

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

13 April 2010

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

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director of Children's Services
(Safeguarding and Specialist Services)
Sue Johnson, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Planning
and Service Integration)
John Robinson, Children's Fund Manager
Stephen Haley, Head of Finance
Ian Merritt, Strategic Commissioner for Children's Services
Tina Juko, Strategic Separation Specialist
Kelly Moss, Children's Trust Manager
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

56. Schools Capital Works Programme 2010/13 – *Head of Finance*

Type of Decision

Key (tests i and ii apply)

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to the Schools Capital Works Programme for 2010/11 and approval in principle to an outline programme for 2012/13

Issues for Consideration

The report outlined the background to funding sources including Devolved Formula Capital (DCF) from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) via the Local Authority or in the case of Voluntary Aided Schools, the local diocese. There was also capital investment via the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programmes. Spending on works was prioritised by a sub group of the Schools Forum including Voluntary Aided schools, along with the Local Authority. The Portfolio Holder had previously approved the first fully joint funded Hartlepool schools capital programme which had been developed by the Local Authority

with support from the Schools Forum Capital Sub Group. In view of the uncertainty of future capital funding, the Authority was proposing a programme of condition works for 2010-11 and an outline programme of condition works for the following two years, subject to review in January 2011. Schools had submitted bids for work which had been prioritised, with those having the potential to make the biggest positive impact on teaching and learning receiving the highest priority. Schools would be required to contribute a minimum of 10% towards overall costs. The Report and its appendices outlined the proposed work and approximate costs for this. Although no Voluntary Aided capital schemes had been fully prioritised for 2010/2011, some were supported in 2009./10 and a number have been supported in principle for future years.

Although the Portfolio Holder was asked to approve works totalling £2,677,800 which exceeded the indicative funding available, officers were confident that additional school contributions above the 10% minimum would be secured and the programme would be carefully managed to ensure that there was no risk of overspending.

The Portfolio Holder thanked the Head of Finance for his contribution in co-ordinating the Works Programme. She expressed reservations about the impact of fencing on safeguarding pupils and asked that it be reinforced to headteachers that links with the local community were an important safeguarding measure. The Head of Finance agreed to speak with the Health and Wellbeing Team to ask them to link in with the Safeguarding Division.

The Portfolio Holder also asked that the Asset Manager, Alan Kell, who was shortly to leave the Authority, be thanked for his hard work and commitment.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- Approved the schedule of 2010/11 condition items as summarised at Appendix 1 of the report subject to the Local Authority agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum.
- Approved the schedule of condition items as included in Appendix 1 subject to a reassessment of priorities in March 2011.
- Approved the schedule of 2010/11 Transformation items as summarised at Appendix 3, subject to the Local Authority agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles

established by the Schools Forum

- Agreed that the Child and Adult Services Department be allowed dispensation and discretion to authorise works where a significant health and safety risk was exposed in advance of formal approval by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

57. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Update 2009-10 – *Assistant Director (Planning and Service Integration)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

For the Portfolio Holder to approve the publication of the childcare sufficiency update 2009-2010.

Issues for Consideration

The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on Local Authorities to publish a childcare sufficiency assessment on a three yearly cycle. Cabinet approved the publication for the first childcare sufficiency assessment on 12 May 2008.

The Childcare Act 2006 also set out a requirement for Local Authorities to publish an update of the childcare sufficiency assessment annually. The report set out the background to the update and included the update document and action plan as an appendix. The report contained a comparison of childcare places available in 2008 – 2009 and 2009 – 2010. Although the numbers of places had decreased there still seems to be adequate child care places to meet the demand although this was monitored closely.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the publication of the childcare sufficiency update 2009-2010.

58. General Sure Start Grant Capital – Early Years Capital – *Assistant Director (Planning and Service Integration)*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to allocate early years capital to private daycare settings in Hartlepool.

Issues for Consideration

A number of reports had been presented to the Portfolio Holder in relation to Sure Start Capital grant spend and it was estimated that £200,000 of Sure Start capital grant remained which was required to be spent by 31 March 2011.

The Early Years Capital funding was provided through the General Sure Start Grant to support settings to offer flexible extended free nursery entitlement. Officers were currently working with schools and settings to ensure all settings were offering the extended entitlement as per statutory guidance received from the DCSF.

Guidance on the allocation of the Early Years Capital funding set out a requirement for local authorities (LAs) to prioritise spend on the private and voluntary sector although it could be spent on the maintained sector. A letter from the DCSF sent to local authorities dated 13 May 2009 strengthened the need for local authorities to allocate this element of funding to the private and voluntary sector in order to continue to improve their early learning environments.

The report outlined the proposals that the £200,000 be made available for daycare settings to request additional capital works.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder approved the allocation of early years capital to private daycare settings.

59. Procurement of Specialist Consultancy to Support Special Educational Needs (SEN) Processes – Assistant Director (Planning and Service Integration)

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To request a direction for an exception to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of securing additional support for SEN processes.

Issues for Consideration

The SEN team manages the processes around the LA's legal duties to identify, assess and make provision for pupils with SEN. SEN regulations set precise and demanding time schedules for the completion of statutory processes and the SEN team in Hartlepool had been successful over a number of years in achieving a 100% record on these. Additionally the LA had never been taken to the SEN tribunal. Temporary lack of capacity in the team since the start of January 2010 had created a significant risk that the LA would fail to meet its statutory duties. In view of the specialist nature of the work, additional capacity could only be provided by a SEN expert with knowledge of local circumstances. The report requested a direction for an exception to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of securing such capacity via a specialist consultant.

The Portfolio Holder did not wish to break the proven track record achieved by the team and expressed concern that existing staff were not overstretched.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder directed an exception to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the proposed consultancy.

60. Resources to Complete the Implementation of ContactPoint – *Strategic Commissioner for Children's Services*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the appointment of consultancy staff to assist in the implementation of ContactPoint in Hartlepool.

To request an exception to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to appoint consultancy support for the implementation of ContactPoint.

Issues for Consideration

ContactPoint is a national database containing basic demographic information on every child and young person in England. It is designed to promote earlier intervention and information sharing between practitioners working with children and as such, is a key component of the Government's 'Every Child Matters: Change for

Children' programme.

Hartlepool Borough Council has an inherent duty in the Children Act 2004 to implement ContactPoint, both with the Authority and with local Partner Agencies including schools and health services. The implementation was scheduled to be completed by March 2011. However in order to ensure implementation within the required timescales external consultancy staff were required.

The Portfolio Holder asked who was delivering ContactPoint training for staff and was informed that it was partly in house and partly from consultants.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- Approved the procurement of consultancy staff to assist in the implementation of Contactpoint in Hartlepool.
- Agreed an exception to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to appoint consultancy support for the implementation of ContactPoint.

61. Setting Up Home Grants for Care Leavers – *Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the current financial arrangements for Setting Up Home grants for Care Leavers and make proposals to increase the total amount of money that may be spent to achieve a suitable level of provision that will ensure the wellbeing of an individual Young Person as they move to independence from the Care System.

Issues for Consideration

The background to the service for those young people leaving the care of the LA, the current responsibilities and provision and information that sought to justify an increase in the maximum amount to be paid from the current level.

An increase from £1,200 to £1,7000 represented a reflection of the increase in costs of setting up a home since the level was set in 2001. The total increase in budget provision on current numbers of

eligible young people would be approximately £4,500 which could be met from current budget provision.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- approved the increased upper limit of financial provision in relation to any individual Care Leaver in respect of a grant to help them set up their own home at £1,700.
- Approved the policy of an annual increase in April each year that reflects the published cost of living increase.

62. Draft Annual Review of the Children and Young People's Plan – Children's Trust Manager

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To present a draft of the Children and Young People's Plan annual review document and update the Portfolio Holder on progress.

Issues for Consideration

The Children Act 2004 placed a duty on Children's Trusts to prepare and publish a Children and Young People's Plan and conduct an annual review against milestones with the appropriate involvement of all the Partners to the Plan.

The final draft of the annual review was to be presented to the Children's Trust Board on 29 April 2010 and the Children's Services Portfolio Holder on 11 May 2010 for agreement. All actions had had some progress made on them.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress made on the annual review to date.

63. Team Around the Primary School – Family Intervention Project – Children's Fund Manager

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the further development of the Team Around the Primary School (TAPS) project to include the Family Intervention Project (FIP) Housing Challenge.

To ask the Portfolio Holder to note the project developments described in the report.

Issues for Consideration

The Authority and its Partner agencies had been working towards a preventative agenda for a number of years. The TAPS approach had been created using funding from a variety of sources with links with all primary schools to ensure that families received support at the earliest opportunity.

A bid for funding from the DCSF Housing Challenge in partnership with Housing Hartlepool, Belle Vue Centre and the New Deal for Communities had been successful and this would focus on the area around Belle Vue. The details of what the funding would be spent on were outlined and would provide the partners with an opportunity to pilot a new way of working with communities to empower residents to set standards of acceptable behaviour and raise the aspirations of the families that live there. If this proved successful this would provide a template for similar work across the Borough in the future.

The Portfolio Holder asked which schools would the TAPS be involved with and was informed that that it was mainly Stranton, but St Cuthbert's, Ward Jackson and St Aidan's would also be involved. The Portfolio Holder said that this project sounded extremely positive and although she wasn't a fan of the Zero Tolerance policy mooted by certain politicians, Anti-Social Behaviour was unacceptable. She was informed that the Police were also supportive of the project. She commented that this project should make life happier for residents of this area.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder noted the progress made by the team.

64. Separated Families Partnership Progress – *Children's Fund Manager*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To notify the Portfolio Holder of the progress of the Separated Families Partnership.

Issues for Consideration

The Separated Families Partnership was one of 10 National Pilots funded by the DCSF. Families Talking took the lead in the partnership with the Local Authority, Relate, Harbour, Headland Futures and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The report outlined the progress of the partnership to date, how the service had been integrated with the Team Around the Primary School and where the work of the partnership fitted within the prevention agenda.

The pilot aimed to deliver a range of integrated services to separating and separated parents in order to reduce conflict, improve co-parenting, improve the parent/child relationship and reduce the financial impact of separation. Children of separated parents were more likely to become teen parents, become involved in risk taking behaviours and achieve poor educational results. Users of support groups for children, young people and families were more likely to be those of separated parents. Details of the services provided by each of the partners was detailed in the report.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

- noted the progress of the Family Separation Pilot
- noted the national significance of the pilot and the implications for future policy outlined in the Support for All : The Families and Relationships Green Paper

65. Strategic Separation Specialist – *Strategic Separation Specialist*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To notify the Portfolio Holder of the work of the Strategic Separation Specialist

Issues for Consideration

The Separated Families Partnership is one of 10 National Pilots funded by the DCSF. In Hartlepool this was a Partnership between the Local Authority, Families Talking, Relate, Harbour, Headland Futures and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The strategic elements of the project were the responsibility of the Parent Commissioner who shares line management of the Strategic Separation Specialist.

Research into the social and economic impacts of divorce and separation evidences strong links to the level of parental conflict and negative long term outcomes for the children and adults involved. In 2011 new birth registration legislation would come into force requiring fathers to be named on all birth certificates.

In conjunction with the Think Family Co-ordinator, an audit of services had been carried out looking at provision for separated families. Services consulted included Children's Centres, parenting support and education, Youth Offending Service, Teenage Pregnancy, Parent Support Advisors, Educational Psychology, Anti Social Behaviour Unit, HYPED, Children's Social care and Barnardos Hartbeat. No actual services exist targeting meeting the needs of separated parents or relationships between the separated families. Most service delivery was provided during office hours although the Headland Futures provided services outside normal office hours.

No service had policies relating to separated parenting. Work with separated parents was not referenced into objectives and work plans and no protocols exist in services for decision making and information sharing with non resident parents. Information gathering regarding the non resident parent was dependent upon the relationship developed with the resident parent.

The Portfolio Holder queried who provided training on separation issues and was informed that there was training nationally. The separation workers attached to the Team Around the Primary Schools had been trained by Tees Valley mediation although this training had not been evaluated. There was a lack of specific training in regard to separation issues but an action plan would be put in place to address this and other issues highlighted by the audit. The Portfolio Holder said she hoped that any training given was carried out by reputable trainers.

Decision

The Portfolio Holder:-

Noted the progress of the Family Separation Pilot

Noted the national significance of the pilot and the implications for future policy outlined in the Support for All: The Families and

Relationships Green Paper

66. 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 67 – Request for an Exemption to Contract Procedure Rules - para 3 information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

Minute 68 – Schools' Insurance for Long Term Absence and Maternity Cover - - para 3 information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

67. Request for an Exemption to Contract Procedure Rules (para 3) – *Head of Finance*

Type of Decision

Non key.

Purpose of Report

To request a direction for an exemption to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the procurement of an updated financial planning software system for all schools in Hartlepool.

Issues for Consideration

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

68. Schools' Insurance for Long Term Absence and Maternity Cover – *Strategic Commissioner for Children's Services*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the termination of the existing contract for the provision of insurance for schools on long term absence and maternity cover and the de-commissioning of this service.

Issues for Consideration

These were detailed in the exempt section of the minutes

Decision

This was outlined in the exempt section of the minutes.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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