

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

23 March 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
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director – Safeguarding and Specialist Services
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager
Anne Smith, Head of Information Planning and Support Services
Kelly Moss, Children's Services Officer
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

38. Provision for Pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) at Springwell School *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Key – test ii applies

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the outcomes of the consultation on the proposal to designate Springwell School to admit pupils with BESD and to seek approval to publish statutory notices in relation to this.

Issues for consideration by the Portfolio Holder

In November 2008 a report had been submitted to the Portfolio Holder giving background information on the Schools Transformation Programme and the priority given to pupils with special educational needs. Proposals were included to designate Springwell School to admit pupils with BESD and the Portfolio Holder had agreed that these proposals should go out to

consultation. Consultation booklets and letters were subsequently sent to all interested parties and consultation meetings were held at Springwell School and the Education Development Centre. As a result of the consultation 10 written replies were received, all of which supported the proposals. Given this response officers recommended approval be given to publish statutory notices early in the 2009 summer term for the statutory period of 6 weeks for objections. A further report would then be brought to the Portfolio Holder. The Portfolio Holder indicated she would be happy to agree to this and was very confident that the pupils would be well looked after.

Decision

That the publication of a public notice for a statutory period of 6 weeks for any formal objections to be received in relation to the designation of Springwell School to admit up to 8 pupils in the age range 6 years to 11 years with statements of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties from 1st September 2009 be agreed.

39. Admissions to Schools 2010/11 and Co-ordinated Admissions Procedures to Primary and Secondary Schools for 2010/11 – Director of Children's Services

Type of Decision

Key – test ii applies

Purpose of Report

To determine the admission policy for community and voluntary controlled primary schools in Hartlepool for the school year 2010/11 and the co-ordinated admissions procedures to primary and secondary schools for 2010/11 following consultation with governing bodies and other admissions authorities.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report indicated that Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 lays down the way in which an admissions authority must determine admission arrangements and requires it to consult with governing bodies and with other admission authorities.

A new statutory code of practice the School Admissions Code came into force on 10th February 2009, applicable to all maintained schools and academies. Admission Authorities must ensure that their determined admission arrangements comply with the

mandatory provisions of the code, details of which were provided within the report. The Children's Services Authority, as admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools must consult on admission arrangements for these schools each year. In September 2008 the Portfolio Holder approved consultation for 2010/11 on the basis of

- Continuing the 2009/10 admission arrangements for 2010/11
- Introducing a partner primary model to replace admission zone as part of the oversubscription criteria for secondary schools
- Seeking views on proposed admission limits
- Seeking views on proposals for co-ordination of admissions from September 2010, for primary and secondary schools

As a result of the introduction of the new code in February 2009, a number of further changes had been introduced as follows:

- That co-ordinated schemes for the normal year of entry for 2010/11 would need to be formulated by 1st January 2009
- That local authorities would also be required to co-ordinate in-year applications from 2010/11
- That consultation would need to take place with relevant parents and other groups with an interest in the local area
- That consultation would need to last a minimum of 8 weeks
- That consultation would need to be completed by 1st March 2009

The report and Appendix 2 summarised responses to the consultation process. Revised admission limits were detailed at Appendix 3. The Admissions Forum had noted the changes to the scheme which were attached at Appendix 4.

On the basis of the consultation exercise, it was proposed that the admissions policy for entry to community and voluntary controlled schools in 2009/10 be as detailed in the report.

Decision

- I. That the admissions policy for 2010/11 as set out in the report be approved
- II. That the current partner primary model be adopted as part of the oversubscription criteria for secondary schools, pending the outcome of the Primary Capital Programme planning process
- III. That the single stage entry at reception continue

IV. That the revised admission limits be agreed

V. That the revised co-ordinated admission schemes be approved.

40. Playbuilder Project *(Director of Adult and Community Services and Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Key – test 1 applies

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to submit a play builder project plan to the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The submission of the action plan would release the play builder funding.

Issues for consideration by the Portfolio Holder

The Department of Children, Schools and Families published a National Play Strategy in 2008. The strategy highlighted the importance of play and high quality play environments, setting out a play builder project which required local authorities to develop play areas.

Hartlepool Borough Council was notified on 26th February 2009 that it had been allocated £1,129,958. In order to release this funding the local authority needed to submit a project plan setting out the timescales for the development and or significant refurbishment of 22 play areas. The first 11 of these would need to be developed between April 2009 – March 2010. The remaining 11 to be completed by 31st March 2010.

Details of the 11 play areas to be developed between April 2009 – March 2010 were given within the report. All were play areas that had already been identified in current planning processes with a number already having been consulted upon. The play areas to be developed in the second year of the play builder project would need to be fully consulted on.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her support for the project given the need for more play areas in the community.

Decision

That the project plan be approved for submission to the Department for Children's, Schools and Families.

41. Decommissioning of Children's Centres Services – *Director of Children's Services*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

- I. To seek approval to decommission children's centre service level agreements with PATCH, MIND and Harbour following the approval of an outreach service specification
- II. To seek approval for the transfer of service level agreements to a joint contract for Credit Union and West View Advice and Resource Centre.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

On 13th November 2008 the Portfolio Holder had approved a children's centres outreach service specification to go to tender. Following this decision a call-in notice was submitted to the proper officer by members of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee. The Portfolio Holder subsequently reaffirmed approval on 29th January 2009. In line with this decision current services being delivered would need reviewing against the outreach service specification.

The outreach service was advertised at the end of February 2009 with the expectation that a provider would be chosen and contracts agreed by July 2009. There were currently five service providers delivering services under the children's centre service level agreements: MIND, PATCH, Harbour, Credit Union and West View Advice and Resource Centre (WVARC). The new outreach service specification included elements of the current MIND, PATCH and Harbour agreements and it was therefore proposed that these current service level agreements cease to take effect from 1st July 2009. The new service specification does not contain any requirement for financial inclusion support. Credit Union and WVARC already provide this service for children's centres in 2 separate contracts. It was proposed that one contract be set up to ensure the services could be closely monitored. Renegotiation with these providers was felt preferable to going through the tender process as the amounts of money were relatively small in comparison to the outreach package and the services provided would not change.

Consultation had taken place with all the service providers and all

had been given the opportunity to bid through the Council's procurement processes. The savings made on the decommissioning of PATCH, MIND and Harbour would be reinvested into the outreach package approved by the Portfolio Holder in November 2009. The funding for Credit Union and WVRAC would continue but be transferred into a joint contract, thereby providing savings to the department in terms of monitoring 1 contract instead of 2.

The Portfolio Holder thanked the officers for all their hard work on this project which would hopefully provide an effective service to families while giving value for money to the local authority.

Decision

- I. That the decommissioning of children's centre service level agreements with PATCH, MIND and Harbour be approved following the approval of an outreach service specification
- II. That the transfer of service level agreements to a joint contract for Credit Union and West View Advice and Resource Centre be approved

42. General Sure Start Grant Capital Projects 2009-2010 *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

- I. To seek approval for the revised costings for Children's Centres 2009-2009
- II. To seek approval for further Children's Centres capital works at Chatham House Children's Centre and Hindpool Close Children's Centre

Issues for consideration by the Portfolio Holder

The report detailed the revised costs for capital works at Stranton Primary School and Throston Primary School. Both capital works had been approved by the Portfolio Holder in August 2008, however the estimated cost for Stranton Primary School had been too low and approval was needed on the revised amount in order to progress the building works. In the case of Throston Primary School an additional need to develop a Foundation Stage Unit had been identified requiring an increase in construction costs. This work

would need to start as soon as possible in order that Throston be designated as a Phase 3 Centre by March 2010.

Proposed developments for Chatham House and Hindpool Children's Centres were also outlined. In both cases the construction of a café/ community meeting place was proposed.

Details of the revised costings and proposed funding were given within the report.

Decision

- I. That the revised costings for Children's Centres 2008-2009 be approved
- II. That further Children's Centres capital works at Chatham House Children's Centre and Hindpool Close Children's Centre be approved.

43. Schools Sickness Absence Insurance Cover – *Director of Children's Services*

Type of Decision

Non Key

Purpose of Report

- I. To inform the Portfolio Holder of a requirement to review a contract in relation to schools sickness absence insurance cover
- II. To request authorisation to extend the existing contract for a further 12 months to allow the department to undertake further scoping work with schools and market testing in advance of advertising a full tender opportunity later in this calendar year.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Department had been developing a more robust approach to the monitoring and review of contracts. As a result it had been identified that the contract relating to the provision of insurance policies for schools to provide staffing cover in the event of long term sickness and maternity cover should be renewed as a matter of priority. Given the specific nature of the contract there was a need to ensure any new contract begin at the start of a financial year in order to link with the business requirements and funding cycles of schools.

Officers recommended that the existing contract be extended for a 12 month period in order to allow the Department to undertake a comprehensive needs analysis with schools and other key stakeholders. In addition, and assuming that schools were in favour, it was recommended that the contract be re-tendered later in 2009 with a view to contracting on 1st April 2010. These recommendations were fully supported by the Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection and the Departmental Head of Finance.

Decision

- I. That authorisation be granted to extend the existing contract in relation to schools sickness insurance cover for a twelve month period allowing sufficient time for a detailed analysis to be completed with schools
- II. That authorisation be granted, subject to the findings of the needs analysis carried out with schools to advertise a tender for this project in October 2009 with a view to contracting in April 2010.

44. Space to Learn Project – St Hild's School

(Director of Children's Services and Head of Procurement, Property and Public Protection)

Type of decision

Non Key

Purpose of Report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the development of the Space to Learn project at St Hild's School, to approve an approach to elements of sponsorship for the project and to note the arrangements for an official launch of the project.

Issues for consideration by the Portfolio Holder

Space to Learn was intended to be a purpose built learning environment which would enable all schools throughout the town to test out new ideas in teaching and learning ahead of the Primary Capital Programme (PCP) and Building Schools for the Future (BSF) investments. A £1 million budget had been secured from the Roman Catholic and Church of England Dioceses and the Council's capital programme, as agreed by the Portfolio Holder in March 2008. Officers had been promoting the project to local businesses, inviting suggestions on construction, layout, ICT infrastructure and furniture, fixtures and fittings. As a result there had been a significant interest from potential providers in sponsoring the project through the supply

of materials, equipment, technology and other goods and services. These materials would be supplied at no cost to the Council and without prejudice to any other supplies or services to be provided to the Council at any time in the future. The proposed process for approval and acceptance of proposals was that all offers under £5,000 would be approved by the School's Transformation Project Director and all offers of £5,000 and over be brought to the Portfolio Holder for approval. A draft protocol was appended to the report for the Portfolio Holder's consideration

The Children's Services Officer advised the Portfolio Holder that a launch event of Space to Learn was planned for 23rd April 2009, subject to approval of the sponsorship arrangements. Those companies that had expressed an interest in sponsorship would be invited and it was hoped that the related publicity of this event would encourage other local businesses to express an interest.

The Portfolio Holder praised the project as a fantastic facility and a beacon of good practice which Hartlepool would be proud to have. The Assistant Director, Resources and Support Services reported that officers were due to meet with experts in this field and a nomination as a National Centre of Excellence was anticipated.

Decision

- I. That the progress on the Space to Learn project be noted
- II. That the approach to Sponsorship as outlined in the report and appendix be approved.
- III. That the arrangements for the launch of the Space to Learn project be noted.

45. Exmoor Grove Children's Home Inspection Report – Director of Children's Services

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Exmoor Grove Children's Home which took place on 5th November 2008

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection. All of the key national minimum standards were investigated as well as actions and recommendations made at the previous inspection. Each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes were looked at in detail regarding the service provided to children and young people as well as the organisation of the home. All outcomes were rated "Good", meaning strong provision. Only one recommendation – to ensure that the physical state of the building is reviewed regularly and shortfalls are addressed – had been made, although the inspector had acknowledged the improvements in the physical environment since the previous inspection by the refurbishment and redecoration of the living areas.

The Portfolio Holder indicated she had always been impressed by her visits to Exmoor Grove and asked that a letter be sent to the staff congratulating them on the inspection results.

Decision

- I. That the inspection report be received
- II. That the recommendation of the inspector be noted
- III. That a letter be sent on behalf of the Portfolio Holder to the staff of Exmoor Grove Children's Home congratulating them on the results of the inspection.

46. Study Visit to Reggio Emilia – Director of Children's Services

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To note the attendance to a study visit in Reggio Emilia, Italy 20th-24th April 2009 of early years officers.

Issues for Consideration by Portfolio Holder

Reggio Emilia is a region of Northern Italy internationally acclaimed as best practice for early years practice. The approach has been highlighted by the National Strategies as good practice and officers encouraged to attend the annual study visits for early years practitioners. The Foundation Stage Profile results for Hartlepool are below the national average and among the worst in the region. It was therefore important for officers to challenge their own thinking in

terms of children's learning in the early years. Three members of staff would therefore be attending at a total cost of £6,120. This would be funded through the General Sure Start Grant. Anything learned on the study visit would be passed on to other officers in the Department.

Decision

That the attendance of early years officers to a study visit in Reggio Emilia, Italy, 20th-24th April 2009 be noted

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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