

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Monday, 21st July 2008

at 4.30 pm

in Committee Room B

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors Aiken, Fleet, Griffin, Kaiser, London, McKenna, Preece, Shaw and Simmons

Co-opted Members: David Relton and 3 vacancies

Resident Representatives: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Joan Steel and Sally Vokes

Young Peoples Representatives: 6 vacancies

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 16th June 2008

4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM

4.1 Portfolio Holder's Response to the Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool – *Joint Report of the Director of Children's Services and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services*

4.2 Portfolio Holder's Response to the Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools – *Joint Report of the Director of Children's Services and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services*

5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

None.

6. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

None.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

7.1 Children's and Young People's Plan 2009-12 Reference Group – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

7.2 Determining the Work Programme 2008-09 – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

(a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

(b) Presentation from the Young People's Representatives

7.3 Scoping Report – Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care Service – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

8. ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM FORWARD PLAN

9. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

i) **Date of Next Meeting 26 August 2008, commencing at 4.30 pm in Committee Room B**

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

16 June 2008

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Jane Shaw (In the Chair)

Councillors: Martyn Aiken, Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Frances London,
Chris McKenna and Arthur Preece.

In accordance with Para 4.2 (ii) Councillor Jonathan Brash was in attendance
as substitute for Councillor Chris Simmons

Co-opted Members: David Relton

Resident Representatives: Christopher Akers-Belcher, Joan Steel and
Sally Vokes

Officers: Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services
Francesca Magog, Partner and Integration Development Manager
Charlotte Burnham, Scrutiny Manager
James Walsh, Scrutiny Support Officer
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

Also present: Elizabeth Barraclough, Primary School Governor
Beth Hawkridge, Barnardos
Arran Frame
Dean Jeffries
Michelle Mincher
David Whittingham

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Chris Simmons

2. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2008 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this Forum

No items.

5. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

No items.

6. The Role of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum (Author)

The report was presented by the Scrutiny Support Officer in order to give an overview of the role and functions of Scrutiny in the Council and specifically, the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum.

The key roles of Scrutiny were detailed as:

- Policy development and review
- Holding the Executive to account
- Investigating issues of local concern

The role of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee was set out with a detailed description of the role and functions of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum. The report highlighted that the strategic direction of the Scrutiny Forums was to assess, monitor and advise on the Council's progress towards the seven priority aims. The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's remit was specifically to consider issues relating to specialist (intervention), targeted (prevention) and universal services for children and young people. A schedule of the Forum's meetings dates was also set out in the report and Members were asked to note that all scheduled meetings would commence at 4.30 pm to enable the young people's representatives to be in attendance.

Beth Hawkrige introduced a number of young people who were interested in becoming the Young Persons' representatives on the Forum and would be chosen from the following categories:-

2 Young Voices
2 Looked after Children
2 School Councils Forum (from 7 secondary schools in Hartlepool)

The Scrutiny Manager and Director of Children's Services agreed to clarify the situation with regards to the co-opted member vacancies that existed on the Forum.

A query was raised as to who made decisions regarding the Schools Transformation Programme and it was clarified that decisions on school transformation were made through the Project Board which was chaired by the Children's Services Portfolio Holder. Democratic accountability was via the Portfolio Holder and/or Cabinet depending on the decision and the degree of consensus. Because of the often tight government timescales in relation to Building Schools for the Future and the Primary Capital Programme, Scrutiny was represented on the Project Board through the Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Forum, Chair of Neighbourhood Scrutiny Forum and the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee. The Chair confirmed that there were time constraints with regard to the Government programmes but it was important that people were allowed to voice opinions on what was best for the people of Hartlepool. The Director of Children's Services encouraged Scrutiny members to take the opportunity to take part in the forthcoming Primary Capital Programme consultation process.

Decision

The report was noted.

7. Appointment to Outside Bodies *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

The Democratic Services Officer presented the report which sought Councillor nominations to Outside Bodies referred to the Scrutiny Forum by the Executive. In this instance 5 members to the Schools Admissions Forum were required.

Nominations had been received from Councillors Fleet, Griffin and Simmons (Labour) and Councillor A Lilley (Administrative Group) and were agreed at Annual Council therefore one further nomination was required. Since Annual Council, the Administrative Group had notified Democratic Services of a change in their nomination to the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum to Councillor Plant and consequently a further nomination was required.

Decision

The nominations agreed at Annual Council on 22 May 2008 to the School Admission Forum of Councillors Fleet, Griffin and Simmons were confirmed.

Councillors London and McKenna were nominated as members of the School Admission Forum subject to the approval by the Executive.

8. Six Monthly Monitoring of Agreed Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Recommendations *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented a report advising the Forum of the process made on the delivery on the agreed scrutiny recommendations of the Forum. Appendices A & B provided a summary which broke down progress made by investigations undertaken by the Forum and a detailed explanation of progress made against each recommendation. It was noted that this was a constantly changing document and reports on the progress would be brought again to the Forum in six months time.

It was noted that the use of acronyms in reports should be avoided to ensure that they were clearer to read.

Concern was expressed that the Citizenship Policy was not on target, but the Scrutiny Support Officer stated that some recommendations have revised deadlines which would inform the next Monitoring Report presented to the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum in 6 months time.

It was clarified that the Participation Strategy was an ongoing year on year target and that the Monitoring Report would be re-worded to reflect this.

A suggestion was made that there should be Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) coverage of any pods and youth shelters erected and the Chair proposed that a small working group could be formed with the Regeneration and Planning Scrutiny Forum to discuss this possibility prior to any approval by the Portfolio Holder. It was also suggested that the neighbourhood policing teams should be consulted regarding the sites of the pods.

The Chair asked whether the young people at the forum had had a chance to look at the Scrutiny Report and was informed that they had not. She stated that she would welcome their comments and any suggestions as to layout to make it more appealing to young people to read.

9. Determining the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Work Programme for 2008/09 *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer presented a report which provided the members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum with a range of information extracted from various sources, to assist in the consideration of suitable topics for inclusion into the Forum's Work Programme for the 2008/09 Municipal Year, together with a time frame for each review for consideration by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 4 July 2008.

The Director of Children's Services, the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Chair of the Forum had already met to suggest suitable topics for the Forum to consider and these were outlined on page 2 of the report. It was suggested that a maximum of two items should be chosen for

the coming year to allow for flexibility in the work programme for emerging issues and referrals from Council/Cabinet.

A lengthy discussion ensued in which various items were suggested including Teenage Pregnancy, Children's Workforce Development, the Role of Mainstream/Special Schools, Bullying in Schools and Foster Care.

It was noted that the Teenage Pregnancy item could be a report to the forum rather than an in-depth investigation given how recently Scrutiny had reviewed this area.

Decision

That the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee be advised that the Forum wished to undertake an in-depth investigation into 'Foster Care Provision' and that the Young People on the Forum would select a further topic for examination.

10. Consideration of Progress Reports/Budget and Policy Framework Documents - Children and Young People's Plan 2009 – 2012 *(Director of Children's Services)*

The Partner and Integration Development Manager presented a report which provided an outline of the consultation process for the re-writing of the current Children and Young People's Plan in preparation for the publication of the new version in April 2009.

The Local Authority was required to produce a Children's and Young People's Plan under Section 17 of the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Young People's Plan (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007.

The existing Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 2009 required review and updating to meet new requirements on Children's Services departments and their partners.

The plan was updated year on year and a summary version had been designed by Young People and consultation was currently taking place in order that the new plan reflected a wide range of views. There were to be different stages of consultation, involving the impact of the current plan, what improvements were necessary and then the formulation of a new plan which would be put out for consultation to ensure that this was acceptable. When the plan had been approved there would be a built in programme of constant consultation so that there would not be the need to review the plan again in three years time.

The Chair suggested that consultations should take account of the split of the town into the North, Central and South areas and it was important to ensure that all areas were covered during consultation events.

A reference group was sought to liaise with officers working on the plan to check and challenge processes as the Children and Young People's Plan was

progressed and any member of the group who was interested in joining this group were asked to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer.

Decision

The Forum approved the proposed programme of consultation for the development of the Children and Young People's Plan 2009 – 2012.

The Forum noted the consultation progresses as a draft of the plan would be brought back to Scrutiny for approval in July 2008.

The meeting concluded at 6.20 pm.

CHAIR

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

21 July 2008



Report of: Joint Report of Director of Children's Services and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

Subject: PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S RESPONSE TO THE ACCESS TO RECREATION ACTIVITIES BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HARTLEPOOL.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum with feedback on the recommendations from the investigation into the access to recreation activities by children and young people in Hartlepool.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The investigation into access to recreation activities by children and young people in Hartlepool conducted by this Forum falls under the remit of the Children's Services Department and is, under the Executive Delegation Scheme, within the service area covered by the Children's Services Portfolio Holder.
- 2.2 On 23rd June 2008 Cabinet considered the Final Report of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum into access to recreation activities by children and young people in Hartlepool. This report provides feedback from the Portfolio Holder following the Cabinet's consideration of, and decisions in relation to this Forum's recommendations.
- 2.3 In addition to this report a further progress report will be produced for Member's consideration bi-annually to enable Members to monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

3. SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE DECISION

- 3.1 Following consideration of the Final Report, Cabinet approved the recommendations in their entirety. Details of each recommendation and proposed actions to be taken following approval by Cabinet are provided in the Action Plan attached at **Appendix A**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Members note the proposed actions detailed within the Action Plan, appended to this report (**Appendix A**) and seek clarification on its content where felt appropriate.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Final Report into 'Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool' considered by Cabinet on 23 June 2008.
- (ii) Decision Record of Cabinet held on 23 June 2008.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: April 2008

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(a)	That a process be implemented to ensure that young people are fully supported to participate in the future development and provision of recreation activities in Hartlepool;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's services department will continue to support council departments to implement the seven vision statements for participation, In particular we will identify key staff involved in developing recreation facilities and provide targeted support to enhance current practice. 	John Robinson	March 09
(b)	That as part of any planned future recreation activities consideration be given to the use of 'pods' and youth shelters, with the close involvement of young people, and other stakeholders, throughout the process from location / selection of structure to Planning application;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will hold a seminar for stakeholder that includes councillors, young people and other Community members to discuss the issues and implications of youth shelters. 	John Robinson Sally Forth	January 09
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will support the development of a corporate strategy for the use of youth shelters and other community based facilities for young people that link with other community focussed initiatives such as local 	John Robinson Peter Davies Sally Forth	March 09

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: April 2008

	RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(c)	That an action plan be produced that explores ways of addressing the barriers to accessing recreation activities for young people, as outlined in the report (Section 9 refers);	area forums and neighbourhood action plans. Children's Services currently have a strategic group undertaking work on the Public Service Agreement 14 and will include work on the barriers outlined in Section 9. The Hartlepool Community Activities Group is supporting the development of sports and recreation for children and young people. An action plan will be developed connecting the work of these two groups with the play strategy for Hartlepool.	Tracy Liveras Peter Davies Maxine Glew	November 08
(d)	That further work be undertaken to increase the marketing of recreation activities to target all young people, and their families across Hartlepool;	We will develop the work of the Family Information Service to include all services and recreational activities that are open to children and young people.	Penny Thompson	March 09
(e)	That, in recognition of the availability of transport as a barrier	The Integrated Transport Team has established an Integrated Transport Sub	Paul Robson	November 08 March 09

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Access to Recreation Activities for Children and Young People in Hartlepool

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: April 2008

RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
	to access, the introduction of free bus passes to young people be supported and the practical feasibility of such a scheme explored, including the suitability of existing routes and timetables to meet young people's needs; and	Group and Theme Group which reports to the Integrated Transport Steering Group. All matters relating to transport are discussed at the Children's Services Themed meeting which will lead on this action and report progress back to scrutiny.	
(f)	That the Local Authority works in partnership with organised groups to ensure that they are fully aware of the funding / assistance available to them, and how it can be accessed, to improve their long term sustainability.	We will work with Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency to ensure that a process is in place to ensure that all voluntary and community sector groups have access to support.	John Robinson/Keith Bailey March 09

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

21 July 2008



Report of: Joint Report of Director of Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

Subject: PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S RESPONSE TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF EXTERNALLY FUNDED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN SCHOOLS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum with feedback on the recommendations from the investigation into the sustainability of externally funded community initiatives in schools.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The investigation into the sustainability of externally funded community initiatives in schools conducted by this Forum falls under the remit of the Children's Services Department and is, under the Executive Delegation Scheme, within the service area covered by the Children's Services Portfolio Holder.
- 2.2 On 7th July 2008 Cabinet considered the Final Report of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum into the sustainability of externally funded community initiatives in schools. This report provides feedback from the Portfolio Holder following the Cabinet's consideration of, and decisions in relation to this Forum's recommendations.
- 2.3 In addition to this report a further progress report will be produced for Member's consideration bi-annually to enable Members to monitor the implementation of their recommendations.

3. SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE DECISION

- 3.1 Following consideration of the Final Report, Cabinet approved the recommendations in their entirety. Details of each recommendation and proposed actions to be taken following approval by Cabinet are provided in the Action Plan attached at **Appendix A**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Members note the proposed actions detailed within the Action Plan, appended to this report (**Appendix A**) and seek clarification on its content where felt appropriate.

Contact Officer:- Stephen Haley – Head of Finance
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) The Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Final Report into the 'Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools' considered by Cabinet on 7 July 2008.
- (ii) Decision Record of Cabinet held on 7 July 2008.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: April 2008

	RECOMMENDATION	EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(a)	That a joint Steering Group between the Children Services Department and the Adult and Community Services Department be established to further explore the proposed recommendations of the Independent Sports Consultant, commissioned specifically as part of this investigation;	<p>Rather than establish a new joint Steering Group, in light of the wide reaching nature of community facilities, and the current schools transformation programme, it is suggested that this is referred to the Schools Transformation Extended Project Team.</p> <p>This team meets regularly and has representatives from all departments and a separate "Extended Services Work stream", a sub group of the main project team, has recently been established. This should ensure that a Borough wide view is formed regarding all community facilities.</p>	<p>Steve Haley (Children's Services)</p> <p>Pat Usher (Adult Services)</p>	December 08
(b)	That all schools that currently operate community initiatives undertake a three year financial forecast and business plan of the viability of each facility that	The Children's Services Finance team has commenced preparatory work to establish the current financial position for each scheme. Each school which operates a community facility will then be visited to discuss financial viability over the	Steve Haley	September 08

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: April 2008

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
	outlines charging policies, usage levels and scheme objectives;	short/medium term. In addition, the relevant section of the local scheme for financing schools which covers the set up and operation of community facilities is being reviewed in line with latest DCSF guidance and best practise. The scheme will be re-launched via the Schools Forum	Steve Haley	
(c)	That pending the outcome(s) of the joint Steering Group (recommendation (a) refers) immediate consideration be given to providing assistance to those schemes that are likely to encounter future sustainability issue; and	After business plans and financial forecasts have been prepared and agreed with schools it will be possible to identify sustainability issues and quantify the level of any subsidies that may be required from the LA in future years. Any bids will then be submitted as part of the Council's annual budget cycle.	Steve Haley	October 2008

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENQUIRY ACTION PLAN

NAME OF FORUM: Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

NAME OF SCRUTINY ENQUIRY: Sustainability of Externally Funded Community Initiatives in Schools

DECISION MAKING DATE OF FINAL REPORT: April 2008

RECOMMENDATION		EXECUTIVE RESPONSE / PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DELIVERY TIMESCALE
(d)	That the findings of this investigation be brought to the attention of school governing bodies to raise awareness of the issue and the proposed way forward.	Agreed. This will also be reported to the Schools Forum and a training package will be developed by the Children's Services Finance Team covering the financial implications of Community Facilities.	Steve Haley	April 2009

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

21 July 2008



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2009-12
REFERENCE GROUP

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek a maximum of six nominations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum to act as a reference group for the development of the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on 16 June 2008, Members received a presentation from the Partnership and Integration Manager relating to the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12.
- 2.2 As part of the consultation process the Forum is invited to nominate six representatives to liaise with and act as a reference group for officers working on the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12.
- 2.3 The Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12 Reference Group will have the opportunity to check and challenge the processes as the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12 progresses through its draft stages.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum nominate a maximum of six representatives from the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum to the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12 Reference Group. Nominations can be a mixture of Elected Members, Co-opted Members, Resident Representatives and Young People's Representatives.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- i) Report of the Director of Children's Services titled 'Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2009-12,' presented at the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum of 16 June 2008.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

21 July 2008



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: DETERMINING THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SCRUTINY FORUM'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR
2008/09 – COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum with their second topic for inclusion into the Forum's Work Programme for the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum on 16 June 2008 Members agreed that two work programme items would be selected for the 2008/09 Municipal Year. During discussions at the meeting of 16 June 2008, Members agreed that their first work programme item should be 'Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care Service' and that the second work programme item be selected by the Young People's Representatives co-opted onto the Forum.
- 2.2 Consequently at today's meeting the Young People's Representatives will provide a brief presentation to Members outlining the second programme item as agreed by the young people of Hartlepool.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum note the content of the presentation from the Young People's Representatives and agree on the second work programme item for the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

21 July 2008



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO HARTLEPOOL
BOROUGH COUNCIL'S FOSTER CARE SERVICE –
SCOPING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To make proposals to Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum for their forthcoming investigation into 'Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care Service'.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the meeting of this Forum on 16 June 2008 Members determined their Work Programme for the 2008/09 Municipal Year. The topic of 'Foster Care' was selected as the first Scrutiny topic for consideration during the current Municipal Year. Furthermore, Members suggested that this investigation should form the major in-depth Scrutiny Inquiry for the Forum's 2008/09 work programme. Members also suggested that the Scrutiny topic should consider issues around areas of 'kinship' and 'guardianship' carers.
- 2.2 Under the Care Standards Act 2000, Ofsted inspected Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Agency on 10 August 2007 and with reference to the Children Act 2004 reported that "the overall quality rating is good¹"; where 'good' is defined as meaning that "the provision is strong²".

3. OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 To review Hartlepool Borough Council's recruitment and retention activity in relation to Foster Carers, including the provision of guidance and support to foster, kinship and special guardianship carers.

¹ Ofsted – 'Inspection Report: Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering', 10 August 2007, p.4

² Ofsted – 'Inspection Report: Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering', 10 August 2007, p. 3

4. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION/ENQUIRY

4.1 The following Terms of Reference for the investigation are proposed:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of the role and responsibility of Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service.
- (b) To assess the marketing campaign targeted at potential foster carers who are 'new' to the Authority;
- (c) To compare the recruitment and retention rates in Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service both locally and nationally, drawing on models of best practice;
- (d) To examine the Fostering Service's placement strategy with specific reference to the following areas:-
 - (i) The use and role of Independent Foster Agencies;
 - (ii) The level of support and advice provided to foster carers; and
 - (iii) Comparison of remuneration levels for foster carers locally and nationally.
- (e) To investigate the provision of support to kinship carers and compare its equability to Hartlepool Borough Council's foster carers; and
- (f) To review the Authority's implementation of special guardianship arrangements.

5. POTENTIAL AREAS OF ENQUIRY / SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

5.1 Members of the Forum can request a range of evidential and comparative information throughout the Scrutiny review.

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

- (a) Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
- (b) Children's Services Department Officers;
- (c) Independent Fostering Agencies;
- (d) Foster Carers;
- (e) Neighbouring Local Authorities;
- (f) Ward Councillors;
- (g) Local residents;

(h) Neighbourhood Consultative Forums; and

(i) Representatives of minority communities of interest or heritage.

5.3 The Forum may also wish to refer to a variety of documentary / internet sources, key suggestions are as highlighted below:-

(a) Department for Children, Schools & Families – 'Care Matters: Time for a Change', White Paper, June 2007.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/docs/timeforchange.pdf>

(b) Fostering.net website

<http://www.fostering.net/>

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Community engagement plays a crucial role in the Scrutiny process and paragraph 5.2, details who the Forum could involve. However, thought will need to be given to the structure in the way that the Forum wishes to encourage those views.

6.2 In addition, diversity issues have been considered in the background research for this enquiry under the Equality Standards for Local Government. As such the views of local diversity groups will be sought throughout the inquiry where felt appropriate and time allows. Consequently, consideration has been given as to how the views of people from minority communities of interest or heritage (for example, people with disabilities, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, black and minority ethnic people, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people), which may not be gathered through the usual community engagement routes, can be included over the course of the inquiry.

7. REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM THE DEDICATED OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BUDGET

Option 1

7.1 Consideration has been given, through the background research for this scoping report, to the need to request funding from the dedicated Overview and Scrutiny budget to aid Members in their enquiry. At this stage no additional funding has been identified as being necessary to support Members in their investigation. Members, however, may wish to seek additional funding over the course of the investigation and the pro forma attached at **Appendix A** outlines the criteria on which a request to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee will be judged.

7.2 In addition, it is possible that over the course of this investigation some specialist research / advice may strengthen the Forum's findings and recommendations. The Scrutiny Support Officer will explore this in greater

depth once the Forum has defined its terms of reference for the investigation and would bring a report to the Forum should a request for funding be deemed advantageous. Members' comments would be welcomed at this stage in relation to requests for additional funding from the dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Budget.

8. PROPOSED TIMETABLE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

8.1 Detailed below is the proposed timetable for the review to be undertaken, which may be changed at any stage:-

21 July 2008 – Consideration of the Scoping Report by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

26 August 2008 – Formal meeting of the Forum to receive:-

- (i) A 'Setting the Scene' report from Children's Services Department; and
- (ii) Evidence from the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (To be confirmed).

6 October 2008 – Formal meeting of the Forum to receive:-

- (i) A presentation/report on the current marketing campaign for Foster Carers taking into account the current benchmark in terms of recruitment and retention rates;
- (ii) A presentation/report on the foster care placement strategy, gathering evidence from the following:-
 - An Independent Foster Agency; and
 - Individual Foster Carers.

w/c 20 October – Visit to Local Authority to draw on examples of good practice in relation to recruitment, retention and marketing of foster carers.

11 November 2008 – Formal meeting of the Forum to receive:-

- (i) A presentation/report on the support for kinship carers in comparison to the level of advice/guidance provided to foster carers within Hartlepool Borough Council;
- (ii) A presentation/report on the implementation of special guardianship arrangements by Hartlepool Borough Council; and
- (iii) Feedback from visit to Local Authority.

27 January 2008 – Consideration of Draft Final Report by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

13 February 2008 – Consideration of Final Report by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee

23 March 2008 - Consideration of Final Report by the Cabinet/Council (tentative date)

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 Members are recommended to agree the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Forum's remit of the Scrutiny investigation as outlined in paragraph 4.1.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (i) Ofsted Inspection Report – 'Hartlepool Borough Council Fostering' (10 August 2007)

APPENDIX A

**PRO-FORMA TO REQUEST FUNDING TO SUPPORT
CURRENT SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION**

Title of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
Title of the current scrutiny investigation for which funding is requested:
To clearly identify the purpose for which additional support is required:
To outline indicative costs to be incurred as a result of the additional support:
To outline any associated timescale implications:
To outline the 'added value' that may be achieved by utilising the additional support as part of the undertaking of the Scrutiny Investigation:
To outline any requirements / processes to be adhered to in accordance with

the Council's Financial Procedure Rules / Standing Orders:

To outline the possible disadvantages of not utilising the additional support during the undertaking of the Scrutiny Investigation:

To outline any possible alternative means of additional support outside of this proposal: