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OVERVIEW OF LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee:-
  - (a) **Work Programme** – Approval has been given to the Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme for the 2004/05 Municipal Year. In compiling the work programme consideration was given the Cabinet’s Forward Plan for particular areas of interest and concern. The Work Programme will be reviewed at each of the Scrutiny Committee meetings during the year.
  - (b) **Service Plan Monitoring** – We received a presentation on Service Plan Monitoring and a demonstration on how the software package Performance Plus will assist this Scrutiny in looking at and monitoring the Authority’s performance.
  - (c) **Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy** – Consideration was given to the progress made with the development of a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, which will focus on addressing issues in the 11 most deprived wards in Darlington . The issues relating to lifelong learning in the Strategy include developing extra-curricula activities for older children and young adults, parenting courses, other adult learning opportunities, ‘Extended Schools and Childcare centres and Breakfast Clubs; continuing Sure Start work; increasing ‘life skills’ aspect of learning in schools; and increasing parent and toddlers’ sessions for the Sure Start programme.
  - (d) **Education and Social Services Department Joint Strategy to Promote and Support Improvement in the Education of ‘Looked After’ Children** – It is pleasing to note that Education and Social Services Departments have been working closely to develop a joint approach to supporting improvements in the attainment of ‘looked after’ children. Currently the attainment of ‘looked after children is lower than that of their peers on both a national and local basis. A Strategy has, therefore, been produced to address this situation, which sets out a vision for ‘looked after’ children and states that they will attain to the level of their ability and will enjoy a broad and balanced education in schools that understand their needs, whilst expecting commitment and success for each child.
  - (e) **Closure of Whinfield Infant School and Whinfield Junior School and Establishment of New Whinfield Primary School** – Consideration has been given to the progress made with the closure of Whinfield Infant School and Whinfield Junior School and the establishment of a new Whinfield Primary School, following approval by the School Organisation Committee held on 19th May, 2004.
  - (f) **Future of Sadberge Primary School – Variation to Previously Announced Closure Date** – The date for the closure of Sadberge Primary School has been brought forward to 31st August, 2004 from the previously agreed date of 4th June, 2005. This step has been taken due to the fact that the projected school pupil population at the School from

September, 2004, would make it financial unviable and thus likely to have an adverse effect on the delivery of education for pupils. Letters have been sent to all parents and staff detailing the programme until closure and informing parents of the school place secured for their child from September, 2004.

- (g) **Policy Review – (i) Primary Provision Review Group** - A Review Group, established by the Committee, has completed a major review of the provision of primary education in the Borough. The Committee, after considering the Group's Final Report, endorsed its recommendations and referred them to Cabinet for consideration.

**(ii) Task and Finish Reviews** - The Committee has received Cabinet's responses on the Final Reports and recommendations of Task and Finish Reviews on the use of Medium Density Fibreboard in Schools, Special Educational Needs Assessment for the Very Young and Educational Attainment of 'Looked After' Children. The Cabinet were supportive of the majority of recommendations made by these Groups and thanked the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee Members who were involved in these Reviews.

- (h) Also since the last Council meeting, I have been involved in the following meetings as Chair of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee:-

3rd June Primary Review meeting with Reverend Chris Wardale  
4th June Monitoring and Coordination Meeting with other Chairs of Scrutiny Committees  
10th June Final Primary Review Group meeting  
11th June LEA Governors Appointments Panel  
17th June Educational Awards Panel Meeting  
8th July Educational Awards Presentation Evening

**Councillor Cyndi Hughes**  
**Chair of Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee**