

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

24 February 2009

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
Sue Johnson, Assistant Director, Planning and Service Integration
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Specialist Services
Graham Frankland, Head of Property, Procurement and Public Protection
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

36. Review of Schools Transformation Programme External Advisor Support *(Assistant Director, Resources and Support Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to review the use of external advisor support for the Schools Transformation Project.

Issues for consideration by the Portfolio Holder

Hartlepool Borough Council was admitted to the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in November 2007 and following the submission and approval of a Strategy for Change, the Outline Business Case (OBC) had been submitted in December 2008 and was expected to be approved by the end of February 2009.

The external advisor support to be reviewed were:-

Technical Advisor - Gleeds

This appointment had been made in June 2007 to work with the

Local Authority and Partnerships for Schools to ensure that the required standard procurement models, processes and documentation were applied in order to ensure the success of the technical aspects of the programme. The firm has worked successfully with the Authority since their appointment and it was proposed to extend the appointment as soon as the Outline Business Case was approved in line with the terms of the original appointment.

ICT Advisor – Specialist Computer Systems Ltd

Tribal Education and Technology had been appointed in November 2007 to work within the Authority's BSF programme to develop with schools and the Authority the ICT vision and Strategy for Change documentation. The letter appointing Tribal Education and Technology confirmed engagement up to the approval of the Outline Business Case and beyond, subject to review. Tribal had engaged a specialist consultant to provide the direct advice to Hartlepool and had since indicated that it did not wish to be formally engaged to provide advice during the procurement phase for commercial reasons and therefore the Council's contract with Tribal will cease. In order to ensure continuity of provision it was proposed that the Council commissioned the specialist consultant directly. This course of action would practically replicate the existing arrangements in terms of the same consultant providing the same services at prices that proved value for money in a competitive environment. A direct appointment would significantly reduce the rates charged as the Council would not therefore pay for a percentage mark up charged by Tribal. In order to follow this course of action, it would be necessary for the Portfolio Holder to confirm that an exemption could be made from the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The current consultant had good relationships with secondary head teachers. The Portfolio Holder agreed that if the contract were to change then there could be risk of a delay in the project.

Legal Advisor – Ward Hadaway

This appointment had been made in January 2008 as an outcome of a competitive process using the Tees Valley framework for legal advice. The remit of the appointment was to work with the Local Authority and Partnerships for Schools to ensure that standard procurement models, processes and documentation were applied as part of the BSF programme up until financial close. Ward Hadaway had been working with Hartlepool's in-house legal team and it was recommended that the continuation of the contract be confirmed in line with the terms of original appointment.

Financial Advisor – BDO Stoy Hayward

The appointment had been made in July 2008 with a remit of

working with both the Local Authority and Partnerships for Schools to ensure that standard procurement models, processes and documentation were applied as part of the BSF programme until Financial Close. It was recommended that this contract be confirmed into the procurement phase of the programme in line with the terms of the original appointment.

Client Design Advisor – GWK Architects

This appointment had been made in May 2008 to work within Hartlepool's BSF programme with the Authority and local and national stakeholders through the preparation, design, construction, occupation and utilisation stages. It was recommended that the contract be continued into the procurement phase in line with the terms of original appointment. It was intended that the in-house team would be undertaking or procuring the technical design with advice from the Client Design Advisor. It was also recommended that the brief given to GWK Architects would be amended in order that they became the Schools Transformation Programme Client Advisor, thereby enabling them to initiate the translation of primary school visions for transformation into project briefs and outline sketch designs, ahead of the appointment of a project team and this would enable the optimum use of in-house expertise of the Council. At present there is no in house architect with experience of school design but it was hoped that the skills offered by the Client Design Advisor would be passed on to the in house team and the plans for Jesmond Road and Rossmere Schools could be implemented as soon as possible.

Education Advisor – Deputy Headteacher, Manor College of Technology

This appointment had been made in February 2008 on a part time secondment basis. It was recommended that this be extended into the procurement phase of the programme in order to ensure that the transformational aspects of the Strategy for Change and Outline Business Case were protected, developed and delivered and that the appointment would be extended to 4 days a week following a Skills Review by 4Ps.

The total value of BSF investment in Hartlepool's secondary schools was expected to be in the region of £104 million. Successful relationships between the Authority and its current advisors had ensured that the Outline Business Case had been submitted on time. It was expected that this would be approved on or shortly after 26 February 2009 after which the project would immediately move into the procurement phase. If appropriate external advisors were not in place a delay to the project would be likely and would pose a risk that the capital expenditure profile agreed with the government would not be achieved. There was sufficient resource in the budget

plan endorsed by the Chief Financial Officer and approved by Cabinet and Council.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved:-

- An extension of the engagement of the Technical Advisor (Gleeds) beyond OBC submission, up to financial close of the design and build solution of the sample scheme (Dyke House School). Gleeds will be required to work with the in-house team in respect of design services in the first instance or via an agreed sub-contracting arrangement as a condition of this extension.
- An exemption from the Council's contract procedure rules to permit the direct commissioning of Specialist Computer Systems Ltd in order to preserve continuity of advisor support through the competitive dialogue phase of procurement. This appointment to be further reviewed following financial close of the ICT Managed Service contract.
- The confirmation of the continuation of the engagement of Ward Hadaway as Legal Advisor, as originally specified.
- The confirmation of the continuation of the engagement of BDO Stoy Hayward as Financial Advisor, as originally specified.
- The confirmation of the continuation of the engagement of GWK Architects as the Client Design Advisor to the Building Schools for the Future programme. Extension of the remit of GWK Architects to be the Schools Transformation Programme Client Design Advisor, in order to ensure appropriate integration and synergy between the Building Schools for the Future Programme and the Primary Capital Programme.
- An extension of the time allocation of the Deputy Headteacher of Manor College of Technology as Education Advisor from three days each week to four days each week, by agreement with Manor College of Technology, in light of recommendations of a Skills Review by 4ps.

37. Children's Services Departmental Plan Quarter 3 Progress Report - Assistant Director, Planning and Service Integration

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made towards achieving Departmental Plan actions and Performance Indicators (PIs) for the period to 31 December 2008.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Departmental Plan identified actions and PIs for 2008/09 and the report summarised the progress which had been made towards achieving the actions. The PIs associated with many of the actions were reported annually but the responsible officers had been able to indicate where activities were broadly on target.

In quarter 1 the action:-

- Implement the Schools Transformation Programme including Strategy for Change 2 (secondary schools) and a further round of consultation for the Primary Capital Programme

had been recorded as complete, but in view of the fact that the programme had moved on and further progress made in relation to activity beyond those originally stated in the action this was now recorded as 'amber'.

During the year there had been some re-allocation of indicators to other departments and a further two indicators relating to childhood obesity had been reassigned to Neighbourhoods Services but this did not alter the fact that the Children's Services Department would be actively working with partners to address the relevant issues.

In addition to the two outturns that had been recorded as red at the previous quarter relating to Early Years outcomes, the outturn for five or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths had failed to achieve the target although Hartlepool schools achieved results for five grades A*-C in any subject being above the national level for the first time. Meeting the target for secondary school persistent absence rate had also been identified as not expected to achieve the target for the year. It was highlighted that the Department for Children Schools and Families had changed the definition since the target was set.

There was mixed success in achieving targets for Looked After Children as the cohort had changed between the period for setting the target and the actual GCSE examinations. It was noted that the educational progress of this group of children was deemed as a high

priority and was monitored closely on an individual basis. It was also noted that percentage figures could vary greatly as there were very small numbers of Looked After Children in any particular year group. The Portfolio Holder asked that it be stressed to carers that there was funding available for extra tuition for looked after children who were not achieving at expected levels. The Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Support Services said that there were now measures in place to provide greater support for foster carers in the future.

The Ofsted Annual Performance assessment 2008 for Children's Services had been published on 17 December 2008 and Hartlepool had maintained its rating of Good for the overall effectiveness of Children's Services. Hartlepool achieved one outstanding rating for Making a Positive Contribution but the Being Healthy target moved from good to adequate. The lack of sustained progress in reducing teenage conceptions and the low proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding were identified as 2 important weaknesses which required development.

It was noted that although many of the indicators were reported on an annual basis, work was monitored throughout the year using other reporting systems.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress made towards completing the actions and performance indicator targets during the third quarter of 2008/09. A further, final report for 2008/09 would be given at the end of the fourth quarter in line with corporate requirements.

The meeting concluded at 10.35 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 3 March 2009