

CABINET
29th NOVEMBER, 2005

ITEM NO.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN A CITY ACADEMY FOR DARLINGTON

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan
Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report

1. To report the views that the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee expressed following its investigations into whether the Council should submit an Expression of Interest to the Department for Education and Skills for up to £25m.

Information and Analysis

2. Cabinet at its meeting held on 1st November, 2005 considered a report on a Proposal for an Academy in Darlington and seeking approval to develop an Expression of Interest in a City Academy to the Department of Education and Skills (DfES).

3. Following consideration of the report, Cabinet resolved:

“(a) That the decision on the development of an Expression of Interest in a City Academy be deferred to enable the report and its recommendations to be referred to a special meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.

(b) That the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee be requested to investigate fully whether the Council should submit an Expression of Interest to the Department of Education and Skills for up to £25M. of funding to develop an Academy, seeking views from interested parties, and its findings be reported back to the next ordinary meeting of Cabinet scheduled for Tuesday, 29th November, 2005.”

4. The Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee subsequently held a Special Meeting on 21st November, 2005 to consider the Cabinet’s referral, to which various stakeholders were invited to address the Committee on whether, in their view, the Council should submit an Expression of Interest to the Department of Education and Skills to develop an City Academy in Darlington. Stakeholders were also invited to submit written representations. A list of speakers who addressed the meeting is attached at **Annex 1**, and a list of written representations to the Committee is attached at **Annex 2**.
5. After hearing all verbal representations the Committee was adjourned and reconvened on the 23rd November, 2005 to allow Members to fully consider the submitted information and formulate its recommendations.

Director of Children's Services Comments

6. The recommendations of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee are welcomed.

Outcome of Consultation

7. In formulating its recommendations the Scrutiny Committee took account of the views of the stakeholders which it heard at the meeting on the 21st November, 2005 and written submissions received on this matter.

Legal Implications

8. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

9. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Conclusion

10. Following consideration of the evidence it collected during its investigations the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet which attempt to address some of the concerns expressed by Members of the Committee and stakeholders. It is stressed that the Scrutiny Committee concentrated its investigation on areas within its remit - i.e. 'learning issues'.

Recommendations of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee

11. It is recommended that :-

- (a) the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee supports the submission of an Expression of Interest for a City Academy, in Darlington, but highlights the need to address the following issues:
 - (i) the proposed Academy stays in Darlington's family of schools;
 - (ii) its ethos and values must match Darlington's Vision for Schools and be educational inclusive;
 - (iii) there is full engagement in the process along the way with the wider community at crucial stages i.e. selection of sponsor;
 - (iv) that Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee be kept in the information and engagement loop;

- (v) that a communication strategy be developed and implemented for the whole Town on the Council's Vision and Strategy for education generally and including school organisation;
 - (vi) that the Authority should continue to look at ways of attracting potential funding to improve attainment/school infrastructures in the Borough.
- (b) That Cabinet also be advised that a minority view of the Scrutiny Committee was that although the recommendations detailed in (a) above are supported, the Expression of Interest for an Academy should not just be concentrated on Hurworth/Eastbourne Schools, but should be widened to consideration of all Schools in the Borough.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services

Background Papers –

- (i) Director of Children's Services report to Cabinet on 1st November, 2005
- (ii) Written Representations of Stakeholders as detailed in Annex 2 of this report.

author : Christine Bates Extension 2387