discussion of this item.
 - (c) **Pupil Referral Unit –** Members received a report from the Interim Director of Children’s Services to update Members of progress on the development of an integrated Pupil Referral Unit and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Service through the refurbishment of the former Rise Carr Primary School. Members were informed of the current position and the reasons for the required change. The Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a Task and Finish Review Group to continue to monitor the progress of the development of the Pupil Referral Unit and Education Other Than At School Service.
 - (d) **Update on Access to Employment for Looked After Children –** A report was submitted to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on the 5th

February 2007, to update Members on the progress and action taken by this Council, since the previous report submitted to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee on the 19th June 2006. It was pleasing to note that the 2006-2007 out-turn for care leavers in Education, Training, or Employment remains in the top band for (PAF A4), rated as excellent. This places this Council as one of the top performing local authorities in achieving this positive outcome for care leavers.

- (e) **Learning and Skills Council funding for Adult Learning Programmes** – The Committee received a report to update Members on the funding situation for adult learning. The report outlined the national reduction in funding over the last two years, and the reasons for this reduction. It was disappointing to hear that Darlington has 16% of adult learning in the Tees Valley, however only 5% of the funding, and that the decrease in funding has affected all adult education providers within the town. It is the intention of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee to contact the Learning and Skills Council to request a more equitable share of funding.
- (f) **Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review** – The Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review Group met with the Health and Safety Manager on Tuesday, 30th January 2007 to discuss the progress made on the ‘Schools Health Check’ programme since the last meeting on 14th November 2007. A further meeting of the Health and Safety in Schools Task and Finish Review Group has been arranged for Tuesday, 27th March 2007.
- (g) **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:-

LEA Governor’s Appointments Panel
Health & Safety Task and Finish
Judged a Schools Public Speaking Competition at County Hall, Durham
Met with the new Assistant Director for Children’s Services, Mr. Andrew Dunn
Attended an evening music event at Carmel College
Attended a service at St. Augustine’s Church to celebrate “Education Sunday”
Met with the Chief Executive of the Darlington Partnership
Met with Mervyn Bell to discuss the Youth Opportunity Fund