

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 31 March 2008** at **10.00 a.m.**

Present:-

COUNCILLOR A BARKER in the Chair

Councillors Armstrong, Burlison, Coates, E Foster, NC Foster, Gray, Ord, Simmons and Stradling.

Co-opted Member:

S Bamber.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Iveson and Tennant, Mrs Brown and Mr Mackie.

A Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 24 September 2007 and 3 January 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny advised that unfortunately The Director of Children and Young People's Service or his representative could not attend the meeting today to provide an update on the position with Academies. The Director of Children and Young People had invited a group of members to meet with him to discuss the position. The Sub-Committee welcomed the meeting and agreed that the Chairman and Head of Overview and Scrutiny attend the meeting.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A3 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items raised.

A4 Building Schools for the Future

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

The Project Manager and the School Strategy Places Manager advised that on Friday of the previous week they had been informed that another bidder had dropped out of the process, therefore there was now only one bidder that they continue to have dialogue with. It was explained that officers along with the PFS would now consider the options available, and they were to meet with the DCfS the following day to discuss the position. By the end of the week they should know the way forward.

In response to a question from Councillor Armstrong on whether the procurement process would allow the programme to go forward with only one bidder, the Project Manager advised that the DCfS would not allow it to go forward if the bidder could not demonstrate that the scheme would be on the basis of its original principals. The original plans were for it to be on the principals of educational transformational and value for money.

Councillor Coates advised of his disappointment in the lack of communication about developments, and pointed out that members of the authority should be kept informed of developments such as this. He had been informed that the first bidder had dropped out of the process by a fellow governor four weeks after the event. He explained that he was concerned about the plans of the one bidder that remained.

It was reported that Councillor Vasey, the Cabinet member was to inform members that the second bidder had pulled out however not much time had elapsed since their meeting with the Partnership on Friday and this had not yet been undertaken. Members asked for measures to be put in place that addressed the communication issue.

The School Places Manager advised that this was not the ideal position however the remaining bidder had undertaken works in other local authorities and it would be possible for the authority to look at their previous work. Councillor Armstrong advised that he was aware that there were guidelines from the Government and the EU on the procedures for this process however it was disappointing that local firms could not be involved. He suggested that they explore opportunities for local firms to be involved. It was pointed out that the bidders have been evaluated on whether they have incorporated local companies into their bid, and of the training opportunities they will provide.

At the forthcoming meeting about academies with The Director of Children's and Young People's Service and the portfolio holder, The Head of the Overview and Scrutiny and the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny would

raise the issue of the way forward to keep non executive members informed of any developments.

Resolved:-

That the report be noted.

A5 Quarter 3 2007/08 Performance

The Sub-Committee determined that the report of the Head of Corporate Policy which provided the quarter 3 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 be deferred until the next meeting when an officer from the service would be in attendance to present the report (for copy see file of Minutes)

A6 Any Other Business

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny advised that the Working Group looking into NEET's was to meet again on 10 April from which recommendations would be made for the Cabinet to consider in the new local authority arrangements. Their work has been in co-operation with the partners.