

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

26<sup>th</sup> October 2010

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

## **Present:**

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Caroline O'Neill, Assistant Director (Performance and Achievement)  
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Specialist Services)  
Ian Merritt, Head of Commissioning and Children's Trust  
Laura Stones, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer  
Judy Williams, 14-19 Co-ordinator  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

Also present

Councillor Ray Wells

## **11. Refurbishment of Exmoor Grove** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Key (test ii)

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder that a funding package for the Capital Works Programme to refurbish Exmoor Grove short break centre is now in place.

To confirm the Capital Works Programme to refurbish Exmoor Grove short break care centre which is planned to commence during early November 2010.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010 the Portfolio Holder agree a change of use for Exmoor Grove, reducing the number of beds from 8 to 6 and making provision for children and young people with learning disabilities and mild to moderate challenging behaviour. The establishment of a Capital Works Programme to refurbish Exmoor Grove was also approved subject to funding being available. The funding had now been confirmed and the work was scheduled to commence November 2010.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee had noted the refurbishment plans during consideration of the Forward Plan. Members had felt that the proposed capital expenditure was excessive given the current financial constraints on the Council and it was therefore suggested by members of the committee that this matter should be referred to Children's Services Scrutiny Forum for consideration. Officers from the department had subsequently given reasons for the refurbishment and a breakdown of the costs. After consideration members had agreed that the refurbishment should go ahead and that the costs were generally reasonable. However they had expressed concern that the cost for professional fees be reviewed and reduced wherever possible as it was a very high percentage of the overall cost which they felt could be spent more productively. The Head of Commissioning and Children's Trust advised that consequently a revised estimate had been requested and the cost of the actual work and the professional fees had now reduced.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her support for the refurbishment, particularly improvements to the dining hall. The Head of Commissioning and Children's Trust indicated that the work was expected to take no more than 12 weeks, including the Christmas period.

#### **Decision**

That the Capital Works Programme to refurbish Exmoor Grove short break care centre, scheduled to commence during early November 2010, be approved.

## **12. Provision for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) at Key Stage 2 (Approval to Consult)** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-Key

#### **Purpose of report**

- I. To review the provision of pupils with moderate learning difficulties in the age range 7-11 years
- II. To consider a proposal to discontinue the additionally resourced facility providing for up to 12 pupils with Special Educational Needs relating to moderate learning difficulties at Golden Flatts Primary School
- III. To consider a proposal to discontinue the additionally resourced facility providing for up to 12 pupils with Special Educational Needs relating to moderate learning difficulties at Owton Manor Primary School

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The Assistant Director (Performance and Achievement) provided information on the implementation of the Council's vision for inclusive education, the changing role of Hartlepool's special schools and the development of new provision for pupils with special educational needs. During consultation around the Schools Transformation Programme in 2008 members of the Local Authority Special Educational Needs Team noted a downward trend in admissions to schools support bases as a result of inclusive practice in mainstream schools and the availability of more appropriate specialist provision for pupils with more specifically identified needs. In November 2009 consultation with primary head teachers had confirmed a preference for more inclusive provision in mainstream schools, using funding released from the support bases. By the end of 2009/2010 alternative provision had been identified for the small number of pupils still attending the support bases at Golden Flatts and Owton Manor primary schools. There were therefore 2 options for future provision:

1. to maintain current arrangements or
2. to formally close the Key Stage 2 support bases at Golden Flatts and Owton Manor primary schools.

Neither option would result in additional budget pressures for the authority. In the case of option 2 funding currently used for the support bases would be reallocated to help individual pupil integration. Proposals to formally discontinue the additional resourced support bases at the schools would be statutory proposals and require a four week consultation with interested parties. The outcomes would be brought to the Portfolio Holder for a final decision on whether to advance the proposal and publish public notices.

### **Decision**

- I. That the proposal to discontinue the additionally resourced support base at Golden Flatts Primary School for up to 12 children in the age range 7-11 years with moderate learning difficulties be accepted and that the Director of Child and Adult Services be authorised to carry out the appropriate consultation following which the Director will provide a report to the Portfolio Holder on the outcome of the consultation.
- II. That the proposal to discontinue the additionally resourced support base at Owton Manor Primary School for up to 12 children in the age range 7-11 years with moderate learning difficulties be accepted and that the Director of Child and Adult Services be authorised to carry out the appropriate consultation following which the Director will provide a report to the Portfolio Holder on the outcome of the consultation.

**13. Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to serve on School Governing Bodies** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

**Type of decision**

Non-key

**Purpose of report**

To request the Portfolio Holder's consideration and approval of the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative Governors to serve on school governing bodies.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The report summarised the process for inviting applications for representative school governors. A schedule setting out details of vacancies together with applications received in respect of the vacancies considered by the General Purposes Committee on 4th October 2010 was appended to the report.

**Decision**

That the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school Governing Bodies be approved.

**14. 11-19 Team – Project Overview** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

**Type of decision**

Non-Key

**Purpose of report**

To note the various projects undertaken by Hartlepool Local Authority 11-19 Team over the last year to improve outcomes for Hartlepool's young learners.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The 14-19 Co-ordinator updated the Portfolio Holder on the work of the 11-19 Team during the academic year 2009/10, including young apprenticeships, diploma development and foundation learning. Progress checks had shown Hartlepool performing well on the number of A-C GCSEs and a reduction in young people not in education, employment or training. However the number of 17 year olds participating in work-based learning required improvement.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to note the improved GCSE results and asked that her congratulations be passed on to all the staff and young people. She hoped that the young people engaging in higher education would find employment at the end of the process.

### **Decision**

That the progress made in the 11-19 agenda in Hartlepool be noted.

## **15. The Implementation and Development of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) within Hartlepool** *(Director of Child and Adult 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.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The CAF was fully implemented in August 2007. Its aim is to help early identification of the needs of children and co-ordinate service provision, thereby preventing the needs of vulnerable children and young people becoming complex or acute. To date 185 practitioners have attended formal CAF training with 179 staff attending alternate training sessions. Between August 2009 and July 2010 the number of CAFs undertaken and logged had dropped 26% compared to the previous year and work is being undertaken with partners to understand the reasons for this. The vast majority of organisations which have contact with children had been undertaking 4 or less CAFs which was a concern given levels of child vulnerability in the town.

The role of CAF within Hartlepool had been deemed adequate by a recent OFSTED inspection, the issues raised by the inspectors were being addressed and new set of practice guides and a pathway plan were being developed. Previously an inspection had found that less than 5% of referrals into the duty system were supported with a CAF. This meant that children or their families had not had their needs formally assessed prior to access by the duty team. Joint work was currently being undertaken to tackle this issue and promote early recognition and response to any additional needs children may have.

An audit into the overall quality of CAF's within Hartlepool was currently underway. The CAF Co-ordinator was contacting individual organisations to discuss what systems they had in place. All future CAFs would be audited

upon receipt and feedback given to the author. In April 2010 the Children's Trust Board had proposed a set of recommendations to address key areas within CAF and its associated processes, all of which had been accepted. A new set of practice guides and a pathway plan were being developed and testing of an eCAF system was underway.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the 'adequate' rating by the OFSTED inspectors, commenting that she would anticipate improvements in this if all the actions referred to within the report were completed. She emphasised the need for early intervention and the importance of staff training, saying this would cost far less in the long term.

### **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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