

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

1 December 2009

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

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Nicola Bailey, Director of Child & Adult Services
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Specialist Services
Sue Johnson, Assistant Director, Planning and Service Integration
Ian Merritt, Head of Commissioning and Children's Trust
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager
John Leach, Senior Advisor, Workforce Development
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

33. Aiming High For Disabled Children – Provision of a Toy/Resource Library – *Extended Services and Early Years Manager*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

For the Portfolio Holder to approve either:-

- A tender process to be implemented for the provision of a toy/resource library using Part B of European Procurement Regulations
- or
- Grant an exemption from the Council's contract procedure rules, as specified in the Constitution to enable the current provider to extend their provision to include specialist toys/equipment

Issues for Consideration

The Government published 'Aiming High for Disabled Children' in 2007 which was a transformation programme for disabled children's services in England. The document set out the vision for the programme and the key improvements that Government want to see in services and support for disabled children and their families. The programme was jointly led by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Health.

The vision behind Aiming High for Disabled Children was for all families with disabled children to have the support they need to live ordinary family lives.

The implementation of Aiming High for Disabled Children short break respite care was being led by parents of children with complex needs. The parents had highlighted gaps in provision, one of them being a toy/resource library. The report set out the current provision available and the proposal to extend this. Exploratory negotiations with the only existing toy library provider had indicated that to extend its current scope to include specialist equipment would cost in the region of £44,000 and therefore the Portfolio Holder was requested to decide whether to sanction an exemption to the contract procedure rules or whether to put the contract out to tender.

Discussion ensued as to the pros and cons of either option as the Portfolio Holder stated she had a responsibility towards those who would be capable of providing the services as well as the responsibility to taxpayers to get the best possible deal. Funding would not continue for this after 2011 but it was envisaged that the resource would be self sustaining as was the current toy library provision.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder granted an exemption from the Council's contract procedure rules, as specified in the Constitution, to enable the current provider to extend its provision to include specialist toys/equipment.

34. Strategy and Action Plan for Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities 2009/2012 – Assistant Director, Planning and Service Integration

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the final draft of the Strategy and Action Plan for Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD) 2009/2012.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided background information about the development of the plan. There was no statutory requirement to have such a plan but the Authority considered it necessary to develop this. Consultation had taken place with a wide range of stakeholders as well as students from Catcote School. The plan had been structured in the same way as the 2007/2010 plan to reflect the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people and there were no cost implications from the Department's revenue budget.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the final draft of the Strategy and Action Plan for Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities 2009/12 which would be taken to the Children and Young People's Trust for endorsement before the final version of the plan was published.

35. Family Group Conferences – Head of Commissioning and Children's Trust

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of a recent commissioning exercise that gathered formal quotations on the future use of family group conferences.

Issues for Consideration

Family Group Conferences were being developed, delivered and evaluated in Hartlepool as a response to several policy, guidance and legislative initiatives, for example the Public Law Outline, in circumstances where Safeguarding and Specialist Services were considering putting families on notice that statutory intervention was planned in respect of their children.

Family Group Conferences are a managed process by which families (including wider family and social networks of families) are supported to find solutions where there are concerns about the

wellbeing or welfare of children and young people in a range of circumstances.

Following requests for formal quotations, in compliance with the Council Constitution, a unit cost for providing Family Group Conferences had been established. It was proposed that the use of Family Group Conferences was monitored and if annual expenditure on this area was likely to exceed the Contract Procedure thresholds, a future tender may be undertaken. However the Portfolio Holder felt that the benefit of supplying these Conferences would prove more economical in the long term as early intervention may prevent a child or young person having to be taken into care.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the future use of Family Group Conferences and the unit cost established following the submission of formal quotations. The Portfolio Holder also authorised any future tendering process, should monitoring indicate that the level of business would warrant this.

36. Integrated Transport Unit Joint Tender (Ref 431) *– Director of Child and Adult Services*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To seek Portfolio Holder approval for the procurement of transport provision for the Dyke House Sports and Technology college decant to the former Brierton School site during 2010 – 2012.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided details of the business case for the provision of transport for the Dyke House Sports and Technology College pupil decant to the former Brierton School site during 2010 – 2012.

The report also confirmed that the tender would form part of a joint tender arrangement in relation to additional transport provision located within the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Division. It was envisaged that new contracts would be awarded no later than April 2010.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the joint procurement process.

37. Changes in Pricing Policies – Chatham House Daycare and Bushbabies Daycare and Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCARS) Out of School Service – Surestart, Extended Services and Early Years Manager

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for a change in charges for OSCARS out of school service, Chatham House Daycare and Bushbabies Daycare.

Issues for Consideration

OSCARS is an all year round childcare service operated by Hartlepool Borough Council. It offers both after school club provision and holiday club provision. The service is townwide and open to children from 4 – 16 years of age and operates from 2 locations within the town.

Chatham House day care and Bushbabies daycare are based at Chatham House Children's Centre and Rossmere Children's Centre respectively providing daycare for children aged 0 – 5 years old.

Unfortunately these services are not sustainable with their current fee structures. The report set out proposals to changes in pricing policy in order to increase income and support the future viability of the service. The Surestart, Extended Services and Early Years Manager outlined new charges for the service in relation to free nursery entitlement wrap around, flexible hours and retainer fees. Charges would also be made for late payment of fees as well as late collection of children from the service. However these fees were in line with private day care provision in the town.

The Portfolio Holder expressed reservations to the proposed charges for late collection of children but was reminded that staff would need to be paid to stay back to look after the children. The Surestart, Extended Services and Early Years Manager agreed to give parents notice of the changes to fees prior to the introduction of the fees.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved:-

- Change in fee structure for Bushbabies daycare and

Chatham House daycare

- The introduction of a full charge for non notification and a late collection payment for OSCARS out of school service.

38. The Implementation and Development of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) within Hartlepool – *Assistant Director Safeguarding and Specialist Services*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To notify the Portfolio Holder of the development and integration of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) within Hartlepool.

Issues for Consideration

The CAF had been fully implemented in August 2007 and the report examined the progress since then. The framework was used by all agencies in the town delivering services to children to assess need although the major users were the Health and Education sectors. A CAF Co-ordinator had been appointed who had identified the need for a formal rolling programme of training and a number of dates had been identified. An eCAF system was also to be piloted. The report explored key areas of development and the training on offer to support the further integration of CAF.

It was highlighted how a group of young people, as part of the 11 Million Takeover Day, had given their views on the CAF documentation and process. It had been decided that young people who had received support through a CAF would also be consulted.

The Portfolio Holder agreed what a useful tool the CAF was, as it prevented young people having to repeat their concerns on a number of occasions to different agencies.

It was clarified that 'hard to reach' staff were those whose hours of work were not during the normal working day and this made it difficult for them to access planned training sessions.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress made by CAF in relation to its support to children, young people and families.

The Portfolio Holder also noted the progress made in relation to

supporting organisations understand integrated working and their responsibilities for providing targeted, co-ordinated services.

39. Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool – Assistant Director Safeguarding and Specialist Services

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

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 July and September 2009.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided the Portfolio Holder with information on the arrangements for safeguarding children in Hartlepool. It provided statistics of children receiving services from Safeguarding and Specialist Services including children in need (577 as at 30 September 2009), children subject to protection plans (110) and children looked after (160).

The number of referrals per month had increased but this would be monitored to see whether it was an emerging change in demand. The numbers of children subject to child protection plans continued to rise although not at the same speed as the previous two quarters. However it had been established that this was not peculiar to Hartlepool and was the same in other localities in the North East.

Details were also given in relation to the current staffing structure of the service and information in relation to staff vacancies, cover arrangements and staff absence.

Team Managers and Heads of Business Units closely monitor social work caseloads to ensure that they are maintained at manageable levels and that only children receiving a service are active on social work caseloads. The report also included details of complaints and compliments received about the service during the period under review.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the contents of the report.

40. Sure Start Children's Centres Progress Report –

Sure Start Extended Services and Early Years Manager

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

For the Portfolio Holder to note the progress in relation to Sure Start Children's Centres.

Issues for Consideration

The report provided an update of progress in relation to government targets for the development of Sure Start Children's Centres. The third phase with a Children's Centre based at Throston Primary School being designated in October 2009 ensured that Hartlepool had met its designation target ahead of schedule. Those centres designated in phases one and two were now offering the full core of services and Hartlepool was one of the first 25 Local Authorities in the country to achieve this target.

Details were given of proposed programmes to support parents. Links had been established with the Parent Support Advisors in schools and consultation with these advisors would take place in relation to the development of 'nearly at nursery' groups and the transition to parenting support for families with children over 5.

The Portfolio Holder commented that those children who start nursery in the near future should have more advanced skills than children who have started in the past because of all the supporting measures in place for parents.

It was established that those parents who did not take up the support offered would be highlighted by health colleagues.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress in relation to Sure Start Children's Centres and looked forward to the outcomes of this.

41. Children's Services Training Framework – Senior Advisor

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the main training activities which staff will be required to undertake in order to promote and further develop integrated working across children's services.

Issues for Consideration

The training framework contained those areas of work that were current priorities and was designed to support national and local priorities. The framework would be regularly updated to reflect changing needs and policies and would be further developed to include town wide training and development on a multi agency basis across the Children's Trust in Hartlepool. The team would also follow the corporate procurement framework. Some of the training would need to be procured under that framework although some would be delivered in house by colleagues able to impart their knowledge.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the report

42. Local Authority – Access to Information

Under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) order 2006

Minute 43 – Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports para 1 information relating to any individual.

43. Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports (Para 1) – Head of Business – Safeguarding Assessment and Support Unit

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To present the Regulation 33/34 report of visits to Children's Home for Exmoor Grove covering the months of February, March, April and May 2009.

Issues for Consideration

The report detailed the reports of visits to Exmoor Grove for February, March, April and May 2009.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder received and noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 4 December 2009