

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the County Hall Durham on Tuesday 10 October 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:

Councillor N Wade in the Chair

Members:

Councillors Carroll, Chaplow, N C Foster, Iveson, O'Donnell, Priestley and Trippett

Cabinet Members:

Councillors Pendlebury, Vasey and Walker

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ebbatson, Graham, Porter and Stradling

A1. Welcome

Councillor Wade, Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting had been convened so that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have an opportunity to receive information on the consultation process for Building Schools for the future in Peterlee.

A2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

A3. The outcome of consultations on the proposals for Secondary Education in Peterlee as part of Building Schools for the Future.

The Committee had received the report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services presenting the outcomes of consultation on the proposals for secondary education in Peterlee as part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

Members were advised that David Williams, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Councillor Claire Vasey Cabinet portfolio holder for Childrens Services were in attendance to respond to questions that members may have in relation to the attached report dealing with the outcome of the consultation process and the case for change.

During the meeting the following issues were raised by members:

1. Consultation
2. Value for money
3. School size
4. Resource allocation if the decision to maintain two schools is the favoured option.
5. Impact on the County Durham BSF programme.

Consultation

In relation to consultation clarification was sought on why the status quo was considered an option.

Members were informed that legal advice had been taken, case law examined and based on this evidence including the status quo as an option was seen to be good practice.

In addition clarification was sought on the outcome of the consultation in that communities have made their choice, however the report favours a different option.

The committee was informed that officers when preparing the report look at the responses to the consultation process however they have to take into account a number of other factors including value for money.

Value for Money

With reference to value for money, members requested clarification in relation to the costs associated with a new build versus the costs of refurbishment.

Members were informed that the National guidance on BSF implies that new build leads to better value for money with better outcomes achieved.

School Size

In relation to school size, the Committee requested clarification on the impact of school size on the improving or worsening of educational standards and educational attainment.

The Committee was informed that there is no research or evidence that exists to say either one way or another. It was emphasised that what is important in improving performance is Leadership in the Education System.

Resource Allocation

Concerning Resource Allocation should the two schools be maintained, clarification was sought on how the money would be spent if this was the decision.

It was confirmed that further discussion would need to be entered into with the DfES and Partnership for Schools in line with the Strategic Business Case however early indications from these key players suggests that they would work the authority.

Impact on the County Durham BSF Programme

With reference to the impact on the County Durham BSF programme, clarification was sought on the impact that the Peterlee decision would have on future BSF bids in the county.

The Committee was informed that it had been suggested that there would be no impact.

Councillor Vasey then updated Members on the current situation regarding Academies.

Resolved:

That the report and additional information provided at the meeting be noted.