

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

22 April 2008

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
Terry Maley, Commissioning and Contracts Manager
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

50. Children's Centres and Extended Services Budgets and Locality Plans 2008/09 *(Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager)*

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of report

This report was submitted to seek approval for the Children's Centres and Extended Services budget and locality plans 2008/09.

Issues for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on Local Authorities to improve the outcomes of children aged 0 – 5 through the development of Children's Centres offering early education integrated with childcare, family support, outreach to parents as well as child and family health services. The Authority is also required to ensure that a core offer for extended schools is in place by 2010 consisting of study support activities, childcare available between 8 am and 6 pm, parenting support and swift and easy referral to a range of specialised support services for pupils. Cabinet approved a strategy setting out the development of services across five localities on 19 June 2006, following which the Sure Start local programmes were restructured and staffing structures were put in place covering the following areas:-

North 1 – St Hilda, Brus, Hart

North 2 – Dyke House, Throston
Central 1 – Grange, Stranton, Burn Valley, Park, Elwick
Central 2 – Foggy Furze, Rift House
South – Rossmere, Owton, Fens, Greatham, Seaton

There are currently seven designated Children's Centres in Hartlepool with appropriate linked sites. A number of centralised staff are funded through the Children's Centres element of the General Sure Start Grant. The grant also funds a finance officer, data officer, childcare development worker and commissioning officer. Each locality has an Integration Support Manager, a Community Involvement Worker, an Admin Assistant, and a Caretaker. In 2 of the localities (North 2 and South) a cook and day care workers are also employed. The Local Authority is only responsible for the daycare in those localities as North 1 and Central 1 had sufficient privately owned daycare and it would not be sustainable to provide further daycare in Central 2 as there were vacancies elsewhere in the town.

Funding for Children's Centres is received via the General Sure Start Grant which is received direct from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and is ring-fenced. Funding allocations for Children's Centres 2008-2009 was £2,862,438. Income generation from Bushbabies and Chatham House day care was estimated at £278,077. Therefore the estimated budget for 2008-2009 is £3,140,515. Part of the budget has been delegated to the localities. This had been allocated based on the number of children aged 0-5 with a weighting placed on children in the 20% most deprived areas. £5,000 had been top sliced and allocated to Central 2 as there have been no Sure Start services in this area before and the extra funding will support the infrastructure to enable service development.

The Sure Start local programmes developed a number of service level agreements and these have been extended until October 2008 to ensure that service users did not see a gap in services, while Children Centres' service specifications are developed in line with the Children's Centres' outcomes. These will then go through the Council tender process to ensure procurement guidelines are being followed. The new contracts will cover the period of October 2008 – March 2011 to ensure continuity of service.

The Portfolio Holder expressed concern as to the funding of the service if Government funding for SureStart was discontinued but the Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager said that said that Childcare Act set this out in legislation which received cross party agreement. The Director of Children's Services stated that the commissioning model for Children's Centres should reduce this risk.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether St Joseph's School was involved in the Central area provision. The Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager explained that the manager in that area was making sure that the Headteacher was included in any service development and delivery.

The Director of Children's Services referred to Ministerial letter received praising the designation of two further Children's Centres.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the Children's Centres and Extended Services budgets and plans 2008-09.

51. Contactpoint Enablement of the Integrated Children's System *(Head of Commissioning and Children's Partnership)*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report was to inform the Portfolio Holder of a project where the Children's Services Department is acting as a national lead on behalf of the DCSF. The department will be working with Liquidlogic to enable an electronic link between the Integrated Children's System and ContactPoint – a database for every child and young person in England.

Issues for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The DCSF is working with local authorities to prepare for the national implementation of ContactPoint. In August 2007 the DCSF invited local authorities to submit bids to become lead organisations to enable local case management systems to link with the national system. Hartlepool Borough Council submitted a successful bid with Liquidlogic and the Authority is now in a position to advance this project.

The DCSF have allocated the local authority a ringfenced grant of £493,506 which was ring-fenced and the vast majority of this allocation would be used to cover Liquidlogic's costs of undertaking the technical requirements of the project. The grant would also cover the department's project management costs, including those incurred by Northgate Information Solutions. This would also cover the cost of communicating with the other 24 local authorities who had commissioned Liquidlogic as their ICS supplier.

The resource implications for the department in undertaking this piece of work were :-

- Head of Information, Planning and Support as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the project
- Commissioning and Contracts Manager as the project manager who would be responsible for managing the risks of the project and reporting progress to the DCSF
- Officers from corporate and departmental finance would

- undertake the financial management of the project
- Legal section had provided input in drafting a contract between the Council and Liquidlogic

There were many benefits to the Authority undertaking this national project including:-

- Increased level of national exposure and profile
- Enhanced links with the DCSF
- Increased leverage in managing the commercial relationship between the Authority and Liquidlogic which was an important benefit as it reduced the potential risk of them allocating their scarce resources to other Authorities as their customer base expands

The Portfolio Holder stated that she was pleased as this would raise the profile of the Authority nationally.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the work of the project and the fact that the department is acting as a national lead on behalf of the DCSF.

52. High Tunstall College of Science: Foundation Status (Director of Children's Services)

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

The report was submitted to inform the Portfolio Holder of the outcome of the Statutory Notice proposal in relation to High Tunstall College of Science's consideration of a change to Foundation Status.

Issues for consideration

The Portfolio Holder had previously considered two reports in relation to High Tunstall College of Science Foundation Status, one on 27 October 2006 to agree a process and timescale for a response to the governors' proposals and another on 18 December 2007 in which a response was prepared to the governor's initial consultation process in respect of a possible change in status.

A letter had been received from the Chair of Governors setting out the governors' decision to proceed to change the status of the college to Foundation Status. High Tunstall College of Science had already begun to make contact with local authority officers to undertake the work relating to change of status although the full extent of this work had not yet been

identified. It would however, include:-

- the establishment of a new Instrument of Government for the college. The Governing Body had agreed an Instrument of Government and constitution to reflect the change of status which was effective from 23 April 2008
- The governing body would consist of 7 parent governors, 2 partnership governors who would be nominated by parents, 1 local authority governor, 4 staff governors and 6 community governors
- the transfer of staff from the local authority to the college governors under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) regulations
- minor adjustments to the college budget to recognise the governors' role as an admissions' authority and an employer on the same basis as voluntary aided schools
- identification of any potential changes to service legal agreements

The Portfolio Holder wished the school success in its new status.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the decision of the governors of High Tunstall College of Science to change the status of the college to Foundation Status.

In accordance with the School Governance Constitution (England) Regulations 2007 the Portfolio Holder approved and make the Instrument of Government.

The Portfolio Holder noted the work which officers would be undertaking with the college to ensure the process for a change in status is appropriately undertaken.

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

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

The report was 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 exist.

Issues for consideration

Applications were invited from members of the general public, elected members and those governors whose term of office was about to or has expired, who were interested in serving or wished 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 20 March 2008.

Elected Members had been written to previously to encourage their involvement but there had been no response and the Portfolio Holder expressed disappointment at this.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the recommendations of the General Purpose Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school Governing Bodies.

54. Association of Directors of Children's Services – Financial Contribution (*Director of Children's Services*)

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

The report sought approval of the Portfolio Holder to the payment of an increased contribution to the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ACDS) in 2008 and thereafter annually.

Issues for consideration

ADCS represents the professional interests of senior officers and advisers in Children's Services departments of local authorities throughout the

country (not just directors). In doing so, it plays an important role alongside the Local Government Association (LGA) in representing and promoting the local authorities themselves with government agencies and is recognised by DCSF as a primary consultee on all major policy issues affecting children's services. It has formal status as a conduit for discussion with ministers, senior civil servants, the community and voluntary sector on all high-level children's services initiatives.

Another aspect of ADCS's work is its bespoke training for local authority staff and it also runs a series of well-respected conferences and seminars.

In April 2007, the Portfolio Holder agreed to the payment of a local authority contribution to ADCS of £1000 reflecting the band of contribution appropriate to Hartlepool's size as an authority. It was agreed that the Portfolio Holder also approve similar payments in future years unless a significant increase over and above inflation was proposed in which case a further report would be presented. This fee included automatic membership for the Director of Children's Services.

In April 2008, following consultation through regional branches, ADCS has proposed an increase in local authority contributions to £1500, above the rate of inflation. This higher fee would include the cost of membership for all second and third tier Children's Services staff in addition to the Director. The fee structure reflects the desire to become an organisation inclusive of all senior staff in Children's Services.

It was suggested that if the contribution is approved for 2008, the approval should be deemed to remain valid in future years on the assumption that the rate would increase broadly in line with inflation. Should a more substantial increase be proposed, the matter would be referred back to the Portfolio Holder.

The £1500 cost of the proposed contribution for 2008 can be met from within the approved revenue budget for the Children's Services Department.

The Portfolio Holder asked about the bespoke training mentioned in the report and was informed that this was commissioned on a regional basis. It was noted that Directors of Children's Services from neighbouring Authorities held leading positions in the ACDS ensuring the region was well represented.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the payment of the financial contribution of £1500 to ADCS in 2008.

The Portfolio Holder also approved similar payments in future years unless a significant increase over and above inflation is proposed, in which case a further report would be presented.

P DEVLIN

ACTING CHIEF SOLICITOR

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