

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD 14th September 2010

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

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Alan Dobby, Assistant Director (Support Services)
Caroline O'Neill, Assistant Director (Performance and Achievement)
Penny Thompson, Childcare Market Officer
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

6. **Bushbabies and Chatham House Daycare – Changes in Charges** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek approval for a change in charges for Bushbabies and Chatham House daycare settings.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Bushbabies and Chatham House are year round nursery daycare facilities which have been providing services to parents across Hartlepool for approximately 5 years. Their current pricing structure is lower than most other daycare providers in Hartlepool and the fee-generated income is not currently covering the cost of the services. They operate with a subsidy through the Sure Start Grant and as Government guidance indicates that daycare settings linked to Sure Start Children's Centres should be sustainable it was felt important that prices be increased to allow a reduction in this subsidy. The possibility of future cuts to the Grant as a result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending review was also highlighted. Two new fee structures were proposed, a 10% increase and a 15% increase. Neither would completely remove the need for the Sure Start subsidy, however the service would continue to be competitive with other daycare facilities in Hartlepool.

The Portfolio Holder referred to other daycare providers in Hartlepool which were in receipt of voluntary sector funding and therefore able to charge

lower fees. She felt it was wrong that these organisations were able to use Council grants to compete against other organisations which did not benefit from this. Concerns were also raised that their remits had altered from what had been originally agreed and that by doing this they were having an adverse effect on other people's jobs. The Assistant Director for Performance and Achievement acknowledged this but felt that cuts in this voluntary sector funding were inevitable, something which would necessitate re-prioritisation of the services currently being provided. In terms of the proposed pricing increases for Bushbabies and Chatham House the Portfolio Holder felt it would be preferable to increase costs by the largest amount possible at this time. Officers indicated further increases were anticipated in 2011/12 but there could be no certainty around the inevitable price increases until the Government announced its comprehensive spending review on 20th Oct 2010 and the implications of the review were calculated at local level. The Portfolio Holder asked that the increase be effective after half term, to allow service users 4 weeks notice of the change.

Decision

That the Option 2 pricing increase for Bushbabies and Chatham House daycare settings be approved as detailed within section 4.2 of the report.

7. Admissions to Schools 2012/13 and Co-ordinated Admissions to Primary and Secondary Schools 2012/13 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Portfolio Holder to the draft Admission arrangements for 2012/13 as the basis for consultation during the Autumn term 2010.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report detailed current and proposed admissions policy, the requirement to consult with other admission authorities and the requirement to develop co-ordinated admission schemes.

Local Authorities have a requirement to consult when determining admission arrangements for schools and a failure to do so would mean that statutory requirements were not met. The mandatory requirements surrounding the publication of admission arrangements were outlined in the report. The role of the Admissions Forums was also detailed. In accordance with statutory requirements, places will be offered to parents/carers of secondary aged pupils on the national offer date of 1 March in the year in which the child will be admitted to the school. For primary aged pupils a local offer date of 15th April has been agreed. Parents/carers were invited to

express at least three preferences on a common application form (also available as an on line form). There is a duty to inform other Local Authorities should a child from their Authority apply for a place at a Hartlepool school and also if a place could be offered at a school in Hartlepool. As of September 2010 all applications must be co-ordinated by the Local Authority for both the normal admission round and in year applications. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, children and young people in care must be given top priority in any over subscription criteria

The proposed admissions policy for 2012/13 was then outlined. Since September 2009 there had not been any community or voluntary controlled schools and therefore the Local Authority's admissions policy would only apply to primary schools. Parents had the right to appeal if their application for a place for their child was turned down, details of the independent appeals process would be sent to all parents/carers whose initial applications had been unsuccessful and where an alternative placement could not be agreed

The timetable for consultation was outlined. The basic framework for admission based on residence in an admission zone as the top criterion was well established, however the School Admission Code stipulates that Admission Authorities must give the highest priority to children in the care of the local authority. Additionally, children with special educational needs where the school is named in the statement must not be part of an admission authority's oversubscription criteria. Criterion 4 of the Authority's oversubscription criteria provides for the Authority to give priority to those children who are deemed to have exceptional circumstances whether medical or on other grounds who would suffer significant hardship if they were unable to attend the school of their choice. The final criterion is distance, this is measured using the local authority's computerised measuring system.

The proposed admission limits would be part of the consultation process and a copy of the proposed admission limits was attached as an appendix to the report. The Assistant Director for Support Services also highlighted a typographical error in this appendix whereby the admission limit for West View Primary School should have read 55 not 65. Copies of the co-ordinated admission scheme for 2012/13 for primary and secondary schools and for in-year admissions were also attached to the report.

Officers advised that the consultation period would also be used to discuss the implications of reductions to the Building Schools for the Future programme with schools.

Decision

That consultation on the 2012/13 admission arrangements (with an end date of December 2010) take place to seek views on the proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled private

schools, the proposed admission limits and the primary and secondary co-ordinated admissions scheme

8. School Term and Holiday dates: School Year 2011/12 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek the agreement of the Portfolio Holder to the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2011/12 for community and controlled schools in Hartlepool.

To seek the agreement of the Portfolio Holder in recommending those dates to the governing bodies of aided schools in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report detailed the current state of play nationally, regionally and locally on the pattern of the school year and recommendations for the school year 2011/12 which would follow the proposed regional model which had been consulted upon. The Assistant Director for Performance and Achievement presented 2 possible models for school term and holiday dates. The first (Appendix A) had been agreed by the North East authorities as being a commonly preferred model. However consultation amongst head teachers and governing bodies of Hartlepool schools had resulted in concerns being expressed regarding the proposed early finish for Christmas and the subsequent effect this would have on Christmas preparations in schools and working parents. Therefore an alternative calendar (Appendix B) was devised to incorporate these concerns and further recommendations in relation to the commencement of the autumn term.

Decision

- I. That the schedule of term and holiday dates for 2011/12 for community and controlled schools in Hartlepool as shown in Appendix B be approved
- II. That the schedule of term and holiday dates for 2011/12 as shown in Appendix 2 be recommended to the Governing Bodies of aided schools in Hartlepool.

9. Progress of Hartlepool Schools during the academic year 2009/10 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

To note the Ofsted inspection reports for all schools during the academic year 2009/2010.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

During 2009/10 9 primary schools, 1 secondary school and 1 special school had been inspected by Ofsted. A further interim inspection had been carried out at another secondary school. The overall outcomes had been satisfactory in the secondary school, good or outstanding in all primary schools and good with outstanding features in the special school with primary and special schools performing well above the national average. A detailed breakdown was provided within the report. Intensive school support had been given to 5 of the primary schools and the secondary and special schools during 2009/10 by the School Improvement Team after they had been identified as in need of additional support to ensure continuous school improvement. Further details were appended to the report.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the support which had been given by the School Improvement Team, asking that her thanks be passed on to the team and the relevant head teachers for their efforts.

Decision

That the good progress of Hartlepool Schools as measured by Ofsted Inspections in 2009/10 and their success in relation to the national picture be noted.

10. Children's Services Departmental Plan Quarter 4 Progress Report *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-Key

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made towards achieving Departmental Plan actions, performance indicators (PIs) and risks for the period to 31st March 2010.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report summarised progress over the fourth quarter of 2009/10 on the actions and PIs within the Children's Services Departmental Plan 2009/10. Of the 30 actions 29 had been completed or showed acceptable progress. One action, to reduce the under 18 conception rate by 55% from the 1998 baseline and improve sexual health was not expected to be achieved, with only a 12.9% reduction demonstrated. However officers were working

closely with colleagues from health to tackle this issue through a range of initiatives.

There were 44 performance indicators, 27 of which had been completed or were progressing acceptably. However 17 had not been achieved. Details of the reasons for this were given within the report. It was noted that high aspirational targets had previously been set and while Hartlepool's levels of achievements were now in line with national expectations in many areas they had failed to meet the original aspirational targets. The Assistant Director for Support Services further highlighted the risks to Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programme, both of which had subsequently been borne out. The Portfolio Holder expressed her disappointment at the reduction in this funding.

Decision

That the progress made in completing the actions and achieving the performance indicators for the Children's Services Department during 2009/10 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10:35 am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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