
OVERVIEW OF LIFELONG LEARNING

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee:
 - (a) **Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners** – Consideration was given to the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners published on 8th July, 2004 by the Department for Education and Science (DfES), which covers all aspects of education, but concentrates mainly on secondary provision. The Strategy is based on five key principles of greater personalisation and choice; opening up of services to new and different providers and different ways of delivering services; freedom and independence to frontline head teachers, governors and managers with clear simple accountabilities and more secure streamlined funding arrangements; a major commitment to staff development; and partnerships with parents, employers, volunteers and voluntary organisations. In addition the Strategy contains eight key reforms which are intended to ensure that the reshaped system will drive up quality and choice. In light of some of the proposals contained in the Strategy the Scrutiny Committee has established a Task and Finish Review Group to revisit the outcomes of the Primary Review Group.
 - (b) **Best Value Review of Education Services** – A report was considered on progress made with the implementation of the four recommendations suggested following the Best Value Review of the Education Department. The Scrutiny Committee congratulated the Education Department on the good progress made to address those recommendations and, in particular, improvements made in the Special Educational Needs Monitoring Service, School Effectiveness Service, services which support improvements in behaviour and attendance and the Educational Psychology Services. It was also pleasing to note that a Communications Strategy has been developed to enhance communications between the Education Department and Schools and that the Audit Commission School Survey showed that satisfaction with the effectiveness of communication between the Authority and schools has increased by ten percent between 2003 and 2004.
 - (c) **The Children Bill** – Consideration was given to the content of the Children Bill which will lead to the creation of a new Children’s Services Authority and was intended to deliver good quality services and experiences for children and their families with a focus on five defined outcomes, i.e.(1) staying healthy, (2) staying safe; (3) enjoying and achieving; (4) make a positive contribution to the community and to society; (5) and economic well-being. It is proposed to invite Mr. Stanley Bradford, Regional Adviser to come and speak to the Scrutiny Committee about current Government

thinking and his plans and priorities to implement these policies.

- (d) **Behavioural Support Team** – The Scrutiny Committee was very pleased to hear about developments which have been made in the Behavioural Support Team, within the Education Department. The developments included additional funding of £100,000, which has enabled the expansion of the Behaviour Support Team to improve provision in all schools in the Borough; and the involvement of the Council in a Primary Behaviour and Attendance pilot, which gives access to new social emotional and behavioural skills curriculum materials and detailed audit resources intended to support this area of school improvement. The Pilot also allowed for staff to be trained to offer ‘Teacher Coaching’ to staff in schools and to support small work groups. The Team has produced a Behaviour Support Newsletter which is intended to make schools aware of what the Team are doing in supporting schools in behavioural matters. As a result of Scrutiny Committee involvement, all Members of the Council will be kept updated on progress made by way of the Behavioural Support Team Newsletters.
 - (e) **Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy** – A draft Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy was well received by the Scrutiny Committee, the vision of which was to reduce deprivation in the eleven most disadvantaged Wards within the Borough and to improve the life chances of those residents living within those areas. The Committee gave particular consideration to areas in the Strategy, which came within the Lifelong Learning remit.
 - (f) **Local Democracy Week** – The Scrutiny Committee held a most enjoyable Special Meeting in celebration of Local Democracy Week, which ran from 18th to 24th October, 2004 with the theme “Making your Mark” and was aimed at helping young people become more involved with decision making and planning at a local level . All Primary Schools within the Borough were invited to send 2 pupils and one teacher to the Special Meeting and ten Primary Schools took part in the meeting. Prior to this meeting the Mayor, Councillor Roderick Francis, hosted a reception for the pupils and teachers, Members of the Scrutiny Committee and several Officers. The meeting emulated an ordinary meeting of the Committee and the pupils attending contributed freely to debates on the future of education in Darlington, school travel plans and the schools meals service. Each pupil who attended was presented with a Certificate for ‘Making Your Mark’ during Local Democracy Week.
2. Also since the last Council meeting, I have been involved in the following meetings as Chair of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee:
- (a) Pre-meetings with Julian Kenshole, with the Education Department, and relevant Officers.
 - (b) Monthly meetings with the Director of Education and relevant Cabinet Member.
 - (c) LEA School Governors Appointments Panel.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Chair of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee

