

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

18 December 2007

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in Training Room 2, Belle Vue Community Sports and Youth Centre, Kendal Road, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services
John Collings, Assistant Director (Performance & Achievement),
Margo MacIntosh, Interim Assistant Director
Sue Johnson, Assistant Director - Planning & Service Integration,
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

23. Revised Costings for Children's Centres Capital Works *(Assistant Director – Planning and Service Integration)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the revised costings for Children's Centres Capital Works 2006/2008.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

On 6 October 2007 the Portfolio Holder approved the capital works at Kingsley Primary School for £301,050 and therefore tenders were sought for this work. The lowest amount tendered was £74,900 over the approved costs and therefore the Contract Scrutiny Panel required approval from the Portfolio Holder for the additional costs. It has been clarified by the Hartlepool Borough Council Quantity Surveyor that the additional costs are preliminaries over which we have no control and include profit margin. Funding to support this capital works programme is provided entirely through the central government grant for children's centres, extended schools and nursery education capital.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the revised costings for capital works for children's centres 2006-2008.

24. Children's Services Departmental Plan Quarter 2 Progress Report *(Assistant Director - Planning and Service Integration, Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made towards achieving Children's Services Departmental Plan actions and performance indicators (PIs) for the period to 30 September 2007.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report outlines identified actions and PIs for 2007/08 and progress was recorded as either being completed on target, likely to be completed on target or unlikely to be completed by the milestone date.

There were 19 key actions within the Departmental Plan and the only action unlikely to be achieved on target was the work with partner agencies, young people schools and families to reduce the under 18 conception rate by 55%. It was noted that progress has been made in reducing the levels of conceptions for under 16 year olds and Hartlepool is now generally in line with comparative councils for this age group. The Joint Area Review in 2006 and the recent Annual Performance Assessment both commented positively on the teenage pregnancy strategy which is in place. Further analysis is ongoing to assist in targeting the most vulnerable young people.

A significant number of performance indicators within the Children's Services Departmental Plan are reported annually, although not all at the same time during the yearly planning cycle. Annual figures are available for 11 of the 32 key PIs. Six are recorded as red:-

- Percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in Key Stage 3 results – English. This has improved and is likely to be in line with national averages although the ambitious target originally set has not been achieved.
- Percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in Key Stage 3 results – maths. This is above the national average but again the ambitious target set has not been achieved.
- Percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in Key Stage 3 results – science. This is below the national average and there is a slight decline in performance and the target will not be achieved.
- Percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in Key Stage 3 results - ICT assessment. This is also below the national average although performance has improved.

- Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 - maths. Although this is likely to be 4% above the national figure, the ambitious target of 87% is unlikely to be achieved. The School Improvement team continue to offer support and challenge to schools in Hartlepool to secure continuous improvement through the implementation of the Schools Improvement Partner services as part of the New Relationship with Schools. There is also a rigorous School Improvement Strategy which targets underperforming schools, an increased focus on improving boys' achievement especially in literacy and English across all Key Stages, and more targeted support for vulnerable and underachieving children and young people through the implementation of the National Strategies, regeneration projects etc.
- To improve early years' children's communication, social and emotional development so that by 2008, children reach a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage. The high levels of deprivation experienced by many families in Hartlepool have a direct impact on the early development of children. Significant work is being undertaken through Children's Centres to address this issue and additional speech and language therapy capacity is being commissioned through the localities. The Children's Services Department is working with the charity ICAN to provide support for all early years practitioners to develop children's communication skills; the Early Years Manager is working closely with the Parenting Commission to ensure a wide range of parental support is available and the Department's Early Years consultants are analysing data so that resources can be targeted where there is most need. Despite the fact that this indicator was not on target in relation to the overall target for Hartlepool, another indicator relating to the same issue has been recorded as being on target.

A half year review had been undertaken of progress on all the separate activities within the operational team plans, 420 of them within the operational team plans across all of the Children's Services Department. 92.4% of these have been recorded as either achieved or expected to be achieved by the milestone date. Those not on target have been referred back to individual Assistant Directors so that they can address these within their division and take appropriate action.

Following the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) process for Hartlepool the overall effectiveness of Children's Services has been rated as grade 3 (good) and the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes all received Grade 3 reviews. The APA had commented on the good progress made since the Joint Area Review (JAR) in 2006 and had reported specifically on progress made against each of the recommendations made within the JAR report. The action plan which was completed following the JAR has been monitored regularly and illustrates the progress that has been made against all of the recommendations. A report on this progress will be going to the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum early in 2008.

Within the Children's Services Department there are 19 actions identified within the Corporate structure for monitoring progress. At the end of the second quarter, 94.7% of these actions were identified as being on target which shows no change from the end of quarter 1.

Annual reported information has now become available for a number of key performance indicators and 6 of these (18.8%) have been recorded as not meeting target. Five of these related to school attainment where particularly ambitious targets were set and although improvements have been made and some of the indicators are in line with or above national averages, the original, ambitious targets have not been met.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress made towards completing actions and PI targets during the second quarter of 2007/08.

25. Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to Serve on School Governing Bodies *(Governor Support Officer)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To request the Portfolio 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 exist.

Issue(s) for consideration by the Portfolio Holder

Applications were invited from members of the general public, elected members and those governors whose term of office is about to or has expired, who are interested in serving or wish to continue serving as a Local Authority representative governor on school governing bodies. Criteria agreed by the Borough Council in 2000 for the recruitment of local Authority representative governors was that they should be able to show:-

- a 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
- the ability to work as part of a team
- a clearly expressed willingness to participate in the governor training programme

A schedule setting out details of vacancies together with applications received in respect of the vacancies was considered by members of the General Purposes Sub Committee at their meeting held on 30 October 2007.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services approved recommendations of the General Purposes Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school Governing Bodies. The Portfolio Holder also suggested that Members be written to in order to bring their attention to vacancies on school governing bodies and to thank those Members who were currently serving on school governing bodies.

26. High Tunstall College of Science and Dyke House School: Foundation Status Consultation Response

(Assistant Director, Performance & Achievement, Children's Services)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To note the response submitted to High Tunstall College of Science and Dyke House School Governors in relation to their wish to investigate the possibility of seeking Foundation Status.

Issue(s) for Consideration by the Portfolio Holder

The Governors of High Tunstall College of Science and Dyke House School had decided to investigate the possibility of seeking Foundation Status for the colleges and were undertaking a period of consultation with a view to votes being taken on 19 and 20 December 2007 respectively. The consultation response from the Portfolio Holder had been drafted by the Director of Children's services for consideration and had been approved on 30 November 2007. This response was similar to that sent to Manor College of Technology's governing body when it went through the same process in 2006

The response covered the following areas:-

- The Council's wish for strong collaboration between schools for Hartlepool, as expressed in its minute of 13 April 2006
- The potential impact of the move to Foundation Status on outcomes for children, not just in the school which is wishing to change status but in the Hartlepool community of schools
- The potential risks for staff at the school in relation to Health and

Safety and liabilities

- The potential costs to the school in respect of undertaking its new responsibilities
- The potential impact on relationships within the town
- The need for the school to ensure that there has been a full and balanced consideration of the issues involved in moving to foundation status, a full and proper consultation process and engagement with an appropriate range of stakeholders.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the submission of a response to High Tunstall College of Science which had been sent to meet their deadline of 3 December 2007 as well as the submission of a response to Dyke House School Governors which was sent in order to meet their deadline of 14 December 2007.

27. Review of Placement Strategy for Looked After Children (*Interim Assistant Director of Children's Services*)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented to inform and update the Portfolio Holder on the ongoing work relating to the review of the placement strategy for looked after children. The purpose of the report was to:-

- inform the Portfolio Holder of the results of initial consultation and market testing exercises undertaken with key stakeholders
- provide information on various options that have been evaluated relating to possible future strategies for the provision of foster placements.
- seek the support for a bid that has been made to Cabinet as part of the department's 2008/09 budget proposals for additional revenue to enhance internal capacity in the department's placement team
- seek authorisation to consult more widely with all key stakeholders on the development of a partnership with selected providers to obtain improved value for money in the future procurement of children's social care placements

As reported to Cabinet earlier this year the department is facing extreme budget pressures arising from the placement costs of an increased number of Looked After Children. Due to the capacity constraints of the in-house service there is little choice but to place children with independent carers at present which is substantially more expensive.

Three options were put before the Portfolio Holder and Option B was suggested. This would allocation additional financial resources to the Placement Team with effect from 2008/9, subject to Council approval, to allow it to meet the additional workload stemming from the rising looked after population.

Other factors which support the expansion of the placement team would be:-

- an emphasis on securing permanent placements for children and young people
- new requirements on the training and preparation of foster carers
- the need to recruit additional foster carers
- maintenance of the high standards recently identified in the OFSTED inspection of September 2007

This option would mean that the following 3.5 additional posts are created within the placement team, a Team Manager, Principal Practitioner, Social Worker and a half time administrative post. This would allow additional resources to be invested in both the adoption and fostering services and mean that the adoption workers will have additional capacity to undertake tasks previously carried out by the child's social worker. The implementation of this option would therefore, change current practice.

The internal expansion would mean that the placement team would be required to move from their existing accommodation at Bevan House, and the costs of this accommodation move have been highlighted as a budget pressure for 2008/9. This option could be that the Leaving Care Team be co-located with the Connexions service in a more accessible town centre location. This move would free office accommodation at the Young People's Service meaning that the Adoption or Fostering Team could be located there.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder supported Option B which, subject to Cabinet approval would provide additional funding in the region of £170,000 in 2008/9 to facilitate the internal expansion of the Placement Team. Consultation with independent providers and other key stakeholders was authorised, on the formation of a preferred provider arrangement. It was agreed to receive a further report which details the outcome of this consultation and formation of a new placement strategy.

28. Local Government Access to Information

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)

(Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 29 – Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports (Para 1 – information relating to any individual

29. Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports (Para 1)
– *Director of Children's Services*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To present the Regulation 33/34 (formerly Regulation 22) report of visit to Children's Home for Exmoor Grove.

Issue(s) for Consideration by the Portfolio Holder

The report covered the months of August and September 2007.

Decision

That the report be received and noted.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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