

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD**

10<sup>th</sup> July, 2007

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

## **Present:**

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services  
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start, Extended Services  
and Early Years Manager  
Miriam Robertson, Connexions Manager  
Paul Briggs, Assistant Director  
Pat Watson, Democratic Services Officer

## **7. Play Strategy 2006-2011** (*Director of Children's Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision

### **Purpose of report**

- (a) To seek approval of the Play Strategy 2006 – 2011.
- (b) To seek approval for submission of a portfolio of play projects to the Big Lottery.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report to the Portfolio Holder indicated that the Local Authority had been allocated a total of £297,457.46 from Big Lottery Funding through the Children's Play Initiative. There is a requirement that the Local Authority must develop a Play Strategy alongside a submission of projects. The Play Strategy at Appendix A set out the aims and principles of the Local Authority and its partners in relation to play across Hartlepool.

A Play Partnership had been established to develop the Play Strategy and monitor its effectiveness and was made up of many organisations. A membership list was provided. An action plan consisting of seven objectives was included in Appendix B. A portfolio of play projects approved by an independent grant panel was included in Appendix C.

The report identified some of the benefits of play for children and detailed the objectives that the portfolio of projects would seek to fulfil.

The report also gave an outline of:

- Consultation;
- Financial Considerations;
- Equality and Diversity considerations;

The Portfolio Holder was advised that the Play Strategy would require approval in order for the portfolio of projects to be submitted to the Big Lottery to receive Big Lottery funding.

The Portfolio Holder asked how closely the projects would be monitored. The Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager indicated that under the Big Lottery guidelines members of the Partnership would need to monitor the portfolio of projects against strict criteria. This would include numbers of children accessing the play provision, the times available for children to access and scrutinising accounts to ensure the organisations are spending the funding appropriately.

The Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager also explained the role of the Young People and Play Development Officer. The Young People and Play Development Officer will support the organisations in ensuring the play provision is of the highest quality. The quality of the provision will also be closely monitored by the Play Partnership.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased that primary schools were included in the Strategy and commented that she felt an opportunities were being missed at lunchtime and break. She accepted that lots of teachers do training with the lunch-time helpers/staff but asked if there would be any funding available to increase play provision at these times. The Director of Children's Services indicated that individual schools have their own arrangements, ie buddying, division of play-grounds etc. The Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager indicated that the issue could be highlighted in the action Plan and she would be happy to do that.

The Portfolio Holder commented on the high quality of the report and Strategy and understood the requirement to fulfil the criteria of the Big Lottery organisation.

## **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder approved:

- (a) the Play Strategy 2006 – 2011, and
- (b) the portfolio of projects to be submitted to the Big Lottery.

## **8. Revised Costings relating to the 2007/08 Capital Works Programme 2006/07 Capital Works Programme** *(Director of Children's Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-Key

### **Purpose of report**

- To seek approval for the revised list of costings relating to the 2007/08 Capital Works Programme, and
- to seek retrospective approval to the cost of specific projects included in the 2006/07 Capital Works Programme.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The report contained an update on the 2007/08 programme and Appendix 1 provided an overview of the overall programme showing the revised cost alongside the original, approved figure. The Assistant Director, Paul Briggs, gave a short verbal update on recent variations in costings.

An update on the 2006/07 was also outlined in the report and the Portfolio Holder's attention was drawn to three specific schemes that had gone significantly over their original cost estimates. These related to Brougham Primary roof-works, Manor College SEN Resource Area and Stranton Primary heating system, for which original cost estimates and final agreed prices were provided. In overall terms the increase in costs had been covered by cost reductions elsewhere in the programme. The circumstances surrounding the three schemes were also outlined in the report.

The Portfolio Holder expressed complete confidence in the Officers dealing with costing of projects and agreed to a degree of informal reporting to her when necessary, with formal quarterly reporting to Portfolio meetings.

### **Decision**

- (a) The Portfolio Holder approved the revised costings relating to the 2007/08 Programme of Works, as shown in Appendix 1, and
- (b) The Portfolio Holder gave retrospective approval to the additional costs appertaining to three schemes from the 2006/07 Programme of Works, relating to:
  - Brougham Primary roofworks;
  - Manor College SEN Resource Area, and
  - Stranton Primary heating system

## **9. Connexions Delivery Plan 2007/08 Progress Report** (Director of Children's Services)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made towards achieving actions in the Connexions Local Delivery Plan for the first quarter of 2007/08.

### **Issue(s) considered by the Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder was reminded that since the inception of Connexions in 2002, there had been a requirement for an annual Local Delivery Plan. From April 2007, Connexions' funding, delivery and responsibility for performance targets transferred to Hartlepool Borough Council. The Portfolio Holder had endorsed the Local Delivery Plan on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2007 and at that meeting updates on progress and performance had been requested.

A summary of performance and progress on actions and performance indicators in the plan was detailed in the report using a visual 'smiley faces' format. The draft delivery plan 2007/08 was attached as Appendix 1. There were no actions highlighted that were unlikely to be achieved in 2007/08. There were a handful of areas highlighted where there was some slippage in actions / targets being achieved within the timescales. Action was being taken, as outlined in the report, to address these issues.

Additional work was being undertaken to review the service's NEET (not in education, employment or training) reduction strategy; NEET performance being a key outcome in the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework.

The Director of Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder thanked the Connexions Manager for her good work whilst with Hartlepool Borough Council and wished her well in the post she would be moving to shortly.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the contents of the report.

**J A BROWN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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