

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Sub-Committee for LIFELONG LEARNING** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 24 September 2007** at **10.00 a.m.**

Present

COUNCILLOR A BARKER in the Chair

Councillors Armstrong, Burlison, C Carr, Coates, NC Foster, Gray, Holroyd, Iveson, Meir, Pye, Stelling, Stradling, Tennant and Walker.

Co-opted Members:

S Bamber and A Tallentire

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bell, Ord, and Porter.

A1 Key Stage 4 Results- 2007/08

Dave Ford, Head of Achievement, and John Dellar, Consultant, BETT Team gave a presentation to the Sub-Committee about the Key Stage 4 Results for 2007/08 (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes). The presentation included the 2007 GCSE results, value added, the achievements, the best improvement and sound value added, those schools with outstanding value added, and immediate targets.

Dave Ford explained that the results are not yet finalised as a number of schools in the county have asked for various GCSE papers to be re-marked. The results in the presentation were the bottom-line as any re-marking would mean that the results would only go up. He pointed out that in a week's time they would receive the first national analysis of Value Added. John Dellar hoped that they would be in the top 10 authorities for Value Added.

John Dellar pointed out the improvements that had been made were so good that it was now difficult to make further significant improvements. He explained that in addition to the hard work by pupils and parents these improvements were down to the investment by the County Council in key stage 4 over the last 4/5 years, the focus from the BETT Team, and the unique approach of schools in working together.

The Chairman expressed his delight at the results, and members recognised the improvements that have been.

Dave Ford advised that they would be focussing on making improvements on english and maths, to ensure that young people are either in education, training or employment, to look at parental support and family learning, and there were 5 schools that they would focus on.

In response to members' comments at the papers that were to be re-marked, Dave Ford explained that they are able to spot any anomalies in results and where believe there is one they will support schools in asking for papers to be re-marked. For the first time there has been a problem with the english papers. There was concern at how accurate the results would be when they were to be marked via computer, as this was the case next year for A level papers. Dave Ford explained that they would be marked online and therefore the marker could be watched, it was possible to know how long the marker had been working on the examination paper, and any problems could be dealt with instantaneously.

In response to questions about the results for special schools, Dave Ford explained that as the Key Stage 4 project rolls forward special schools will be involved. Although these schools are now gaining a greater percentage of 5 A to G results there is much work to be done and the difficulty is that much of their education is disrupted.

In relation to Shotton Hall Comprehensive School it was reported that the BETT team had gone into that school and provided emergency intervention which had brought about improvements. Some subjects will continue to be supported by the BETT team in that school, and the school would be used as an example to show how improvements could be made in the short term.

A2 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

A4 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items raised

A5 Quarter 1 2007/08 Performance

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy which provided the quarter 1 performance update for 2007/08 for the authority's corporate priorities, Best Value Performance Indicators and Public Library Service Standards relevant to the Corporate Aim of Developing Lifelong Learning (for copy see file of Minutes)

Bev Stobbart, Corporate Policy Officer, explained that there are some discrepancies between the data on GCSE results that she had presented in her report and those that were presented in item 1A. She explained that the results in the report were provisional and the final results should be available for the next meeting.

A6 BSF Update

The Sub-Committee received a report from the BSF Programme Manager that provided an update on progress of the BSF Programme (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Meir declared an interest in this item as a governor of Seaham School of Technology, and Councillor Barker declared an interest as a governor of Easington School.

Yvonne Edwards, BSF Programme Manager, advised of the position with Seaham School of Technology and that it was expected that a decision about the site would be made that week.

In response to a question from Councillor N C Foster she explained that future waves would have the same criteria as wave 3 in relation to projection of planning, providing places and the funding formula.

Councillor Walker wished to ensure that at the Invitation to Participate and Dialogue stage, questions be asked of the bidders to ensure that they would provide opportunities for the local labour force and young people. Yvonne commented there would be questions around the design skills and the use of local labour, and of the learning opportunities for young people in the construction phase. She explained that there are also questions around sustainability and energy, and how to have a safe environment and what could be done to enable the community to use the facilities.

A7 Academies

The Sub-Committee received an update on academies from Neil Charlton, Head of Support Services, and Sheila Palmerley, School Strategy Places Manager.

Neil Charlton explained that a report had been agreed by Cabinet on 19 July 2007 on the strategy for the development of Academies in County Durham. The strategy would be to have 3 academies in County Durham and this would involve having a wide consultation exercise in the Derwentside and Durham city areas. The Local Authority has identified itself as a co-sponsor and thus make a financial contribution which would impact on the medium term financial plan.

There would be two processes running, one would be to seek sponsors and the other for a formal consultation exercise in the Derwentside and Durham City areas.

The Authority would advertise nationally for sponsors, for which they would be provided with a prospectus. They were not sure what interest they would receive for this, but any sponsor would have to work to the authorities policies and with its schools, although bringing its expertise to enhance these policies. Their responses would be scrutinised.

The consultation document would be circulated widely in order to have a fully open and transparent process. It was explained that they have a duty to secure diversity in the provision of schools, and therefore ensure that they promote different types of schools whether faith, trusts, and academies.

There were three schools identified for academies, however the consultation document will not suggest these as they wish to seek views, following which a firm set of proposals would be reported back to Cabinet. Members would be fully involved in consultation process, and would be asked to work with officers to seek people's views. Primary schools too would be involved.

Councillor Pye, declared an interest as a governor of Belmont Comprehensive School. He questioned whether the process was open and transparent, and explained that he had been made aware in relation to the situation with Belmont and Gilesgate Comprehensives one school had more information than the other. He enquired about the plans for those schools in that was there to be one school on two separate sites, and was it to be a trust school. In response Neil Charlton advised that until 19 July when the matter was considered by the Cabinet there was no resolution on the way forward and therefore it could not be discussed prior to then. There had been a meeting on 5 September which he had been asked to attend as an observer where it was mentioned that Belmont Comprehensive had asked about having a trust school. Having reported this to the Leader of the Council, and David Williams, the Director of Children and Young People's Service he was asked to convene a seminar for all secondary schools in October about how to become a trust school. The Director is anxious that all information is available to schools about how to become a trust or foundation school.

Sheila Palmerley emphasised that nothing was hidden, they would await people's views and then firm up the recommendations.

A8 Funding Issues- Adult Education

In the absence of Dave Emmerson, Education in the Community Manager, and Anne Adams, Adult Education Officer the item about funding issues for adult education was deferred until the next meeting.

A9 Progress with Joint Overview and Children's Trust

Feisal Jassat explained that there are to be a series of meetings with the Children's Trust. A joint Overview and Scrutiny project looking at NEET's is being established. It will have representation from each of the District Councils. Following each meeting a bulletin will be circulated to members of the Sub-Committee.

Carol Payne, Strategic Commissioning Manager, advised that they were breaking new ground as there are not many Children's Trusts that have looked into this issue, consequently all partners were keen to progress with this.

A10 Medium Term Improvement Priorities

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy on the medium term improvement priorities that have been included in the Council's current Corporate Plan 2007/08 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Sub-Committee was asked to consider whether the improvement priorities were still relevant, and if there were other areas for improvement that should be considered.

The Sub-Committee was keen to continue with the priorities identified.