

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA



Friday 1st September 2006

at 4.00 p.m.

in the Council Chamber

MEMBERS: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE:

Councillors SAllison, Barker, Clouth, R Cook, Fleet, Gibbon, Hall, James, Laffey, A Marshall, J Marshall, Preece, Shaw, Wallace, Wistow and Wright.

Resident Representatives:

Evelyn Leck, Joan Smith and Linda Shields

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

3. **MINUTES**

3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4th August 2006 (*attached*)

4. **RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

No items.

5. **CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

No items.

6. **FORWARD PLAN**

No items.

7. **CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

No items.

8. **CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS**

No items.

9. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's (HCFE) On-Site Nursery Facility Scrutiny Referral (Referred by Council on 26 July 2006):-

9.1 Evidence from Key Witnesses:-

- (a) Covering Report (Scrutiny Manager);
- (b) Verbal Evidence from the Town's MP, Iain Wright;
- (c) Verbal Evidence (supported by a Presentation and Background Papers) from the HCFE's Principal / Chief Executive, David Waddington;
- (d) Verbal Evidence from the Authority's Childcare Co-ordinator;
- (e) Verbal Evidence from Ward Councillors;
- (f) Verbal Evidence from Students and Parents whose children attended the First Steps Nursery (Spokes person to be confirmed);
- (g) Verbal Evidence from the former staff of the First Steps Nursery; and
- (h) Verbal Evidence from Members of the Public.

9.2 Provision of Additional Information / Key Documentation to support the undertaking of the Scrutiny Referral into the Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's (HCFE) On-Site Nursery Facility (Scrutiny Manager)

Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) Scrutiny Referral:

9.3 Draft Formal Response to the 'Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) Scrutiny Referral (Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee).

10. **CALL-IN REQUESTS**

11. **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

FOR INFORMATION

- i) **Date of Next Meeting Friday 15th September 2006, commencing at 2.00pm in Committee Room B at the Civic Centre**

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

4th August 2006

Present:

Councillor: Marjorie James (In the Chair)

Councillors: Rob Cook, Mary Fleet, Steve Gibbon, Gerard Hall, Pauline Laffey, Ann Marshall, Arthur Preece, Jane Shaw, Steve Wallace, and Edna Wright.

Resident Representatives:
Evelyn Leck and Linda Shields.

Also Present Councillor Victor Tumilty, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation
Caroline Tyrrell, Audit Commission
Lesley Hall, Hartlepool Community Network

Officers: Stuart Green, Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development)
Graham Frankland, Head of Procurement and Property Services
Chris Little, Assistant Financial Officer
Geoff Thompson, Head of Regeneration
Adrian Hurst, Principal Environmental Health Officer
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

31. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caroline Barker, Harry Clouth, John Marshall, Gerald Wistow and resident representative Joan Smith.

32. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

33. Minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2006

Confirmed.

34. Portfolio Holder's Response to the Overspend on the Headland Town Square Development Scrutiny Referral *(Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation and the Head of Procurement and Property Services)*

The Portfolio Holder and Culture, Leisure and Transportation and the Head of Procurement and Property Services jointly presented a report that provided Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with feedback on the recommendations from the investigation into the Overspend on the Headland Town Square Development, which was reported to Council on 13th April 2006. The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that a further progress report would be produced for the Committee's consideration six months after the Final Report was considered by Council to enable Members to monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

It was noted that the recommendations made by Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee had been accepted and embraced where appropriate.

Decision

That the Portfolio Holder and the Head of Procurement and Property Services were thanked for their report and the content of the appended action plan together with the progress made upon the delivery of the approved recommendations were noted.

35. Portfolio Holder's Response to HMS Trincomalee Trust Scrutiny Referral *(Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation, Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) and Assistant Director (Community Services))*

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Transportation and the Assistant Director (Community Services) jointly presented the report which provided Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee with feedback on the recommendations from the investigation into the HMS Trincomalee Trust, which was reported to Council on 13th April 2006. The Portfolio Holder informed the Committee that a further progress report would be produced for the Committee's consideration six months after the Final Report was considered by Council to enable Members to monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

It was noted that the inquiry had been very positive with the relationship between the Trust and the Council being cemented and improved. The Trust also now had a robust funding strategy in place.

Decision

That the Portfolio Holder and the key officers in attendance were thanked for their report and the content of the appended action plan together with the progress made upon the delivery of the approved recommendations were noted

36. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews from Council, Executive Members and Non Executive Members

No items.

37. Forward Plan (*Scrutiny Manager*)

The Scrutiny Manager submitted a report seeking consideration as to whether any item within the Executive's Forward Plan August 2006 to November 2006 should be considered by this Committee or referred to a particular Scrutiny Forum.

Decision

There were no items to be considered further and the plan was noted.

38. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents

No items.

39. Consideration of financial monitoring/corporate reports -

Review of Internal Audit Inspection Report (*Chief Financial Officer*)

The representative from the Audit Commission and the Assistant Chief Financial Officer jointly presented a report which outlined that Audit Commission's Review of the Internal Audit Report.

The Committee were informed that the Audit Commission was satisfied that the Council had the appropriate constitutional and management arrangements were in place for its Internal Audit Service and that they had been able to place reliance upon the quality and content of the work of the Internal Audit Team.

Discussion ensued on areas where improvements were to be made such as the need of an improved risk assessment process to be introduced, the introduction of monitoring arrangements for the inspections undertaken and the need to implement the Corporate staff appraisals process within the Section.

Decision

The report was noted.

40. **Strengthening Communities Best Value Review – Draft Improvement Plan** (*Head of Regeneration*)

The Head of Regeneration presented a report which outlined the Council's contribution to Strengthening Communities, based around the aim and objectives for this theme contained within the Community Strategy. Members were requested to consider and comment on the Draft Strategic Improvement Plan for the Best Value Review into the Strengthening Communities theme.

The comprehensive nature of the report was commented upon by the Committee and a discussion then took place in which the following points were raised:

Compact – Members supported the action contained within the Improvement Plan Schedule, attached by way of appendix, (Ref 4) that the Compact needed to be re-launched as a high priority. It was noted that the report overall was an appropriate starting point for doing this in partnership with the community sector.

Community Portal – Members felt there should be more integration with the community sector with regard to the development of the Community Portal - or its equivalent (Annexe A of the appendix referred)

Resident Representatives – It was requested that the need for a resident representative training programme be carried through as an action into the Improvement Plan Schedule (Annexe A of the appendix referred).

Promoting and Encouraging Volunteers – It was noted that from autumn of this year the Department of Work and Pensions were introducing changes to the way benefits were calculated for volunteers who receive expenses. The Committee acknowledged that this would have a detrimental affect on the decision to become a volunteer and that a letter be sent to the Department of Work and Pensions and to Iain Wright, MP to this effect.

Decision

That a letter be sent to Cabinet requesting that an investigation was undertaken into what impact the changes to the allocation of DWP benefits for volunteers would have and that representations are made to the DWP.

41. **Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) Scrutiny Referral – Progress Report** (*Joint report of the Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) and the Scrutiny Manager*)

The Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) and the Scrutiny Manager jointly presented a report that provided an overview of the work undertaken to date by CORWM in order for the Committee to indicate its preferred course of action in response to the Scrutiny Referral agreed by Council on 13th April 2006.

Based on the information shared with the Committee jointly by the Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) and the Principal Environmental Officer, Members felt that there was clearly no immediate need or opportunity for the Council to comment in response to a consultation process, although it was felt that it would be advantageous to make CORWM's detailed report and recommendations the subject of a Members' Seminar.

The Committee agreed that by holding a Members' Seminar, all Members would be suitably informed to assist any discussions and responses to future consultation opportunities.

Discussion ensued in relation to the arrangements for the proposed Members' Seminar and Members were of the view :-

- (a) That the Seminar be repeated on an evening to accommodate those Elected Members with work commitments;
- (b) That representation from CORWM be in attendance (where possible); and
- (c) That the Seminar be held at the earliest opportunity in September 2006, although it was acknowledged that the recommendation of a Members' Seminar was subject to endorsement by Full Council on 14 September 2006.

Decision

- i) That in response to the Scrutiny Referral, the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee recommends to Council that the Authority holds a Members Seminar on this issue in accordance with the organisational arrangements outlined above; and

- ii) That the formal response to be submitted to Council on 14 September 2006 be considered in draft format at the next meeting of this Committee on 1 September 2006 and if possible provide Members with an indication of the proposed dates.

42. Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee – Progress Report *(Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee)*

The Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee presented a report that updated Members on the progress made to date by this Committee since the start of the 2006/07 Municipal Year. It was highlighted that this was the first year that Annual Scrutiny Work Programme was finalised before the end of June 2006 and this was seen as good practice for future years.

The report outlined the work programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee for 2006/07 as agreed by this Committee on 30th June 2006 together with general Overview and Scrutiny issues.

Members were asked to note that the next joint Cabinet/Scrutiny Event was proposed for 21st September 2006, and confirmation would be despatched to Members in the near future.

Decision

That the report was noted.

43. Children's Services Scrutiny Forum – Progress Report *(Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum)*

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny forum presented a report that updated Members of the progress made to date of the work of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum. Since the last progress report to this Committee on 7th April 2006, it was reported that an inquiry had commenced into 'Boys Achievement – Bridging the Gap'. It was noted that at the next meeting of the Forum, evidence would be received from national and regional bodies on the factors affecting boys' achievement and the strategies/models identified to address the gender gap. Visits to a number of schools within Hartlepool and another local authority as a benchmarking exercise were also arranged.

Decision

That the report was noted.

44. Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum – Progress Report *(Chair of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum)*

In the absence of the Chair of Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum, the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee informed the Committee of the progress made to date of the Adult and Community Services and Health Scrutiny Forum.

Members were informed that since the Forum's annual work programme had been approved on 30th June 2006, the Forum had been involved with the following issues:

- Reconfiguration of PCTs – Teesside
- Acute Services Review – Darzi
- Scrutiny Investigation into Social Prescribing

Decision

That the report was noted.

45. Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum – Progress Report *(Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum)*

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum presented a report that updated Members on the progress made to date by the Forum. Since the Forum's last progress report to this Committee on 7th April 2006, the following was on target to complete the Scrutiny Referral from Cabinet into Hartlepool's Public Convenience Provision and had also recently considered a progress/monitoring report on Hartlepool's Local Bus Service Provision, a former scrutiny investigation undertaken during the last Municipal Year.

Decision

That the report was noted.

46. Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum – Progress Report *(Chair of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum)*

The Chair of the Regeneration and Planning Services Scrutiny Forum presented a report that updated Members on the progress made to date by the Forum. Since the Forum's last progress report to this Committee on 7th April 2006, an investigation into 'Railway Approaches' had commenced. The Chair confirmed that a site visit was due to be undertaken by Forum

Members approaching the town from both the north and south. This was intended to give Members and officers a better understanding of the key 'problem spots' and areas of good practice on the way into Hartlepool.

Decision

That the report was noted.

47. **Scoping Report – Rossmere Learner Pool (Council and Portfolio Holder Referral)** (*Scrutiny Manager*)

The Scrutiny Manager presented a report with proposals for Members of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee for their investigation into the closure of Rossmere Pool, which was referred to this Committee by Council on 3rd February 2005 and subsequently by the Joint Liveability and Children's Services Portfolio on 24th February 2005.

Members recalled that at a meeting of this Committee held on 10 March 2006, consideration was given to the progress of the two Scrutiny Referrals at which point Members agreed to postpone the investigation until this current Municipal Year.

The Scrutiny Manager advised the Committee that since the actual dates of the Scrutiny Referrals, a considerable amount of time had elapsed. In addition to this there had been a high turnover of staff with responsibilities for this issue, therefore to undertake the two Scrutiny Referrals in accordance with the original Terms of Reference would be problematic. Consequently, in responding to the two mandatory Scrutiny Referrals, a combined alternative Overall Aim of the Referral and Terms of Reference for the undertaking of the investigation were suggested as follows:-

The overall aim of the Scrutiny Referral was to determine the circumstances leading to the closure of Rossmere Pool and the proposed future use of the site.

The proposed Terms of Reference were

- To gain an understanding of the circumstances leading to the closure of Rossmere Pool
- To determine the Council's policy around health and safety in relation to the maintenance of Rossmere Pool
- To establish the current and future proposals in relation to the Rossmere Pool site

The timetable for the review was as follows:

- 4th August 2006 – Consideration of Scoping Report

- 15th September 2006 – Presentation of evidence and formulation of Committee's views
- 26th October 2006 – Consideration of the Final Report by Council.

The Scrutiny Manager discussed the possibility of a Site Visit which if possible would include entry to the building (subject to health and safety) and Members were invited to contact the Scrutiny Manager if they felt this would be beneficial.

Decision

That the proposed Overall Aim of the Scrutiny Referral, Terms of Reference and Timetable be agreed.

48. Call-In Requests

No items.

49. Scrutiny Topic Referral From Council – ‘Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education’s On-site Nursery Facility’ *(Scrutiny Manager)*

The Scrutiny Manager submitted a report to notify Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, that at a meeting of Full Council held on 27 July 2006, it was resolved that; the decision of Hartlepool College of Further Education (HCFE) to close their on-site nursery facility, known as First Steps be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Function to enable a full and extensive scrutiny investigation to be undertaken without undue delay. Emphasising the importance of listening to the views and obtaining evidence from the HCFE and students who currently use the on-site nursery facility.

Decision

That given the Overview and Scrutiny Function had a mandatory obligation to undertake the Scrutiny Referral without undue delay, it was agreed that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee would undertake the referral, as opposed to re-directing it to the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum due the limited capacity within its Work Programme.

50. Scoping Report – ‘Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education’s On-site Nursery Facility (Council Referral) (Scrutiny Manager)

In ensuring that the Scrutiny Referral into the Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education’s On-Site Nursery Facility was undertaken without undue delay, the Scrutiny Manager submitted a report which outlined the proposed overall aim of the Scrutiny Referral, terms of reference, potential areas of enquiry, sources of evidence and the timetable for the undertaking of the investigation.

The Committee was informed that the overall aim of the Scrutiny Referral was to gain an understanding of the circumstances and process leading to the decision of the HCFE to close their on-site nursery facility known as ‘First Steps’ and to explore any possible options which the HCFE had available for the retention of such facilities.

The proposed Terms of the Reference were as follows:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of the circumstances and process leading to the decision of the HCFE to close their on-site nursery facility with particular reference to marketing, usage and demand;
- (b) To explore what options the HCFE considered to enable the continuation of the on site nursery facility with particular reference to funding issues and further marketing; and
- (c) To examine the impact of the loss of such facility in relation to those parents or carers using the facility.

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that two additional meeting dates of this Committee had been identified for 11 August 2006 at 2.00 pm and 1 September 2006 at 4.00 pm, however, following consultation with the HCFE, it was identified that the Principal of HCFE who had indicated that he would lead the HCFE’s input to the inquiry, would not be available on 11 August 2006. Therefore the proposed meeting for 11 August would no longer go ahead, however the additional meeting of this Committee proposed for 1st September 2006 would.

In response to the various questions from the general public, further concern was expressed with regard to holding the meeting after the College had made the nursery staff redundant on 26 August 2006. In response to the concerns of the public, the Chair informed all present that whilst the Hartlepool College of Further Education had no mandatory obligation to be involved in the investigation, the Principal of the HCFE was keen to personally be involved to ensure that the HCFE fully co-operated in the process. The Chair further explained that external organisations had the freedom to choose whom, they felt was the most appropriate representative to attend and that the Council had no influence or statutory power to prevent

the closure, even if it had been possible to hold a meeting before 26 August 2006.

In light of such discussions, Members of the Committee felt that due to reasons beyond the Council's control, it was crucial to the investigation that the Principal of the HCFE was in attendance and therefore supported the proposal to hold the additional meeting of the Committee on 1 September 2006.

Further discussion ensued on the proposed witnesses to attend on 1 September 2006 and it was agreed that provision be made for the following to attend (subject to availability):-

- (a) Iain Wright MP;
- (b) Principal of the HCFE and the Assistant Principal due to his experience with regard to the operation management of nursery;
- (c) Parents of children who attended the nursery;
- (d) Staff of the Nursery;
- (e) Members of the Public;
- (f) Ward Councillors;
- (g) Learning and Skills Council (subject to availability); and a
- (h) Representative from the Authority's Children's Services Department

In addition to the proposed list of the witnesses, Members felt that subject to availability, the following information would prove helpful to the investigation on 1 September 2006:

- Details of alternative nursery places and funding arrangements available to enable students to use other creche/nursery facilities within Hartlepool;
- A copy of the waiting list for the HCFE's Nursery and the projections for future usage;
- Statistics for the numbers of children in the HCFE's Nursery, their ages and the category of user (ie child of student, child of lecturer, or other etc);
- A copy of the latest Ofsted Inspection Report of the HCFE's First Steps Nursery;
 - Details of the number of other nurseries in Hartlepool, that have received a "very good" Ofsted inspection outcome.
 - Details of the number of other nurseries within Hartlepool that provide a term-time only facility;
- A copy of the HCFE's 5 Year Development Plan of HCFE (up to 2009);
- Any documentation that relates to the reduction of funding from the LSC to the HCFE; and a
- Schedule of Planning Permissions Granted to the HCFE over the last five years

In drawing the debate to a close the Chair concluded that Members were to note that the Committee did not have the power to insist on the nursery being re-opened, but could request that the information

used by HCFE to make this decision, was provided publicly with a view to the Committee exploring any possible alternatives that could be available to retain the provision.

Decision

That the proposed Overall Aim of the Scrutiny Referral, Terms of Reference and Timetable be agreed;

That arrangements be made for the key witnesses to be invited to attend the additional meeting on 1 September 2006 together with the provision of the additional documentation as outlined earlier; and

That an Informal Meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee be held at 3.00 pm on 1 September 2006, in preparation for the undertaking of the investigation at 4.00 pm.

51. Proposed Scrutiny Training and Development Programme for 2006/07 (*Scrutiny Manager*)

The Scrutiny Manager presented a report which outlined the proposed Scrutiny Training and Development Programme for 2006/07 to be facilitated by Birmingham University (INLOGOV) due to the unavailability of last year's service provider.

The Scrutiny Manager further reported that in addition to the five themed sessions secured with INLOGOV, additional training was to be provided on Health Scrutiny related issues and Media/TV skills for Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs.

Members commented on the success of last year's training programme and felt that the proposed Scrutiny Training and Development Programme for 2006/07 certainly built on last year's success and would equip Scrutiny Members with additional skills to support them in their challenging role.

Decision

That the Scrutiny Training and Development Programme for the 2006/07 Municipal Year be endorsed.

MARJORIE JAMES

CHAIR

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

1 September 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Manager

Subject: Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's On-site Nursery Facility Scrutiny Referral – Evidence from Key Witnesses

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of this Committee that arrangements have been made for key witnesses to be invited to attend this meeting, to provide evidence as part of the process for the undertaking of the Scrutiny Referral into the HCFE's decision to close their on-site nursery facility.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Committee held on 4 August 2006, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Committee for the undertaking of the mandatory Scrutiny Referral.

2.2 Consequently, arrangements have been made for key individuals to attend this meeting to submit evidence to the Committee, in the following order of priority:-

- (a) Verbal Evidence from the Town's MP, Iain Wright;
- (b) Verbal Evidence (supported by a presentation and background papers) from the HCFE's Principal/Chief Executive, David Waddington;
- (c) Verbal Evidence from Ward Councillors who have expressed an interest in the undertaking of the Scrutiny Referral;

- (d) Verbal Evidence from the Authority's Childcare Co-ordinator with regard to the Authority's involvement and to address issues where points of clarification are required;
- (e) Verbal Evidence from Students and Parents whose children attended the First Steps Nursery (spokesperson to be confirmed);
- (f) Verbal Evidence from the former staff of the First Steps Nursery (subject to availability and confirmation); and
- (g) Verbal Evidence from Members of the Public.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members of the Committee consider the views of the key witnesses in attendance in line with their questioning strategy determined earlier.

Contact Officers: - Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523 087
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Report of the Scrutiny Manager entitled 'Scoping Report - Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's On-Site Nursery Facility (Council Referral)' presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 4 August 2006.
- (ii) Minutes of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 4 August 2006.

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

1 September 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Manager

Subject: Provision of Additional Information / Key Documentation to Support the Undertaking of the Scrutiny Referral into the Closure of Hartlepool College of Further Education's (HCFE) On-Site Nursery Facility

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide the additional information and key documentation, as requested by this Committee at their last meeting held on 4 August 2006, to assist Members in the undertaking of the Scrutiny Referral into the HCFE's decision to close their on-site nursery facility.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Members will recall that at the last meeting of this Committee held on 4 August 2006, the Terms of Reference and key witnesses to be invited to participate during the undertaking of the mandatory Scrutiny Referral were agreed.

2.2 In addition to this, Members agreed that where possible and subject to the necessary consents, additional information and key documentation be obtained, to assist Members in the undertaking of the Scrutiny Referral during this meeting. As such, the below -mentioned additional information and key documentation are attached as appendices to this report:-

- (a) Statistics on the day care provision of nurseries in Hartlepool (**Appendix A refers**) that includes;
 - (i) The number of registered day care nursery full time equivalent places verse vacant places across the town;
 - (ii) The number of providers that have student parents using their provision across of the town;

- (iii) The number of day nursery providers who provide term-time places together with their retainer costs across the town;
 - (iv) The OFSTED Inspection Grades of all 14 day care nurseries across the town; and
 - (v) The provision of alternative childcare across the town such as childminders and out of school clubs.
- (b) The most recent OFSTED Inspection Report of the HCFE's First Steps Nursery undertaken on 27 January 2004 (**Appendix B refers**);
 - (c) Schedule of Planning Permission Granted to the HCFE over the last five years (**Appendix C refers**);
 - (d) Scoping Report – Closure of HCFE's On-Site Nursery Facility' agreed by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 4 August 2006 (**Appendix D refers**); and
 - (e) Attendance of a representative / or correspondence from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Following discussions with the LSC it should be noted that the LSC are not permitted to discuss the financial position of an individual college, in this instance the HCFE, as earlier requested by Members. **As such arrangements have been made for correspondence from LSC to be circulated during this meeting that relates solely to the regional funding position/pattern.**

2.3 In addition to the above, the Committee's request for specific information relating to the HCFE's First Steps Nursery, as outlined below, has been forwarded to the HCFE, which subject to their agreement, will be included within their verbal and written submission of evidence during this meeting:-

- (a) A copy of the waiting list for the HCFE's Nursery and the projections for future usage;
- (b) Statistics for the numbers of children in the HCFE's Nursery, their ages and the category of user (ie child of student, child of lecturer, or other etc);
- (c) Any documentation that relates to the reduction of funding from the LSC to the HCFE; and a

- (d) A copy of the HCFE's 5 Year Development Plan of HCFE (up to 2009).

3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 That Members of the Committee:-

- (a) Consider the content of this report during the undertaking of this Scrutiny Referral; and
- (b) Having considered the information during Agenda Items 9.1 and 9.2, determines whether sufficient evidence has been gathered to formulate the Committee's findings and proposed recommendations, to form the basis of the Final Report to be presented to Full Council on 14 September 2006.

Contact Officers: - Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523 087
Email: charlotte.burnham@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

DAYCARE PROVISION IN HARTLEPOOL

SNAPSHOT OF STATUS OF DAY NURSERIES AUGUST 2006

Ward	Provider Name	Reg Places	Places Available	Student Parents	Term Time Provision	Retainer per week	Date of last Inspection	OFSTED Grade
Grange	Lonsdale Nursery Limited	55	16	Y	considering	X	01/05	Good
Rift Hse	Masefield Road Nursery	110	95	Y	Y	£10	12/04	Good
Dyke Hse	Chatham House	40	30	Y	considering	X	02/05	Good
Stranton	Playmates Day Nursery	80	37	Y	Y	£24	03/05	Good
St Hilda	Kiddikins Nursery	53	39	Y	Y	foc	01/04	Satisfactory
Park	Aldersyde Day Nursery	75	26	Y	N	X	01/05	Good
Owton	Manor Residents Ass'n	15	5	Y	Y	varies	12/04	Good
Seaton	Scallywags Day Nursery	62	50	Y	Y	£10	Not yet been inspected	
Throston	Kiddicare Day Nursery	52	47	Y	N	X	05/06	Inadequate
Brus	Rainbow Day Nursery	58	18	Y	N	X	11/05	Good
Stranton	Footprints Day Nursery	43	11	Y	Y	50% fees	12/05	Good
Rossmere	Bush Babies	32	9	Y	Y	50% fees	07/05	Good
Brus	Starfish @ SJV	66	61	Y	Y	£10	10/05	Good
Stranton	Little People Nursery	61	5	Y	N	X	01/06	Good
Total	14	802	449	14/14	8/14			

Registered Places/Places Available

Registered Places refer to full time equivalent Ofsted places available in the setting

The number of places available reflect the full time equivalent places currently available

The total number of registered places in the town is 802

The total number of **available** registered places are 449 (56%)

Term Time Provision

Of the 14 daycare providers, 8 (57%) offer term time only places in addition to their all year round care

Taking available places into account (307) this equates to 68% of places available across the town

All nurseries with the exception of one offering term time only provision, charge a small retainer to 'retain' that place

Of the 8 nurseries offering term time only only provision, 3 (38%) are dassed as an 'excellent' nursery (see below for explanation)

Student Parents

All of the 14 daycare providers either have, or will have students using their provision as part of their customer base
This includes those who have childcare subsidised through Care2Learn, Leamer Support Funds from HCFE, WDF etc

OFSTED Inspection Dates/Grades

First Steps Nursery has been described by parents as an 'excellent' nursery. There are no excellent nurseries in Hartlepool
Based on the last inspection reports, 6 (43%) of the 14 daycare providers obtained the highest possible grade for childcare
One provider has not yet been inspected as they have recently opened up

Childminders

Childminders offer flexible care and can take up to 6 full time equivalent places (up to 8 yrs of age)
There are currently 90 registered childminders operating in Hartlepool
Figures collated on a monthly basis have identified 25 (28%) as having no vacancies (July 2006)
The remainder (72%) have available places, all of which offer flexible care

Out of School Clubs (breakfast, afterschool, wraparound, holiday)

Out of School Clubs generally offer term time care for nursery and school age children
There are 45 providers offering a variety of out of school childcare (25 registered, 20 non-registered)

OFSTED Inspection Grading

Before April 2005

Quality judgements for childcare:

Good

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory.

From April 2005

Quality judgements for childcare:

Outstanding

Good

Satisfactory

Inadequate



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 321724

DfES Number: 581023

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 27/01/2004
Inspector Name Elaine Marie McDonnell

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care
Setting Name First Steps Day Nursery
Setting Address Brunswick Street
Hartlepool
TS24 7NT

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Hartlepool College Of Further Education

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Hartlepool College Of Further Education
Address Stockton Street
Hartlepool
Cleveland
TS24 7NT

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

First Steps Day Nursery has been registered since January 1993, it operates from a purpose built ground floor building close to the centre of Hartlepool. It is managed by Hartlepool College of Further Education and operates on a term time only basis. The provision serves both the local and the wider community and is very close to the main college building. There are three play rooms and two outdoor play areas. There are currently 55 children on role including seven funded three year olds, and one funded four year old. Fourteen members of staff are employed at the nursery, some on a part-time basis. All staff hold a relevant childcare qualifications. There are currently no children with English as an additional language attending the setting and no children with special educational needs. Staff receive valued support from the EYDCP to help them plan and provide education for children.

How good is the Day Care?

First Steps Day Nursery provides good quality care for children. All staff have a childcare qualification and have access to ongoing training and development. Good use is made of available space and resources, and staffing ratios are high. Most staff have a food hygiene certificate, half of the staff have had training in child protection and all have first aid although most of these are first aid at work. Children are grouped appropriately depending on their age or development and are cared for by consistent staff. There are two outdoor play areas and a well equipped multi-sensory room within the college, which children access on a regular basis. The environment is very warm and welcoming allowing children to feel a strong sense of belonging. Most toys are well maintained, all activities are set out attractively and all are accessible for the children. All documentation required for the efficient and safe management of the provision is available and is well kept.

Staff have a good understanding of safety issues and take positive steps to promote safety and prevent accidents, comprehensive risk assessments are carried out. Staff practice and promote good hygiene practises, which children have developed. Staff act in the best interests of all the children with regards to illness. Children receive nutritious and varied meals and snacks, and meal times are relaxed, social

occasions. All children are included and valued, and their needs are met. The provision works closely with outside agencies to assess and meet the individual needs of the children.

Children have easy access to a wide range of activities that promote learning in all areas of development. Staff observe and record what children do and use this information to inform the next stage of play and learning. Staff value and promote positive behaviour and as a result children's behaviour is good, they relate well to each other and to staff.

Partnership with parents is excellent.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed.

What is being done well?

- Staffing ratios are high and all staff have a childcare qualification.
- Staff, space and resources are used effectively to meet the needs of the children.
- Children have good access to a broad range of activities that promote learning in all areas of development.
- The environment is very warm and welcoming resulting in children having a strong sense of belonging.
- All staff have a good understanding of safety issues and are vigilant.
- Good hygiene procedures are practiced by children and staff.
- Children receive healthy and nutritious meals and snacks and meal times are relaxed, social occasions.
- All children are included and valued, staff are aware of their individual requirement.
- Children's behaviour is good, they relate well to each other and to staff.

An aspect of outstanding practice:

The setting works very well in partnership with parents. Parents are kept fully informed of their child's development and progress. Lots of information about the setting and about other general child care issues is made readily available for parents. All parents interviewed made the same comments; that staff are very friendly and approachable, their children thoroughly enjoying coming to the nursery, and all are very happy with the care their children receive.

What needs to be improved?

- the extending of some policy documents;

- children's possible access to the store cupboard.

Outcome of the inspection

Good

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
6	Ensure children do not access the storeroom.
12	Extend the complaints procedure to include the address and telephone number of the regulator and develop a procedure to be followed in the event of a child being lost.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

First Steps Day Nursery offers a very warm and welcoming environment where children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. Children are making very good progress in all areas of learning, they seem to have a strong sense of 'belonging' within the nursery. Children have access to a broad range of activities that promotes learning in all areas of development, they are interested, excited and motivated to learn.

Staff work well together and have established very good relationships with children and parents. Teaching is very good and an effective key worker system is in operation. Staff plan and prepare activities well, and these are adapted for individual children and are evaluated. Observations of children and activities are used to inform the next stage of play and learning.

Good leadership results in the nursery running smoothly, all staff having access to ongoing training and development. All staff are committed to providing the best quality care and education for children, they are positive and friendly.

The setting works very well in partnership with parents, parents are kept fully informed of their child's development and progress and are kept informed of current topics their children are studying. All parents interviewed commented that staff are very friendly and approachable, and stated that their children thoroughly enjoyed attending the nursery.

What is being done well?

- Children are very happy and settled in the nursery, they are interested, excited and motivated to learn.
- Children receive regular opportunities for interesting discussion in small groups.
- Staff provide a varied programme of purposeful activities that are well planned and paced.
- Children enjoy good relationships with staff and peers.
- The setting is well managed and staff have access to ongoing training and development.
- Staff value and promote positive behaviour and as a result children's behaviour is good.
- The relationship with parents is a very strong point of the nursery.

What needs to be improved?

- There were no significant weaknesses highlighted during the inspection, however there are two 'points for consideration' for staff;
- Extend planned activities in communication language and literacy to develop children's understanding of the shape and sound of letters.
- Extend planned activities in mathematical development to help children recognise numerals and develop adding and subtracting skills.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The nursery has continued to make very good progress since the last inspection. All activities and resources are well organised and are now easily accessible for the children.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are interested, excited and motivated to learn, they can sit quietly when necessary and older children can concentrate for extended periods, e.g. making something specific from play dough and listening to instructions. Children's behaviour is good, they are regularly praised and encouraged by staff. Children have very good relationships with peers and staff, there was fun and laughter in the nursery and the children seem to have a strong sense of belonging.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children communicate well with staff and peers and confidently speak to other visitors to the nursery. They receive regular opportunities to engage in conversation in small groups and listen well to instructions and requests. Children's vocabulary is extended by learning, repeating and discussing new words and sounds.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are beginning to count in a familiar context, e.g. dinner plates and cups. They can understand many shapes and can compare size. Children can understand some concepts e.g. inside, outside, full and empty.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children receive many opportunities to explore and investigate their environment through interesting topics. They receive regular opportunities at circle time to discuss events in their lives and the lives of other family members. Children are beginning to learn a sense of time through daily routines and discussion, e.g. yesterday, today, tomorrow, lunch-time. Children have opportunities to learn about the cultures and beliefs of others, in fun and interesting ways.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children receive regular opportunities both indoors and outdoors to develop large physical control and coordination. They are beginning to recognise the importance of staying healthy by learning the reason different hygiene routines are practiced, e.g. brushing of teeth after lunch. Children have many opportunities to develop fine motor skills and hand and eye coordination with the good range of resources readily available within the nursery, e.g. drawing, painting, pouring and construction.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children receive many opportunities to explore different media in fun ways. They are beginning to use their imagination in role play and music. Children have regular opportunities to explore their senses when using the well equipped multi sensory room.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT

There are no significant weaknesses to report, but considerations should be given to improving the following:

- There were no significant weaknesses highlighted during the inspection, however there are two 'points for consideration' for staff;
- Introduce more planned activities to promote children's understanding of the shape and sounds of letters.
- Introduce more planned activities for children to recognise numerals and develop adding and subtracting skills.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.

APPENDIX C

**SCHEDULE OF PLANNING PERMISSIONS GRANTED TO THE HCFE
FROM JANUARY 2001 TO PRESENT**

Discounting applications for advertisements, there are only two relevant applications. These are as follows:

H/FUL/2002/0773 - Elevational alterations to gymnasium block (associated with its conversion to provide a higher education centre for health and care). This was approved on 23 January 2003 but has not been implemented. The permission will expire on 23 January 2007.

H/FUL/2005/5875 - Alterations and enclosure of courtyard to form internet cafe and store and emergency stairway. This was approved on 15 December 2005 but has not been implemented. The permission will expire on 15 December 2008.

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

4 August 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Manager

Subject: SCOPING REPORT – CLOSURE OF HARTLEPOOL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION'S ON-SITE NURSERY FACILITY (COUNCIL REFERRAL)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To make proposals to Members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee for their investigation into the decision of Hartlepool College of Further Education to close its on-site nursery facility, known as First Steps, which was referred to this Committee by Council on 27 July 2006.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the meeting of Council held on 27 July 2006, Members unanimously approved the following resolution:-

That the Council resolves to scrutinise the decision to close the nursery of the College of Further Education in the context of gaining a fuller understanding of the College's underlying financial position and any alternative source of funding;

That a letter be sent to the governing body of the Hartlepool College of Further Education (HCFE) informing them of the Council's resolution and concerns expressed during the meeting and requesting that the College puts on hold its action to close the nursery until the Scrutiny process has concluded'.

- 2.2 During the meeting there was considerable debate on this issue and after much discussion Members stressed the importance of the matter being referred to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, to enable a full and extensive investigation to be undertaken, emphasising the importance of listening to the views and obtaining evidence from the HCFE and students who currently use the on-site nursery facility.
- 2.3 Consequently this matter is being considered at today's meeting of this Committee, to ensure the investigation is undertaken without undue delay.

3. SETTING THE SCENE

- 3.1 The HCFE currently offers on-site child minding facilities for children aged 6 weeks to 5 years old through their First Steps Nursery both to HCFE students and to members of the public during term time.
- 3.2 The on-site nursery is able to accommodate 48 child places, however, the occupancy of the nursery during the last 2005/06 financial year has been averaging at approximately 47% of its total capacity. Of that 47%, 10% of the total capacity was taken up by students of the HCFE.
- 3.3 Since 2003, the HCFE has not been able to use the nursery as a training facility as unqualified individuals could not be given the responsibility for looking after children, consequently, increasing the HCFE's staffing costs for the nursery.
- 3.4 The First Steps Nursery has had an increasing deficit despite the many efforts over the last five years to turn it around. During recent years the HCFE has used its growth potential to generate small surpluses that has enabled the subsidising of the nursery.
- 3.5 The HCFE's Board of Governors took the decision to not re-open the nursery on 29 August 2006 on the basis of the financial position and after considerable effort by the HCFE to find other means of retaining the on-site nursery facility.
- 3.6 In addition to the above, the HCFE are currently facing considerable financial pressures in relation to the substantial deficit forecast during the 2005/06 financial year and the projected shortfall of future funding, therefore to establish a stable and sustainable financial base, it is expected that 40 redundancies, 13 of which are nursery staff, will be made during their current financial year.

4. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REFERRAL

- 4.1 The overall aim of the Scrutiny Referral is to gain an understanding of the circumstances and process leading to the decision of the HCFE to close their on-site nursery facility known as 'First Steps' and to explore any possible options which the HCFE had available for the retention of such facility.

APPENDIX D

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY REFERRAL

5.1 The proposed Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Referral are as outlined below:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of the circumstances and process leading to the decision of the HCFE to close their on-site nursery facility with particular reference to marketing, usage and demand;
- (b) To explore what options the HCFE considered to enable the continuation of the on site nursery facility with particular reference to funding issues and further marketing;
- (c) To examine the impact of the loss of such facility in relation to those parents or carers using the facility.

6. POTENTIAL AREAS OF ENQUIRY / SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

6.1 Members of the Committee can request a range of evidential and comparative information throughout the Scrutiny Referral.

6.2 The Committee can invite a variety of people to attend to assist in the forming of a balanced and focused range of recommendations as follows:-

- (a) Key Representatives from the HCFE;
- (b) HCFE students who use the First Steps Nursery;
- (c) Ward Councillors; and
- (d) Members of the Public.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

7.1 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the Scrutiny process and paragraph 6.2, details who the Committee could involve. However, thought will need to be given to the structure in the way that the Committee wishes to encourage those views.

8. PROPOSED TIMETABLE FOR THE SCRUTINY REFERRAL

8.1 The proposed timetable for the undertaking of this review is as outlined below:-

4 August 2006 – Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee commencing at 2.00 pm in Committee Room B, Civic Centre: Consideration of Notification of Council Referral and the Scoping Report.

(Please note the additional meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to be held on 11 August 2006 has been CANCELLED following the unavailability of key witnesses)

1 September 2006 – Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee commencing at 4.00 pm in Committee Room B, Civic Centre (Additional meeting) – Evidence from representatives of the HCFE, students who use the nursery facility, members of the public and Elected Members.

Formulation of the Committee's views with delegated approval being granted to the Chair to agree the finalised content of the Final Report for submission to Council.

14 September 2006: Full Council commencing at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre - Consideration of the Final Report of this Committee into the Closure of the HCFE's On Site Nursery Facility 'First Steps'.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee agrees the proposed Terms of Reference together with the suggested timetable for the undertaking of this referral as outlined in paragraphs 4, 5 and 8 of this report.

August 2006

Contact Officer:- Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
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Hartlepool Borough Council
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 July 2006.

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

1 September 2006



Report of: Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

Subject: DRAFT FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE 'COMMITTEE ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT (CORWM)' SCRUTINY REFERRAL

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee's draft recommended course of action in relation to the Council's involvement in any future consultation arrangements of the work undertaken by the CORWM, referred by Full Council on 13 April 2006 to the Overview and Scrutiny Function.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At a meeting of the Council held on 13 April 2006, Members views were sought on the CORWM's recommended option(s) for the long term management of solid radioactive waste. Given the severity of the long term implications, it was agreed that it was premature to discuss the issue at the Council meeting, in advance of all relevant information being available to Members.
- 2.2 It was subsequently resolved by those Members present at the Council meeting that an officer of the Authority was to attend a further meeting in May 2006 and report back to Council with a report on all the options to allow full discussion and consultation, involving the Neighbourhood Forums and the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee (Minute 151 refers).
- 2.3 To assist Members in responding to the mandatory Scrutiny Referral, at the meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 4 August 2006, an overview of the work undertaken to date by the CORWM was provided jointly by the Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) and the Scrutiny Manager. Additional information was also provided verbally throughout the debate by the Principal Environmental Health Officer, the nominated officer who attended the event in May 2006.

3. FINDINGS

- 3.1 CORWM was appointed jointly by Ministers of the UK Government and the administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, to oversee a review of options for managing solid radioactive waste in the UK and recommend the option(s) that can provide a long-term solution, providing protection for people and the environment.
- 3.2 Members understood the importance to note that CORWM was considering different types of long term storage or disposal but was not assessing specific locations.
- 3.3 It was evident that the Committee had taken a phased approach to its work:
- (a) producing an inventory of wastes requiring management;
 - (b) identifying a long-list and then a short-list of options for managing the wastes in the long term;
 - (c) producing detailed criteria for assessing options;
 - (d) assessing the short-listed options against the criteria; and
 - (e) producing recommendations on how to manage the wastes and advice on how these could be implemented
- 3.4 Members were informed that CORWM had recently published its finalised report and recommendations on the long-term waste management option(s) to Government. It was understood that CORWM may continue in existence through to November 2006 to undertake some further work on the ways by which recommended management option(s) should be implemented.
- 3.5 In these circumstances, it was envisaged that there may, in due course be opportunities for the Council to respond to:-
- (a) the Government's response to the CORWM recommendations; and/or
 - (b) any further consultation which CORWM undertake in connection with their ongoing work on implementation.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Based on the information presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee, Members concluded that there was clearly no immediate need or opportunity for the Council to comment in response to a consultation process, although it would be advantageous to make CORWM's report and recommendations the subject of a Members' Seminar.

- 4.2 In this way, Members would be suitably informed to assist any discussions and response to future consultation opportunities.
- 4.3 With regard to the arrangements for the proposed Members Seminar, Members were of the view:-
- (a) That the Seminar be repeated on an evening to accommodate those Elected Members with work commitments;
 - (b) That representation from CORWM be invited, subject to their capacity to attend such events; and
 - (c) That the Seminar be held at the earliest opportunity.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That in response to the Scrutiny Referral, Council endorses the recommendation of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to hold a Members Seminar on this issue in accordance with the organisational arrangements outlined earlier in this report (paragraph 4.3 refers).

**COUNCILLOR MARJORIE JAMES
CHAIR OF SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

August 2006

Contact:- Charlotte Burnham – Scrutiny Manager
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:-

- (i) Decision Record of Council held on 13 April 2006.
- (ii) Joint Report of the Assistant Director (Planning and Economic Development) and the Scrutiny Manager entitled 'Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CORWM) Scrutiny Referral – Progress Report' presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 4 August 2006.
- (iii) Draft Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee entitled 'Formal Response to the 'Committee on Radioactive Waste Management

(CORWM) 'Scrutiny Referral' presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 1 September 2006.

- (iv) Minutes of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 4 August 2006 and 1 September 2006.