

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 27 March 2006** at **10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor A Cox in the Chair

Members:

Councillors Armstrong, Holroyd, Lethbridge, Magee, Meir, Porter, Simmons, Stelling, Stradling, Vasey and Williams.

Other Members:

Councillors Chapman and Douthwaite.

Parent Governor Representative:

Mrs A Atkinson

Co-opted Members:

Mr J Dormer and Mrs M Robinson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bell, Graham, Iveson, Ord, Robinson, Tennant and Mrs A Tallentire (Parent Governor Representative) and Ms S Bamber (Church Representative).

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 December, 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A2 Any Declarations of Interest

Councillor Vasey declared an interest in Agenda item 5, Surestart and Children Centres in her capacity as a paid employee for Surestart.
Councillor Meir declared an interest in relation to the item raised by a co-opted member concerning Building Schools for the Future in his role as a Governor at Seaham School of Technology.

A3 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

Mrs A Atkinson, Co-opted Member raised an issue concerning Building Schools for the Future. She informed the Sub-Committee that she had been approached about the lack of consultation in relation to the Building Schools for the future programme and the proposals for East Durham.

Councillor Armstrong requested clarification from the Deputy Director of Education as to what consultation had been undertaken.

The Sub-Committee was informed that consultation had taken place in the East of the County with all schools being contacted and informed of the proposals in relation to Building Schools for the future with much of the consultation process running parallel with the consultation process for Every Child Matters. It was emphasised that the period of consultation was still ongoing.

A4 Learning Co-ordination

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation from Jeanette Trafford Lifelong Learning Partnership Manager explaining learning co-ordination (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

Councillor Armstrong asked how the Authority secures value for money in relation to the partnership.

Jeanette responded that the project is currently going through the funding process, with the Authority having officer representation on the Board.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the project, for the first 4 years was mainly funded by the Department for Education and Skills however following this period it was then funded by the Learning and Skills Council who have now withdrawn funding for non-accredited courses, leaving the Partnership and Education in the Community the only sources of non-accredited learning. It was highlighted that funding had not yet been resolved.

It was emphasised that to date the Council had provided support by way of expertise.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

A5 Surestart and Children's Centres

The Sub-Committee considered a report and a presentation from Frank Firth, Nominated Strategic Officer Surestart explaining the work of Surestart and Children's Centres in County Durham (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

During the presentation the following issues were highlighted:

- What Surestart is here to do
- How Surestart was started
- Stage 2 – all young children/poor young children
- Stage 3 where we are now
- The Every Child Matters context
- Achieved so far:
- Learned so far: key principles that informed ECM
- What we know from research: National Evaluation of Surestart
- What we know from research (EPPE findings).
- Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a ten year Strategy for Childcare.
- Key Strategy Commitments
- Legislation Current Consultation.
- Maintaining momentum through mainstream
- The Initial Task in County Durham
- Achievements
- Phase 2 April 2006 to March 2008.
- The Core Offer
- Children's Centres: a graduated model.

Mr J Dormer (Co-opted Member) commented that Children Centres particularly in relation to rural areas will not be easily accessible and asked what will happen in relation to transport.

The Sub-Committee was informed that there is a need to use the current infrastructure as flexibly as possible.

Councillor Lethbridge asked what consultation had taken place in respect of Children Centres.

The Sub-Committee was informed that with regard to Phase 1 of the Children Centres, LSP's and the Local Children Planning Group were consulted, however, in relation to Phase 2 consultation is taking place slightly differently with local task groups being consulted. (established via the Local Children Planning Group), it was emphasised that the process is ongoing.

Councillor Vasey commented that there is a need for the Children Centres to maintain the local image of Surestart.

Mrs Robinson, co-opted member, commented that whilst recognising the need for the Corporate Image within Children Centres there is also a need to maintain the local link with Surestart in order for them to be accepted.

Members were informed that work is currently ongoing to promote the Corporate Image via Children Centres but it was recognised that there is a need to try to keep the local identity which Surestart currently has.

Councillor Porter requested clarification as to who would fund Surestart if there is no more funding available from Central Government.

It was confirmed that the Authority would be responsible for funding if no more funding is available from Central Government, although funding was currently projected to 2008.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny highlighted the need for the performance of Children Centres to be monitored to ensure that the Authority is receiving value for money.

The Sub-Committee was informed that with effect from 1 April 2006 monitoring of this service lies with the County Council who will monitor the performance of the Children's Centre more closely.

Resolved:

That the report and presentation be noted.

A6 The Youth Service Interim Scrutiny Report

The Sub-Committee considered a covering Scrutiny Report from the Head of Overview and Scrutiny together with the interim report from the Scrutiny Working Group and a presentation relating to the Youth Service (for copy of Reports and slides of presentation see file of Minutes).

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny highlighted the following during the presentation:

- Review of the Youth Service - 13-19 year olds
- Co-ordination - Value for Money - Contribution to Strategic Vision and Priorities
- Timing of investigation bearing in mind:-
 - The establishment of the new Children's Service
 - Every Child Matters
 - The Government's 'Specification'
 - Imminent Inspection
- The Original aim was to consider all youth provision
- Initial research concentrated on Education in the Community and the 'Youth Service' provided by the County Council
- Position Statement considered - what, where, why, how, when
- Education Youth Service Budget - £2.8m
- Policy Context - Transforming Youth Work - for the first time a specification for youth work.
- Standards Introduced
- Youth Matters - Green paper setting out a further vision for Services for Young People
- Visit to mid-Durham Projects Club
- Durham's position - £62 per head
- Some of the provision perhaps historical
- Needs to be more targeted in line with Government policy
- Timely to review the allocation of funding for the Youth Service
- Further work needed to consider joining up with:-
 - Other County Council Services
 - Connexions
 - District Councils
 - Police, Probation
 - Voluntary Sector

Reference was made to a plan showing the location of Youth Organisations, together with a table showing the current distribution of resources for the Youth Service in County Durham (for copies see file of minutes).

It was highlighted that some delivery points on the plan would be removed due to the removal of SRB funding.

Councillor Vasey asked how much more additional funding would be required for the Authority to reach the £100 per head spend on provision.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Authority is currently spending per head £62 in order to raise it to the £100 per head an additional sum of approximately £2 million would be required.

In addition, the members were informed that in relation to targeting delivery the Authority has to reach 25% of young people, the Authority is currently working with 20% of young people.

The Deputy Director highlighted to members that the Education Service has put forward bids for additional funding for the Youth Service in Durham however due to budget difficulties this funding has not been forthcoming.

He concluded by highlighting the need to review the funding of the existing provision.

Councillor Armstrong suggested that there is a need to look at the role of Area Committees to establish what they do and the financial implications.

Resolved:

That the Interim report be approved for submission to cabinet.

A7 Performance Management

The Sub-Committee considered a 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 together with the progress in relation to the public library service standards (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

Members were informed that 67% of indicators have stayed in the same quartile, however, it was emphasised that a fall in quartile position for an indicator does not necessarily represent falling performance, if other authorities improve more than the Authority, it is possible to improve performance yet fall a quartile.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

A8 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.

A9 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.