

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Developing Lifelong Learning held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 19 December 2005** at **10.00 a.m.**

Present:-

Councillor A Cox in the Chair

Members:

Councillors Armstrong, Ebbatson, Gray, Iveson, Lethbridge, Meir, Ord, Tennant and Vasey.

Other Members:

Councillors Barker, Bowman, Chapman, Douthwaite, Fenwick, Nicholls and Priestley.

Parent Governor Representatives:

Mrs A Atkinson and Mrs A M Tallentire.

Co-opted Member:

Mr J Dormer.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Robinson.

Councillor Cox (Chairman) welcomed everyone to the meeting in Spanish to promote the use of foreign languages in society.

A1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to Minute A4, the Head of Overview and Scrutiny, referred members to a paper which had been circulated entitled, "Modern Foreign Languages Ensuring Entitlement at Key Stage 4 is a reality". The paper was a press release from the School's Minister Jaqui Smith which encouraged all secondary schools to ensure that as many pupils as possible are taking up their statutory entitlement to study a foreign language, leading to a recognised qualification at key Stage 4. It was highlighted that the Government is investing an additional £115 million through the National Language Strategy over the next three years to encourage more young people to study languages, including at Key Stage 4.

A2 Any Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ebbatson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item A3 in his role as Chairman of the Forge.

A3 The Forge – Arts, Education Agency for County Durham

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Head of Overview and Scrutiny together with a presentation from the Director of the Forge providing information relating to the work undertaken in County Durham Schools by the project (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

During the presentation by Tony Harrington, Director of the Forge project the following issues were highlighted:-

- History and Management of The Forge
- Key Area of Activity
- What does The Forge do?
- Value for money
- Developing the cultural economy
- Durham at the forefront
- Why the work is important
- Unique selling point
- The Future

Following the presentation, Debbie Cooper, Restorative Justice Manager informed the Sub-Committee that she currently had a project in partnership with the Forge whereby work is undertaken with 10 to 17 year olds which allows victims to meet with offenders. It was emphasised that when young people are confronted by the consequences of their crime they are less likely to re-offend. She emphasised that through arts and drama, issues are brought to life.

Neil Charlton, Deputy Director of Education commented that he was delighted to see Stephanie McManus from St Joseph's Primary School at Coundon where project work had been carried out with children and their families by the Forge project and in addition a lot of work had been undertaken relating to Equality and Diversity.

Councillor Armstrong requested clarification as to how the project was funded.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the project is funded 50% by Cultural Services and 50% by the Education Services, however this will change in the future.

Councillor Dormer commented that he had observed the work undertaken by this project in Primary Schools but asked what efforts were made to undertake projects in Secondary Schools?

Members were informed that it is more difficult to get access to work in Secondary Schools with the pressing school timetable. Tony emphasised that the 'small world, big dream' project does do work in Secondary Schools, however there is a need for support from partners in relation to Secondary School provision.

Dave Ford, Chief Inspector commented that Arts links allows schools the opportunity to contribute to the funding of projects undertaken by The Forge.

Councillor Lethbridge commented that it is refreshing, with the pressure to get GCSE grades A*C, to hear what projects are being undertaken in the arts in County Durham.

Councillor Barker asked how areas of need are pin-pointed?

The Sub-Committee was informed that it is quite difficult, there is a need to open up access to all that the Forge provides, it is about linking in at the right level.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

A4 Performance Management

(a) Report of head of Corporate Policy

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Corporate Policy providing a half year performance update (2005/06) for Best Value performance indicators relevant to the Corporate aim, Developing Lifelong Learning (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Dave Ford, Chief Inspector informed the Sub-Committee that in relation to GCSE 5 A-C Grades the Authority is currently at 51.1% however it is on target to achieve the national average in 2006.

In addition it was emphasised that in relation to overall attainment at GCSE level A-G the Authority is performing higher than the national Maths & English average.

With reference to BV 181 Level 5 Key Stage 3 English the attainment indicator had fallen from 71 to 69.81%. There is a need to focus on English outcomes.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

(b) OfSTED inspections

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Chief Inspector, Education Services explaining the new approach to OfSTED inspections for Schools (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

Dave Ford, Chief Inspector explained the changes to the system that had taken place from September 2005.

Joan Sjovoll, Headteacher at Framwellgate School, Durham informed members of her recent experience when the school was inspected under the new system.

She informed members that the focus of the inspection is very much based on the Headteacher. It was emphasised that the inspection team was only present for 2 days at the school and that the inspection was actually completed in 1½ days with the report being read to the Senior management Team of the School by 3.30 p.m. on the 2nd day.

With reference to the implications for the Education Development Service it was highlighted that they will provide training to schools and will support them in constructing and validating their self-evaluations in order to ensure that schools are ready for inspection at all times.

It was highlighted that the new process is more data driven and therefore it is easier for schools to fall into the categories of 'Special Measures' and 'Notice to improve'.

Councillor Armstrong commented that members who are School Governors should take advantage of the training available.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A5 Items from Co-opted Members or interested parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members.

A6 Forward Plan

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the section of the Council's Forward Plan which is within the remit of the Sub-Committee (for copy of report see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A7 Work Programme

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the current work programme (for copy of report see file of minutes)

Resolved:

That the programme be noted.