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OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council the following were the main areas of work under my Education Portfolio:
  - (a) **Task and Finish Reviews** – A number of Scrutiny Task & Finish Final Reports have been considered, namely: Medium Density Fibre Board in Schools, Special Educational Needs Assessment of the Very Young and Educational Attainment of ‘Looked After’ Children. After considering the reports and comments of the relevant Directors, Cabinet endorsed the majority of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Reviews. I would like to record my thanks to LLL scrutiny members for the work undertaken in relation to the Reviews.
  - (b) **Admission of Pupils to Primary and Secondary Education in Darlington for the Academic Year 2005/06** – Approval was given to the admission arrangements of pupils to primary and secondary education in Darlington for the academic year 2005/06. These arrangements take account of the recommendations made in revisions to the Code of Practice on School Admissions and the Education Act 2002. Some admission numbers have been changed after consultation with schools; admissions criteria remain unchanged from last year.
  - (c) **Anti Social Behaviour Act 2004 – Pupil Attendance Related Provision** – A draft Code of Conduct has been drawn up to assist with new powers given to LEA and Head Teachers under Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003. The Act, under Section 444(1), empowers the Local Education Authority and Head Teachers to issue Penalty Notices to parents of children who have unauthorised absences from school, as an alternative to prosecution and enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty. When dealing with unauthorised absences the home / school relationship is a key factor, and therefore the use of such powers will have to consider the impact on that relationship. Further, the provision of Penalty Notices will require clear thresholds to be applied consistently and equitably and the Code has been developed to facilitate this.
  - (d) **School Holiday and Term Dates 2005/06** – Approval has been given to holiday dates and associated professional development arrangements for schools in the Borough for the academic year 2005/06, which commences in September, 2005. Cabinet has considered a further report on this matter.
  - (e) **Future of Sadberge Primary School – Variation to previously announced closure date** – The School Organisation Committee has reviewed the agreed closure date for Sadberge School. The original closure date was June 2005. Since that decision was made three events have occurred that have resulted in SOC agreeing to change the closure date to July 2004. Those events are: the Diocese has informed the authority that the completion of the new Middleton St George school would not be in time to meet the June 2005 date; the roll of Sadberge school has fallen very quickly with parents

moving pupils sooner than anticipated; a member of the Sadberge teaching staff has secured a post at Middleton St George school. These events have left the school being not viable for what would have been its final year.

- (f) **Proposals to Close Eastbourne Nursery School and Change The Character of Dodmire Infant School** – A report was considered on the progress made with the proposals for the closure of Eastbourne Nursery School and to change of character of Dodmire Infant School, to include a nursery unit. Members will recall that the original proposals to closure Eastbourne Nursery School and provide a nursery unit at Dodmire Infants School from 1st April, 2004 were revised following the consultation period. Following a further consultation period on these revised proposals and issue of Statutory Notices, no responses were received to the Statutory Notices, so the Director of Education will implement the proposals under delegated powers from 1st September, 2004.
- (g) **Adult Learning Inspection** – A report of the recent inspection of the Adult and Community Learning Service by the Adult Learning Inspectorate report was considered. I have pleasure to announce that Family Learning was judged to be outstanding and although the inspection highlighted some weaknesses within the overall Adult Learning Service it also identified many strengths. Weaknesses related to provision that is currently contracted out; the intention is that such provision will be provided by ‘direct delivery’ from September 2004. The Council are currently working with the Adult Learning Inspectorate and the Learning and Skills Council to address the identified weaknesses.
- (h) **14-19 Education in Darlington** – Approval has been given to establish a loose Federation to be known as the Darlington 14 – 19 Trust to co-ordinate the development and management of the provision of 14 – 19 education in the Borough. The Trust would comprise the seven comprehensive schools in the Borough, plus Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Darlington College of Technology, Beaumont Hill Special School and Technology College, EOTAS, the Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council, Connexions and the Council.

2. I have also attended meetings of the following:

- (i) School Organisation Committee, 19th May
- (ii) Life Long Learning Scrutiny meeting, 21st July
- (iii) LEA Governors appointments panel, 19th May, 11th June
- (iv) Regular briefings with the Director of Education
- (v) Quarterly joint briefing with Cllr Lister, together with the Directors of Education and Social Services

**Councillor Stephen Harker**  
**Cabinet Member with Education Portfolio**