

# CABINET

## MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

12 January 2009

The meeting commenced at 9.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

The Mayor (Stuart Drummond) - In the Chair

Councillors: Pam Hargreaves (Deputy Mayor),  
Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder),  
Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder),  
Robbie Payne (Finance & Efficiency Portfolio Holder),  
Peter Jackson (Neighbourhoods & Communities Portfolio Holder),  
Victor Tumilty (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder),

### Also in attendance:

Councillor Frances London, Vice Chair of Children's Services  
Scrutiny Forum

Officers: Paul Walker, Chief Executive  
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive  
Peter Devlin, Chief Solicitor  
Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services  
Dave Stubbs, Director of Neighbourhood Services  
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Ian Merritt, Head of Commissioning and Children's Partnership  
Alistair Rae, Public Relations Officer  
James Walsh, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Angela Hunter, Democratic Services Team

### **186. Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **187. Declarations of interest by Members**

Upon taking advice from the Chief Solicitor, Councillor Peter Jackson declared a non-prejudicial in minute 189.

### **188. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 December 2008**

Received.

## **189. Falcon Road Update** (*Director of Neighbourhood Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To give an update on the traffic management options for Falcon Road.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities presented the report which outlined the progress made since the meeting of 23 June 2008 and other potential options for implementation. The Mayor informed Members that a Residents' Working Group had been formed with a view to finding a possible solution to the traffic issues in the Falcon Road area. A number of useful discussions and debates had taken place between the Working Group, Members and relevant officers which had resulted in a general agreement that a solution should be implemented to limit traffic, although no firm recommendations had been suggested at this time.

It was noted that the Council's Traffic and Transport Section would consider the proposed options in the report with a view to a further detailed report being submitted to Cabinet for decision.

### **Decision**

- (i) That no action be taken at the current time.
- (ii) That the proposed options be examined and a detailed report be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet.

## **190. Final Report – Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care Service** (*Children's Services Scrutiny Forum*)

### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

### **Purpose of report**

To outline the findings and conclusions of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care

Service’.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Vice Chair of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum presented the final report into the Forum’s investigation into Hartlepool Borough Council’s Foster Care Service. Members’ attention was drawn to the Forum’s wishes for an urgent completion of the current review into Hartlepool Borough Council’s Foster Care Service and that the delivery of training for foster carers at set times of the year should be adopted to ensure that prospective carers know potential waiting times when they apply. In addition it was highlighted that support services including financial support should be made immediately available prior to the formalisation of a Kinship Care Arrangement.

Members discussed a number of the recommendations in the report and questioned whether the investigation examined how independent foster carers were monitored. The Assistant Director, Children’s Services confirmed that there were a number of independent foster care agencies that were commissioned by the Council with placements being reviewed on a monthly basis. It was noted that the Forum had suggested innovative approaches in the future marketing of foster care service be explored and a Member sought further information on this. The Director of Children’s Services indicated that a review of the marketing strategy was being undertaken through partnership working with regional networks to explore different ways of reaching a diverse market for potential foster carers. A Member commented that the reinstatement of the promotional banner at Hartlepool United Football Club should be explored.

In response to a Member’s question about the remuneration of foster carers, the Assistant Director indicated that across the north east region, Hartlepool Council provided fairly generous payments for foster carers. Clarification was sought on whether people with or without families were targeted to become foster carers. The Assistant Director responded that the fact that people did not need to conform to the traditional model family to become foster carers should be emphasised.

### **Decision**

That incorporating Members’ comments above, the recommendations of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum, as set out below, be approved:-

- (a) That the current review of Hartlepool Borough Council’s Foster Care Service be completed as a matter of urgency in order to stabilise recruitment and retention difficulties;
- (b) That innovative approaches in the future marketing of the foster care service be further explored in the following areas:-

- (i) Lack of family group provision;
  - (ii) Identification of suitable location(s) in the Town for a permanent advertisement for the recruitment of foster carers; and
  - (iii) Through untapped mediums, such as Radio Hartlepool and leaflets in doctors' surgeries, libraries and shopping centres.
- (c) That the delivery of future training programmes for new Foster Carers:-
- (i) Be delivered in-house at set times of the year;
  - (ii) Ensures opportunities for extending such training to external foster carers be explored; and
  - (iii) Where in-house delivery capacity issues occur, that support is sought from other Local Authorities or independent foster care agencies.
- (d) That the Foster Care Service Section on the Council's website be redesigned to make it a more accessible and comprehensive source of information; and
- (e) That where a child is placed within his / her family, support services be made immediately accessible, including the provision of financial support, prior to the formalisation of a Kinship Care Arrangement.

**191. Scrutiny Investigation into 'Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care Service' – Action Plan** (*Director of Children's Services*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key.

**Purpose of report**

To agree an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care Service'.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

To assist the Cabinet in its determination of either approving or rejecting the

proposed recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, attached as Appendix A to the report was the proposed Action Plan for the implementation of those recommendations which had been prepared in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

Implementation of the action plan would be subject to the comments made by Cabinet in the previous item.

### **Decision**

That the Action Plan prepared in response to the recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Hartlepool Borough Council's Foster Care Service' be approved

## **192. Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2010** (*Director of Children's Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

Cabinet was requested to consider the Final Draft version of the Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2020 and refer the plan to Children's Services Scrutiny Forum.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services presented a report which confirmed that the local authority was required to produce a Children 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 had been reviewed and following consultation with stakeholders, a new plan had been prepared to reflect the present and future needs of children and young people within Hartlepool. The current plan expired on 31 March 2009.

A Member sought clarification on what measures were in place to deal with eradicating child poverty which was both a regional and local issue. The Head of Commissioning indicated that a number of actions were being undertaken with the aim of developing a joined up strategy for the whole town, including the Economic Development Section of the Council and national benefit agencies. In addition to this, the availability and eligibility criteria for benefits were promoted through the Children's Centres and social care provision. The Chief Executive added that in view of the current

economic climate, an initiative to promote the take-up of benefits was currently being developed by the Assistant Chief Financial Officer. Members commented on the excellent work undertaken by the Council's Benefits Team which has been recognised nationally and emphasised the need for Children's Services to work closely with them.

A Member questioned the monitoring and review arrangements for the Plan in view of the fact that it was a long term plan. The Head of Commissioning indicated that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) required progress reviews to be undertaken annually. These reviews would involve consultation with service users and Members. It was also proposed that major reviews be undertaken in years 3 and 5 to ensure the plan's priorities and actions were still relevant.

A number of young people had approached Members with concerns that activities for them to participate in were limited and transport to and from any activities was a major issue. The Commissioning Manager informed Members that there were a number of other departmental plans below this plan that will address these issues. In addition, the Department were currently working alongside the Traffic and Transportation Section with a view to approaching bus companies about improving access to transport services for young people.

A Member referred to the difference in life expectancy across various wards within the town and asked how this was being tackled. The Director of Children's Services responded that the Children and Young People's Plan was an over-arching plan with a bookcase of other plans in support. It was acknowledged that the variance in life expectancy across the town was an issue and that the Children's Services Department were working with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Locality Director for Public Health to address health inequalities across the town. A Member commented on the level of self harm in young people reported and asked what mechanisms were in place to enable early identification and prevention of this issue. The Commissioning Manager informed Members that the Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS) were very pro-active in this area and had provided diagnostic tools for schools to utilise. Additional training had also been arranged for school staff to alert them to the signs to look for.

Whilst it was recognised that the consultation undertaken had been extensive, it was suggested that a more pro-active approach be taken to reach a wider range of young people, including the 6<sup>th</sup> Form and Further Education Colleges. The Commissioning Manager responded that the Young Voices group had been invaluable throughout the development of the Plan but added that utilising the Colleges in the town more for consultation purposes would be looked at as part of the review.

## **Decision**

- (i) The Final Draft Version of the Children and Young People's Plan

2009-2020 was noted.

- (ii) That the Plan be referred to the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum with its view and comments reported back to Cabinet in February 2009.

### **193. Local Government (Access to Information ) Act 1985**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be 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 the paragraphs below 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 194 Hartlepool People Centre, 21 Raby Road This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) Para 3.

- 194. Hartlepool People Centre, 21 Raby Road** (*Director of Neighbourhood Services*) This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) Para 3.

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

To update Cabinet on the progress made following Hartlepool People's successful bid to the Community Asset Transfer Fund further to the report presented to Cabinet on 7 July 2008.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet**

The report outlined the progress that had been made in relation to the transfer of the property and the Community Asset Transfer bid. It highlighted problems which had now been resolved and detailed the outcome. Additional details were included within the exempt section of the minutes.

#### **Decision**

Details of the decision were included within the exempt section of the

minutes.

The meeting concluded at 9.50 am.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 16 January 2009**