

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

5 May 2009

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Paul Briggs, Assistant Director, Resources and Support Services
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Specialist Services

Anne Smith, Head of Information Planning and Support Services
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

52. Outcome of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Information and Communications Technology Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) Evaluation Process *(Director of Children's Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to inform the Portfolio Holder of the outcome of recent evaluations of the Pre Qualification Questionnaires and to advise of the three preferred bidders for the next stage of the BSF ICT procurement.

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the process for evaluation of the pre qualification questionnaires and the outcome of the process.

Details of the suppliers who submitted PQQs and the three top bidders selected to go through to the next stage of the process were named in an exempt appendix to the report. The appendix contained exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The Portfolio Holder was informed that the shortlisted companies would be contacted to ensure that they were still interested in undertaking the contract and if not a further company had been earmarked to join the shortlist. There was a risk of challenge by any of the companies that had not been shortlisted to proceed to the next stage, but full composite copies of all documentation including the evaluations had been retained for audit purposes.

The financial considerations for the process were in relation to officer time spent on the evaluation but the benefits of a thorough process outweighed any financial issues. As part of the evaluation process, internal and external legal advisors had considered the responses within the PQQ relating to any legal aspects.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the top three bidders and the intention to proceed to the next stage of the procurement process.

53. Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool *(Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Specialist Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

The report was presented in order to update the Portfolio Holder in relation to the arrangements for safeguarding children in Hartlepool and to provide an analysis of statistical information in relation to safeguarding activity between January and March 2009.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided the Portfolio Holder with information on the arrangements for safeguarding children in Hartlepool. The report provided statistics of children receiving services from Safeguarding and Specialist Services including children in need (625), children subject to protection plans (81) and children looked after (155).

The Portfolio Holder was informed that there had been a significantly higher number of referrals in January which had also led to an increase in the number of children subject to protection plans and looked after by the authority. In February and March activity returned to levels more in line with the annual average, but emerging patterns and trends were being closely monitored.

The service employs 117.5 members of staff to work with children and their families. The report detailed the current staffing structure of the service,

information in relation to staff vacancies, cover arrangements and staff absence. Team managers and heads of business units closely monitored social work caseloads to ensure these were maintained at manageable levels and that information was shared with the Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive. The service had resolved four complaints in the last quarter and received one compliment. Hartlepool Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is the co-ordinating body that manages safeguarding arrangements in the town. The work of the LSCB is monitored through an annual work plan. The draft priorities and work plan of the Board had been developed and would be presented to the Board for ratification in May 2009.

It was clarified to the Portfolio Holder that the increased referrals in January had led to increased numbers of protection plans.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the cost of provision of residential home or school places for 11 children. One place could cost in the region of £250,000 but the commissioning team were robust in negotiating prices for the provision of care for these children with specific needs.

The Portfolio Holder queried the sickness absence figures alluded to in the report and was informed that in the past year there have been two members of staff on long term sick.

The legal cost for instigating care proceedings was highlighted but it was stressed that the cost is not a factor in considering the commencing of child care proceedings, decisions are based on the needs and welfare of the child.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the content of the report.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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