

Item No 1

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Developing Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee
held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 22 September 2008 at 10.00 a.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor J Blakey in the Chair

Members:

Councillors J Armstrong, J Bailey, A Bainbridge, B Bainbridge, P Brookes, M Dixon, Holroyd, Mackie, E Paylor, C Potts, J Shiell, Simmons, Stradling, Williams, and B Wilson.

Faith Community Representative

Mr P Mackie

Parent Governor Representative

Mrs A Tallentire

Co-opted Member

Mrs O Brown

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Iveson and Savory, and Councillor Mrs M Robinson.

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2008 were considered. With the addition of Councillor Maslin in the attendance the minute was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Referring to Minute A6, Tom Bolton, Principal Scrutiny Officer advised that the project about Young People's issues that is a joint project with the Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee would commence shortly. There were 28 members on the Working Group and the first meeting was to be held on 2 October. The project would be in two parts. There would be a light touch review of progress on recommendations from previous scrutiny projects which relate to young people, as covered in the reports: Carrier Bag Culture, "Who's Afraid of Crime?", and A Question of Culture? (Alcohol and

Drugs Misuse by Young People). The second strand would be an examination of youth engagement and youth provision in the light of LGR.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

A3 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

Mr A Barker advised that there were so many good things happening in the Easington area in terms of youth provision, and gave examples of neighbourhood pathfinders, welfare centre, schools, and colleges however it seemed that there was no co-ordination of the activities. He suggested that they should pull together all of these activities.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny agreed that it was important to bring all these activities together, and that the Children and Young People's Service was aware of the gap, and would be undertaken as part of the young people scrutiny project.

Linda Bailey of the LSC advised that this was something that the Local Children's Boards should take up, and the LSC through new commissioning of services would work to co-ordinate this through the Local Children's Boards.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny advised that this would be reflected in the scoping of the project.

A4 Performance Issues

The Head of Corporate Policy advised of the changes that had been made to reporting on the performance indicators, and reminded Members that they had been made aware of this at the budget briefing on 11 September. There had been a shift to the National Performance indicators and with the new LAA indicators that have been signed off. The majority of indicators that assign themselves to the Lifelong Learning are unique in their nature with them being reported on annually. It was explained that there is very little information to share with the Committee part of the way through the year.

She advised that in the future performance monitoring would be looked at by the regular liaison meetings between the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, together with the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Portfolio Holders and leading officers. If there were any issues that the Group felt needed further investigation a report would then be brought to the attention of the Committee.

In response to a question from Mr R Pye about previous comments arising from the CPA about performance monitoring, the Head of Overview and Scrutiny advised that there is now a more focussed approach to this. Members were advised that performance management issues can be complex and a training event on 6 October to be undertaken in partnership with CfPS would give Members a better understanding.

A5 BSF Update

The Committee received a report from David Theobald, BSF Project Director that provided an update on the BSF Programme (for copy of slides see file of Minutes).

He provided information on Procurement, Sample Schools, Wave 3 Non Sample Schools, Wave 6, Academies, and ICT.

In response to a question from Councillor Brookes, he advised that there are structured workshops with stakeholders for every school, and this would involve young people. As each school has a Vision, which is approved by Children and Young People's Services, that Vision has the young people's voice attached to it.

He explained to Mr Barker that using procurement as an economic generator was a key measure, however it does need more work and he will ensure it gets the right balance, whilst delivering value for money when they are at the final bid stage.

Mrs O Brown enquired whether there were plans for Bishop Barrington and King James Schools to merge. It was explained there would be many issues to be taken into account, however it would be for the schools to lead on this if that was the direction they wished to go.

Mr Pye enquired about the BSF process in relation to Academies. It was explained that the process would be similar although the sponsor would be more in the driving seat.

Councillor Simmons enquired whether the pupils would be transported between schools to take advantage of the different specialisms. David Theobald advised that this would not happen for Key Stage 3 pupils, and that Dave Ford is looking at the logistics of this for the 14-19 year olds.

In response to a question from Councillor Dixon about ICT, it was explained that they are working hard to ensure it is sustainable and practicable, and has the benefits of advancing technology. The Managed ICT Services Team is an in-house service team.

Councillor Armstrong enquired how the present contractor was providing value for money. David Theobald advised that although there was only one bidder, the Authority was aware of the market price and they benchmarked

against that. The programme is moving ahead, and the sample schools are creating a model. Procurement is involved, it is supported by national benchmarks, and there are continuous improvement programmes.

David Theobald invited the Committee to visit the Durham Johnston School site.