

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

19 April 2011

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 (Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services)
Jane Young, Business Unit Manager
Peter McIntosh, Head of Planning and Development
Patrick Wilson, Employment Development Officer
Tom Argument, School Improvement Adviser
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

36. Schools Capital Works Programme 2011/12 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key – tests i and ii apply.

Purpose of report

To seek approval to the formation of a School Capital Works Programme for 2011/12.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

In December 2010 the Government announced the capital allocations relating to the school estate in Hartlepool as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. As future planning approaches were yet to be confirmed following the completion of the James Review only a one year allocation had been provided. In July 2010 the Building Schools for the Future programme was cancelled. Despite this funding of £12.4 million was secured to remodel Dyke House Sports and Technology College with further funding secured to provide an ICT infrastructure for secondary “non-sample” schools. Primary Capital Programme Funding of £8.4 million had also previously been secured from the Government for improvements to Jesmond Road Primary School and Rossmere Primary School. No further funding was expected through this initiative.

Details were given of the Capital Allocations for 2011/12. This showed a total amount of £4,068,657, approximately 20% less than the previous year.

Included in this was funding specifically for diocesan schools. Usual practice was for schools to make a 10% contribution to capital schemes however as there had been a significant increase in allocations to schools it was acknowledged that this may not be possible in all cases. Departmental representatives had met with Diocesan representatives and agreed upon a consistent approach to capital schemes. In addition there would no longer be a funding stream for Children's Centres with capital maintenance allocations being utilised for this. However there were felt to be no immediate high priority capital works required for the 2011/12 programme. Dedicated funding for Special Educational Needs had also been removed.

Details of the proposed programme of works for 2011/12 were included in 2 appendices to the report. Included in these were essential works highlighted during Fire Safety inspections and Special Educational Needs adaptations. There were also a number of transformational schemes remaining from the bidding process adopted as a strategy for developing this element of the 2010/11 programme which would be re-examined by the Capital Sub-Group at its next meeting. It was felt prudent to consider the development of transformational schemes as separate from the Capitalised Maintenance Programme. A separate report on the transformational programme would be brought to the Portfolio Holder in the coming months. Building works would continue to be procured through the in-house Facilities Management Section and 2 external contractors. A competitive tender process would be adopted for work estimated at £100,000 and over.

The Portfolio Holder queried why Holy Trinity was not included in the priority lists despite its current poor condition. The Head of Planning and Development advised that work on this school was funded by the diocesan programme. Although their priority list had not yet been confirmed Holy Trinity was expected to be included. The Portfolio Holder also queried the inclusion of Ward Jackson Primary School and was informed that although they were due to become a voluntary aided school from September work was still scheduled to be carried out as an early priority in the Capitalised Maintenance Programme. The Head of Planning and Development commented that Government priorities at the moment in terms of funding priorities were to improve existing stock and ensure the demand for places was met. The long term forecast for Hartlepool was that there would be sufficient school places to meet demand however officers would continue to keep a close eye on this.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her support for the proposals and her continued disappointment at the cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Decision

- I. That the schedule of 2011/12 capital condition items be approved as summarised at Appendices 1 and 2, subject to the Local Authority agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in

line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum;

- II. That the schedule of Fire Safety and Special Educational Needs be approved as summarised at Appendix 2, subject to the Local Authority agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum;
- III. That the principle of developing a 'Transformational' programme in the region of £1.2 – 1.3 million be approved, subject to the Local Authority agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum;
- IV. That the ongoing ICT infrastructure and the anticipated completion of works in the 2011/12 financial year be noted and
- V. That the Child and Adult Services be allowed dispensation and discretion to authorise works where a significant health and safety risk is exposed in advance of formal approval by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

37. Expression of Interest RPA Trials (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the background to the Raising Participation Age Trial programme and to request permission to submit an expression of interest to the Department for Education to be part of the pilot programme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Education and Skills Act 2008 places a new duty on all young people to participate in education or training until their 18th birthday. This could be through full-time education, work-based learning or part-time education or training for those in employment. The Raising Participation Age Trial programme would investigate the local arrangements which would need to be in place to successfully deliver the increase in the participation age. Expressions of interest to take part in a new phase of locally-led delivery projects were invited from local authorities, working alone and in partnership with other local organisations. Details of the purpose of the locally-led projects and the selection criteria to be employed were given within the report.

The Portfolio Holder expressed her support for this proposal. She

commented that by cutting Local Authority funding, and the resultant redundancies, individuals' spending power would be reduced as would the work passed on to local businesses by the council. She felt therefore that the Government's belief that the private sector would provide employment to those made redundant was flawed. She acknowledged that the North-East would probably not be a priority area for this initiative but hoped Hartlepool would be successful nevertheless.

Decision

That the submission of an expression of interest to the Department for Education to be part of the Raising the Participation Age trial be approved.

38. Foster Carer Progression Payment Scheme *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Portfolio Holder for the implementation of a revised Foster Carer Progression Payments Scheme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The current Foster Carer Banded Payments Scheme was implemented in November 2005. Since then there had been several key developments creating a need to review the arrangements. The key change would be the replacement of the Band 5 carer scheme with a specialist scheme based on matching the carers' skills, experience and abilities with the assessed needs of a child and sibling group. Payments associated with holiday, respite and sickness entitlement would no longer be part of the scheme therefore a transitional arrangement was proposed for the next 12 months to allow half the holiday and respite allowance, thereby giving Band 5 carers time to adjust to the new scheme. Although there was a risk that some foster carers might resign the feedback was that there were service benefits provided carers receive appropriate support, training and supervision. The Council had also maintained its commitment to set its fostering allowances in line with the recommended rate for 2011/12 beyond current inflation rates.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether similar changes were being made nationally. The Assistant Director advised that all local authorities had unique foster carer payment schemes and other North-East authorities were also considering moving to a specialist scheme. In terms of the rate for fostering allowances a number of authorities were uplifting only at the rate of inflation. However for 2011/12 Child and Adult Services have been able to continue to meet the Fostering Network recommended rates. The Portfolio Holder noted the importance of having carers with the ability to foster more challenging individuals. The Assistant Director acknowledged this, commenting that there needed to be incentives for foster carers and

improvements in remuneration for people delivering a higher level of service. It had also been clear through the consultation responses that foster carers placed more emphasis on practical support rather than monetary funding.

Decision

That the implementation of the Foster Carer Payment Progression Scheme be approved.

39. National Citizen Service Pilots *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of report

To provide a background to the National Citizen Services (NCS) Pilot and to seek approval from the Portfolio Holder to submit an expression of interest to deliver a Hartlepool based programme.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Office for Civil Society (OCS) is working jointly with the Department for Education and other Central Government departments on a two year programme of pilots to test the NCS model. This is a voluntary 8-week summer programme for 16-year-olds from all backgrounds designed to promote a more cohesive, responsible and engaged society and would include residential opportunities. The first pilots will take place in Summer 2011 with 11,000 places available. Safer In Tees Valley were the accountable body for the 2011 Tees Valley pilot with Hartlepool's Integrated Youth Support Service delivering in partnership with other statutory agencies and third sector groups. A further 30,000 places had been announced in Summer 2012. It was proposed that an initial expression of interest be submitted stating that Hartlepool Council, in partnership with other organisations would deliver a pilot for the Hartlepool area aimed at 250 16-year-olds (with Hartlepool being the accountable body). Should any other Tees Valley local authorities wish to be involved in this partnership this could also be considered. Details of the commissioning timetable, risk implications and financial considerations were given in the report. At this stage there was no requirement to submit a detailed financial breakdown or confirm partner organisations, however if the initial proposal was successful the Council would invite partner organisations to become involved and work with them on a strong financial and delivery model. It was noted that as the overall contract value was anticipated to be over £100,000 Cabinet approval would be needed.

The Employment Development Officer expressed certain reservations on whether the Government would fund two consecutive pilot schemes.

However, he noted that if successful, the funding could be used to provide revenue for Summerhill and Carlton Outdoor Centre. This would also help to potentially support the third sector by sustaining jobs. The Portfolio Holder however felt sustaining jobs was not the business of the Council. Their role was to provide community services and jobs were sustained by doing this. She queried who would monitor delivery of the pilot and was advised that staff from the Child and Adult Youth Services Department had been tasked with this. The Portfolio Holder approved the recommendations, commenting that every young person should have the opportunity of a residential experience.

Decision

- I. That approval be given to the submission of an initial expression of interest by representatives from Child and Adult Services and Economic Development to deliver a National Citizen Scheme pilot in 2012 by 5th May 2011.
- II. That if other local authorities across Tees Valley are interested in being a partner within Hartlepool's bid this be considered, subject to approval from the Portfolio Holder.

40. West Park Primary School – Consultation Regarding Conversion to Academy Status *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the notification of the governing body of West Park Primary School of their indication that they are currently consultation stakeholders around their intention to convert to Academy status with effect from either 1st August or 1st September 2011.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Academy Act 2010 was passed by the coalition government inviting schools to convert to academy status. The governing body of West Park Primary School had subsequently announced their intention to convert to Academy status from August/September 2011, subject to consultation. This conversion would allow them the freedom to adopt their own conditions of service for staff, change the length of terms and school days and amend delivery of the national curriculum. However it was felt by officers and others in the educational community that this move would be divisive and break up the 'family' of Hartlepool schools. There were also concerns at the loss of income from central government and Service Level

Agreements. Information on issues relating to land and property and assets and contracts was given within the report. It was stated that should the conversion take place the Council would be obliged to determine the balance of the budget immediately prior to the conversion date, paying any surplus back to the academy and notifying the Secretary of State of any deficit. In this case however there was no deficit.

The Head of Planning and Development indicated that following the notification from West Park Primary School the Director of Child and Adult Services had written to the head of the governing body expressing the disappointment of the Council at this decision and referring to the previously successful partnership between the school and the Council. Officers were recommending that the Council continue to work in partnership with the School despite these future changes as they did not wish to see the children disadvantaged by the aspirations of the governing body.

Decision

That the response to the Governing Body of West Park Primary School by the Director of Child and Adult Services be noted.

41. 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 developments in relation to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) within Hartlepool

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

CAF was introduced to Hartlepool in mid 2006 and is designed to help early identification of the needs of children and co-ordinate service provision. In the last 12 months 312 common assessments have been logged as providing support to children and families in Hartlepool with the more complex cases supported through the use of CAF, Care Co-ordination and Team Around the Child meetings. A recent OFSTED inspection of Children's Safeguarding Services had deemed CAF as being underdeveloped, this had already been identified and was being responded to via the formation of a steering group considering different work streams. One of these was the possible move to an e-CAF system. The Assistant Director acknowledged that the paper CAF system was not yet embedded but an electronic system would lend itself to building on existing systems.

However access to the internet was not universal for all services or individuals. In terms of the struggle to embed CAF the Assistant Director was unable to give a reason as to why this had not been more successful as every effort had been made. A variety of options were being considered including the development of a Pathways team sitting alongside duty providing a single point of entry to services. It was also noted that very few local authorities had successfully embedded CAF. Information on a recent CAF audit and other developments was also included within the report.

The Portfolio Holder found it difficult to understand how a young person could be excluded from school without a CAF accompanying them. The Assistant Director acknowledged this but said that small improvements continued to be made. She felt that the previous system may have been overcomplicated and it might be productive to simplify things more. The Portfolio Holder asked that officers inform her if the situation improved.

Decision

That the areas of development in relation to the use of CAF by services within Hartlepool be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 a.m.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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