

CABINET

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

18 April 2011

The meeting commenced at 9.15 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

The Mayor, Stuart Drummond - In the Chair

Councillors: Jonathan Brash (Performance Portfolio Holder)
Robbie Payne (Deputy Mayor) (Finance and Procurement Portfolio Holder),
Pam Hargreaves (Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio Holder),
Gerard Hall (Adult and Public Health Services Portfolio Holder).
Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder),
Hilary Thompson (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder),

Also Present: Councillor Chris Simmons, Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Forum
Ashleigh Bostock and Robyn Reid, Young People's representatives from Children's Services Scrutiny Forum

Officers: Paul Walker, Chief Executive
Andrew Atkin, Assistant Chief Executive,
Dave Stubbs, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services
Juliette Ward, Participation Youth Worker
James Walsh, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Officer

216. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Peter Jackson (Cabinet Member without Portfolio).

217. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

218. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2011

Consideration of the minutes was deferred as it was unclear as to whether all Members had received the published minutes.

219. Final Report – Youth Involvement / Participation In The Development And Delivery Of Council Services, Including The Safeguarding Of Young People (*Young People's Representatives, Children's Services Scrutiny Forum*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to outline the findings and conclusions of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Young People's Representatives' investigation into 'Youth Involvement / Participation in the Development and Delivery of Council Services, Including the Safeguarding of Young People'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

Ashleigh Bostock and Robyn Reid, Young People's representatives from Children's Services Scrutiny Forum, presented the final report following the Forum's investigation into 'Youth Involvement / Participation in the Development and Delivery of Council Services, Including the Safeguarding of Young People'. As part of the Children's Service Scrutiny Forum the young people's representatives were given the opportunity to pick a topic that they were interested in and to lead on. The topic of Social Networking was selected as it was felt that it was very relevant to a large majority of young people and the investigation focussed on 'how the council could use social networking as a way to promote and advertise what's on offer'.

Through the investigation it became apparent that some departments within the Council had used, and still did use, sites such as Facebook, as a way of communicating what's going on to both adults and young people. The Tall Ships Facebook page was set up within the Council in order to get feedback on issues around access to and on the site. It was also used as a platform in which people could post comments on and upload their photographs of the event. The Sports Development Team also used a Facebook page to reach a target audience.

In acknowledging all the potential risks that were linked with social networking one of the main recommendations that the young people had made was that a council policy needed to be established to monitor and govern social network use by departments. Through the investigation the Young People had become familiar with the much-publicised case of Ashleigh Hall who was murdered after agreeing to meet a man she had developed a relationship with through Facebook. This admittedly severe case did raise concerns on how paedophiles could access sites like Facebook to groom young people.

The Mayor thanked the two Young Peoples representatives for an excellent report and presentation. Cabinet Members commented that it was essential that any use of social networking sites did need to be managed appropriately. There was the view expressed that these sites were not used enough by the Council and they could be a key tool for the authority to connect with young people. There were already many adults that found engaging with the Council and Councillors a daunting experience. Many young people will feel the same and any avenue that could bring them into contact with the local authority to access services through a means that they understood and felt comfortable with should be promoted.

It was highlighted that, taking on board the concerns highlighted in the report and presentation, simply setting up accounts on social networking sites was not enough; they needed to be managed and up-to-date. Reviewing the services provided by those Councils that did social networking well should be a starting point.

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum highlighted that while there were a couple of Facebook accounts already being operated by the council, there was no agreed policy on their use. If these avenues were to be used to communicate with young people, then it made sense to involve them in the development of the policy relating to their use and management. There was also a wider role for young people to play in the services provided by the council and potentially the Adult Services Scrutiny Forum was one such avenue highlighted by the Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum; though it was accepted that there were resource issues involved.

The Mayor thanked the Young Peoples representatives for their excellent report and hoped that they would be able to be involved in the development of the council's policy on social networking. It was essential that if these websites were to be used to reach young people, then we needed to know what they wanted to know about the Council, what it does and what it could do for them. The Chief Executive suggested that a brief for the young people to work to should be agreed and it would seem that the best forum for that to be discussed was the Children's Services scrutiny Forum. Cabinet could then focus on the implementation of the ICT element of the recommendations. The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum supported this proposal.

Decision

1. That the following recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigations into 'Youth Involvement / Participation in the Development and Delivery of Council Services, Including the Safeguarding of Young People' be approved and adopted: -

That "using Social Networking to promote council activities and/or

engage young people is an excellent tool we would make the following recommendations that will support doing this safely:

- Some Clear policy and guidance put in place for all departments within the council to follow
 - Have a standard procedure – departments should not go ahead and do this on their own
 - Closed sites that cannot be commented on or someone to be responsible for the site 24 hours a day. This would include fast and effective takedown procedures!
 - Employers should have basic legal training. If not don't do it!
 - Education is a good way of ensuring young people are safe when they are online. Ashleigh's rules go some way in to supporting this. This could be advertised when each department sets up a site
 - Take in to consideration examples of good practice. Some Councils may be ahead of others so link with them where possible
 - Social networking is not for everyone so other methods of communicating such as posters and leaflets will still need to be in place."
2. That the Young People's Representatives on the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum be asked to explore the identification of specific Council activities that young people would wish to more aware of through the Social Networking Sites they are part of.

220. Scrutiny Investigation Into Youth Involvement / Participation In The Development And Delivery Of Council Services, Including The Safeguarding Of Young People *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To agree an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Young People's Representatives' investigation into the 'Youth Involvement / Participation in the Development and Delivery of Council Services, Including the Safeguarding of Young People'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The report provided brief background information on the 'Youth Involvement / Participation in the Development and Delivery of Council Services, Including the Safeguarding of Young People' Scrutiny Investigation and

provided a proposed Action Plan, submitted as Appendix A to the report, in response to the Scrutiny Forum's recommendations.

Cabinet questioned when a policy document on the use of Social Networking could be expected. The Assistant Chief Executive indicated that a draft policy would be presented by the end of May.

Decision

That the Action Plan submitted in response to the recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's Young People's Representatives' investigation into the 'Youth Involvement / Participation in the Development and Delivery of Council Services, Including the Safeguarding of Young People' be approved.

221. Final Report - Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services (*Children's Services Scrutiny Forum*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to outline the findings and conclusions of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum's investigation into 'Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services'.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum presented the forum's final report following its investigation into 'Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services'. The Chair of the Scrutiny Forum highlighted the main aspects of the investigation report and outlined his concern that services in this area were being affected by a change in focus of the government from Child and Family services towards education services. The recent cut in the grant supporting early intervention services reflected this. There was, however, significant evidence, as outlined in the report, that money spent on early intervention services achieved huge savings in the longer term. The utilisation of General Practitioner services to identify early intervention cases was also highlighted.

Cabinet discussed in detail some of the issues raised in the investigation report. Concern was expressed at the central government cuts to specific grants that had affected the delivery of early intervention services, which Cabinet Members considered to be shortsighted in terms of the savings that were made in the longer term. Cabinet acknowledged the role that GP's could play and it was hoped that the GP Consortia may move this concept forward.

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum highlighted recommendation (g) which suggested that the budget allocation for these services be re-examined in the 2012/13 budget process. In relation to other recommendations, a cabinet Member suggested that branded materials (recommendation (c)) should be centrally controlled so a single brand was maintained and that approved procurement routes were utilised. In relation to the partnership working it was questioned how this would link with existing partnerships and if it was indeed needed.

The Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services commented that it was expected that the partnership arrangements would be short-lived during a transitional period and eventually would most likely be incorporated into the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board. The Mayor considered that there needed to be a stronger partnership between the Police and Housing providers. The Safer Hartlepool Partnership had changed its focus towards funding families rather than service providers. Crime figures could often be distilled down to a small number of problem families. Changing the focus onto the families themselves gave a greater opportunity for these cycles to be broken.

The Chief Executive suggested that bringing the Hartlepool MP into the promoting the profile of these services. Iain Wright MP was now an opposition front bench spokesperson on education and in a position to highlight the benefit of maintaining resources in family intervention services.

It was highlighted that other services, such as the Fire Brigade had a role to play in bringing referrals into these services as they had the ability to access households where more traditional services may not be welcome. There were also community support resources available that could assist in providing services.

Decision

1. That the following recommendations of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum following its investigations into 'Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services' be approved and adopted: -

"That:-

- (a) The Council works with partner organisations / agencies to:
 - (i) identify families with additional needs as early as possible to ensure that individuals / families receive the help and support that meets their specific needs;
 - (ii) ensure that all services are co-ordinated to avoid gaps in service provision and duplication of services;
 - (iii) develop stronger partnership arrangements to ensure that all organisations / agencies are signposting individuals / families to the appropriate services; and
 - (iv) ensure that all services are open and accessible to all families and family members;

- (b) The Council develops and promotes a simplified self – referral route with one point of contact so that individuals / families can refer themselves to a service if needed;
 - (c) The Council raises awareness of all the Think Family services available by promoting and marketing the services through the media; ‘Hartbeat’; schools, nurseries and children’s centres; GP surgeries; community centres and libraries;
 - (d) The Council engages with parents and uses their experience to improve / deliver existing services and help develop new services;
 - (e) The Council explores options with partner organisations / agencies to secure funding for the continuation of services and the development of new services;
 - (f) The Council integrate the Think Family approach into community based services so that families feel comfortable, safe and secure when accessing the services; and
 - (g) The Council, as part of the 2012 / 13 budget process re-examines the allocation of the Early Intervention Grant and the proportion that is allocated to Think Family services
2. That The Mayor request that the Member of Parliament for Hartlepool utilise his positions as opposition spokesperson on education to promote the case for the maintenance of family intervention services in Hartlepool.

222. Action Plan – Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To agree an Action Plan in response to the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum’s investigation into ‘Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services’.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The report provided brief background information into the ‘Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services’ Scrutiny Investigation and provided a proposed Action Plan, submitted as Appendix A to the report, which had been prepared in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s) in response to the Scrutiny Forum’s recommendations.

Decision

That the submitted Action Plan in response to the recommendations of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Forum’s investigation into ‘Think Family – Preventative and Early Intervention Services’ be approved.

223. Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2011-2012 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

To set out proposals for Youth Justice Strategic Planning in Hartlepool for 2011-2012.

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

The Children's Services Portfolio Holder reported that in 2010 the coalition government announced that it intended to lay legislation before Parliament in 2011 to amend the 1998 Act and to abolish the national Youth Justice Board (YJB). Advice from the YJB in respect of the requirement to produce a Plan for 2011– 2012 has been contradictory and it was proposed that a refresh of the 2010-2011 Plan be produced. The plan produced last year was comprehensive and the strategic objectives continued into 2011/12.

The Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services indicated that while there was still a legislative requirement to produce a plan, a 'lighter touch' was being taken to refresh the previous years plan and still comply with the need for a plan for 2011/12.

A Cabinet Member commented that if the appropriate finance was being targeted at family intervention services as discussed previously, spending on services such as this could in the longer term reduce. It was highlighted that a Youth Offending Services was still required to deal with the young people already in the system and to reduce their repeat offending.

Decision

1. That a refreshed Youth Justice Strategic Plan be developed for 2011 - 2012 in consultation with partners and for consideration by scrutiny.
2. That the final draft be available for consideration by Cabinet on in July 2011 and subsequently Council in August 2011.

The meeting concluded at 10.25 a.m.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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