

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

12 August 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
Paul Briggs, Assistant Director – Resources and Support Services
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Specialist Services
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager
Alan Kell, Project Manager
Debra Wilson, Governor Support Officer
Leanne Lupton, Governor Support Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

5. 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's 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 Portfolio Holder

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, who were interested in serving or wished to continue serving as a Local Authority representative governor on school governing bodies. Criteria were agreed by the Borough Council for their recruitment as

follows:

- 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 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 had been considered by members of the General Purposes Sub-Committee on 4th July 2008.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her disappointment at the lack of elected members willing to serve on school governing bodies.

Decision

That the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee, in respect of the appointment of representative Governors to serve on school governing bodies where vacancies exist, be approved.

6. –Outdoor Centre Charges for the School Year 2008/09 *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

- To request the Portfolio Holder to determine the charges to be set by Hartlepool Borough Council for Hartlepool schools attending the outdoor centres covered by the joint arrangements with two former Cleveland Local Authorities (Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland) for the school year 2008/2009
- To note the 2008/09 charges relating to external users of the Carlton Centre which have been determined by the Joint Authority Management Group at their meeting on 25th February 2008.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report detailed proposed charges for Carlton Outdoor Education Centre and Lanehead Centre in Coniston with effect from 1st September 2008. The Centres were the subject of a joint arrangement between Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Local Authorities.

Running costs for each centre were funded by annual contributions from the joint authorities in accordance with a Partnership Agreement with each authority partially recovering its costs via subsidised charges levied by them to the schools in their areas. In previous years increases charged by Hartlepool had been broadly in line with inflation however for 2008/09 increases were suggested which would:

- Recognise and partially address the current divergence in subsidy levels between joint authorities
- Recognise the substantially improved facilities at the Carlton Centre
- Provide a modest contribution toward the Departmental savings target as identified in its 2008/09 budget submission

Low income families received remittance from these subsidised charges therefore they would not be affected by any increases. Detailed information was given within the report as to the proposed new charges for the two centres. It was noted that the proposed increase for Carlton was larger than for Lanehead. However historically Lanehead charges had always been the greater and this would bring the charges broadly into line.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether the refurbishment work at Carlton had shown an increase in use. The Project Manager indicated that a decision had been made to open the centre for part of the school summer holidays and this had led to some increase in usage. The Assistant Director commented that some marketing was needed to advertise the centre as providing a valuable life experience to young people.

Decision

- i. That the proposed charges for Hartlepool Schools to use the Carlton Centre as set out in the report, with the daily rate set at £20 be approved with effect from 1st September 2008.
- ii. That the proposed charges for Hartlepool Schools to use the Lanehead Centre as set out in the report with the daily rate set at £20 be approved with effect from 1st September 2008.
- iii. That the charges for Carlton Centre users outside the joint agreement as determined by the Joint Authority Management Group be noted.
- iv. That the Portfolio Holder continue to receive a report each year detailing proposed charges.

7. Development of a Practice Manual for Safeguarding and Specialist Services – Proposed Project *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

- i. To seek approval for the development of a practice manual for Safeguarding and Specialist Services.
- ii. To request a direction for an exemption to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the proposed project.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Integrated Children's System (ICS) was implemented in Hartlepool in July 2007 and radically changed the way in which social workers undertook their work with children and recorded their interventions. This meant that all the local procedure and practice guidance documents were out of date as they were based on paper case records and obsolete government forms. There was felt to be an urgent need to put a new Practice Manual in place that was fit for purpose, reflected the ICS system and ensured consistent and safe practice.

The Council Contract Procedure Rules stated that at least three written quotations are needed for contracts between £20,000 and £50,000. However these rules need not apply to contracts with professional persons or contractors for the execution of works or provision of services in which the professional knowledge and skills of these contractors were of primary importance. The professional knowledge of Jo Fox Associates was felt to be critical from the social work and ICS perspective. Therefore the Portfolio Holder was asked to approve an exception to the existing contract procedure rule in this case.

Decision

That the proposed project to produce a Practice Manual for Safeguarding and Specialist Services be approved

That an exception to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the project be granted.

8. Children's Centres, Extended School and Early Years Outline Programme of Capital Works 2008-2011 – (Director of Children's Services)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the outline programme of capital works for children's centres, extended schools and early years 2008-2011.

Issue(s) for Consideration by the Portfolio Holder

Childrens Centres and Extended Schools

In 2004 the Government published its 10 year Childcare Strategy requiring the development of children's centres across the borough by 2010. In addition the Local Authority needed to ensure that an extended schools core offer was in place for pupils by 2010. A Children's Centres and Extended Schools Strategy document was developed in 2006 to ensure these two requirements were met in Hartlepool and brought together coherently. Following an extensive period of consultation it was agreed that the centres and activities would be focused around five localities. The final Strategy was approved by Cabinet in 2006.

Capital funding was available through the General Sure Start Grant of £295,584 for Children's Centres in 2008 and £176,005 for Extended Schools in 2008. Funding to maintain Children's Centres was available at amounts of £20,111 in 2008, £34,737 in 2009 and £36,553 in 2010. Eight Children's Centres needed to be developed by 2010 with seven centres designated so far. All Children's Services capital was expected to be used in conjunction with Primary Capital Funding if appropriate. However conflicting timescales meant that this would not possible until 2010 at the earliest.

Government guidance indicated that third phase children's centres should be developed in non-disadvantaged areas, based on existing provision ie schools. There was indication that Throston, Fens and Seaton were those areas most in need and possible options were being considered in conjunction with Primary Capital and Primary Care Trust developments.

Extended Schools funding was used to support schools in their delivery of the extended schools core offer, including childcare, community access and swift and easy access. Stranton Primary School were proposing to add a multi-agency team room and community café to the existing centre in

partnership with New Deal for Communities. The extended schools element of the General Sure Start Grant would match fund an element of this build.

Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

Early Years Foundation Stage is a statutory framework for implementation in September 2008 setting standards of learning, development and care of children from birth to five. It builds on and replaces existing guidance and all providers are required to use it by September 2008. Funding of £351,807 per year is available 2008-2011 to support implementation with priority to the private, voluntary and independent sectors, particularly in the areas of accessibility, outdoor environment and ICT. A grant process had been set up to enable private settings to identify key areas of development in relation to capital work.

The funding allocations along with the criteria for children's centres, extended services and early years capital were appended to the report for the Portfolio Holder's attention. Estimated costs of projects would be presented to the Portfolio Holder over the coming months.

Decision

That the outline programme of capital works for children's centres, extended services and early years 2008-2011 be approved.

9. Home to School Transport Policy *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To request that the Portfolio Holder approve a period of formal consultation on a revised draft policy and to receive a report on the outcomes from this consultation

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Children's Services Student Support Team administers transport arrangements and determines entitlement for home to school transport for Hartlepool children in accordance with parameters laid down in the current policy. This was implemented in September 2005 and required amendment to reflect the transport implications of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The revised draft Home to School Transport policy was appended to the report for the Portfolio Holder's attention. It described the criteria used to determine eligibility for transport assistance to pupils between home and school/college, along with the procedures by which

applications were made and administered by the Local Authority. Additional funding had been received from Central Government extending the right to free transport. This funding had been incorporated into the Home to School Transport Budget.

Following approval of the draft policy by the Portfolio Holder formal consultation would be carried out with schools, colleges, neighbouring Local Authorities and diocesan authorities, the results of which would be brought back to the Portfolio Holder in October 2008. A guide for parents would also be produced.

Decision

- i. That the revised draft Home to School Transport Policy be approved for consultation
- ii. That the Portfolio Holder agree to receive a report on the outcomes of the consultation in October 2008 together with a final draft policy to be implemented with effect from the start of the 2008/09 school year.

10. Revised Costings Relating to the 2008/09 Schools Capital Works Programme *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval to the revised costings relating to the 2008/09 Schools Capital Works Programme and to advise the Portfolio Holder of the creation of a Schools' Forum Capital Sub-Group

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

In April 2008 a report outlining the overall Capital Works Programme for 2008/09 was submitted to the Portfolio Holder. This was subsequently approved in the knowledge that the estimated costings of the individual schemes would be confirmed as soon as possible. The majority of the projects included in the programme had now been fully costed and had shown a general increase in the estimated costs, rather than a overall balance as had been anticipated. A number of actions had been taken to counter these escalating costs and details of the revised costs were given in an appendix to the report. The revised programme showed a deficit of £41,280. Officers stressed that while this may seem high each individual scheme included a contingency figure of 5% against the contractor's cost, an overall value in excess of £130,000. Further reports monitoring the Capital Works Programme would be presented to the Portfolio Holder for

information or approval.

Details were also given within the report of the newly formed Capital Sub-Group of the Schools Forum. This consisted of seven school representatives supported by officers from Children's Services, Neighbourhood Services and Finance. Draft terms of reference for this group were outlined.

Decision

- i. That the revised costings relating to the 2008/09 Schools Capital Works Programme be approved.
- ii. That the establishment of a Schools Capital Forum Sub-Group be noted

PETER DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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