

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

23rd January 2006

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services
John Collings, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Terry Maley, Planning and Implementation Officer
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

Councillor David Young

34. Local Authority Support to Foster Carers (*Director of Children's Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report was to propose ways in which Hartlepool Borough Council, in its role as corporate parents, could best support the vitally important role foster carers undertook in the delivery of services to looked after children and young people. The report presented two specific proposals, for consideration by the Portfolio Holder as to how the local authority could use its resources to best support foster carers in this role.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Planning and Implementation Officer indicated that the following proposals were discussed and fully endorsed by the Corporate Parent Forum on 29th November 2005.

- (a) to use foster carers as a source of recruitment by offering £100 to existing carers who introduce a person who was subsequently

- approved as a foster carer.
- (b) that an annual fund of £500 be created from existing budgets to cover the expense incurred by foster carers who received visits from people previously in the care of the local authority.

The Corporate Parent Forum believed the implementation of these proposals would be useful methods in attracting and retaining carers.

Fostering Network, a large national focus group who campaign on issues related to fostering, estimated that there was a national shortage of approximately 10,000 foster carers. This meant that local authorities were competing against each other, and partner agencies within the independent sector to recruit and retain a sufficient number of foster carers. This had led to the local authority planning and implementing a range of recruitment and retention techniques to ensure a sufficient stock of local foster carers for Hartlepool's looked after children.

Proposal a) – Many other local authorities had chosen to implement this initiative, although there was widespread variation on the actual amounts payable. An illustration was provided in the report that detailed some examples of what other authorities had implemented. A sum of £100 was proposed for implementation in Hartlepool as the Corporate Forum thought this would provide sufficient incentive to existing carers without being prohibitively expensive.

Proposal b) – Similarly to adults visiting their parents, it was often the case that adults visit their previous foster carers. However, the significant difference was that foster carers often had very large "extended families". It was proposed that a budget of £500 be created to cover the costs incurred by visits from children they previously cared for and this would be managed by the Head of Business Unit. If approved, the scheme would act as a pilot scheme initially to be reviewed at the end of the financial year as it was difficult to predict the levels of take up.

The Portfolio Holder indicated that proposal a) was a good way of aiding the recruiting and retaining of foster carers and would only incur costs when a foster carer was approved. With regard to proposal b), the Portfolio Holder requested that the proposed review be undertaken at the end of the 2006/2007 financial year given that it was almost the end of this financial year.

Decision

- i) That the local authorities existing foster carers be paid £100 for every new foster carer they introduce, who was subsequently approved by Panel.
- ii) That a fund of £500 be created from existing budgets to cover the expense incurred by foster carers who receive visits from children

previously in the care of the local authority, with the scheme to be reviewed at the end of the 2006/2007 financial year.

35. Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to Serve on School Governing Bodies (*Director of Children's Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To request the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services consideration and approval of the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee, in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative Governors, to serve on school governing bodies where vacancies currently and will exist in February 2006 following the expiry of terms of office and the reconstitution of one Governing Body under the School Governance Constitution (England) Regulations 2003, on 1st January 2006.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Governor Support Officer reported that applications were invited from members of the general public, elected Members and those governors whose term of office was about to expire or had expired but who wished to continue serving as a local authority representative governor.

The criteria agreed by the Council for the recruitment of local authority representative governors was as follows:

- Demonstrable interest in and commitment to education;
- A desire to support the school concerned;
- A commitment to attend regular meetings of the governing body (and committees as appropriate) and school functions generally;
- Good communication/interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work as part of a team;
- A clearly expressed willingness to participate in the governor training programme.

A schedule was attached by way of an appendix that set out details of vacancies together with applications received in respect of the vacancies. This was considered by Members of the General Purposes Sub-Committee on 14th December 2005.

The Governor Support Officer indicated that one of the governors for

Catcote School had not yet returned their form, however all governors would be requested to re-sign the appropriate documentation before undertaking their term of office.

The Portfolio Holder requested that the next report for the approval of school governors be submitted to Cabinet, as the term of office of her own appointment as a school governor was due to expire and would therefore be submitted for renewal on this report.

Decision

As detailed in the attached appendix, the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school Governing Bodies were approved.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 25th January 2006