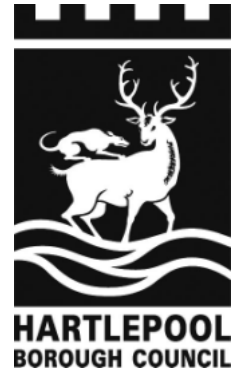


# CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Wednesday 23 November 2011

at 4.30pm

in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

MEMBERS: CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM:

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, Fleet, Griffin, Ingham, Lauderdale, Maness, P Thompson, Wells and Wilcox.

Co-opted Members: Eira Ballingall, Sacha Paul Bedding and David Relton.

Resident Representatives: Joan Steel, and 2 vacancies.

Young People's Representatives: Hanna Bew, Ashleigh Bostock, Bianca Gascoigne and Kim Henry

School Council Representatives: Two vacancies

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**

3. **MINUTES**

- 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011 (*to follow*)
- 3.2 To confirm the minutes of the joint meeting of Children's Services Scrutiny Forum and Health Scrutiny Forum held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November (*to follow*)

4. **RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No items

5. **CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

No items

6. **CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

No items

7. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**INVESTIGATION INTO THE 'PROVISION OF SUPPORT AND SERVICES TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE'**

7.1 How the Council and Partner Organisations support looked after children / young people across all aspects of their lives:-

(a) Group Exercises - Covering Report – *Scrutiny Support Officer*

(b) Small group exercises to discuss how the Council and its partner organisations support looked after children / young people across all aspects of their lives

7.2 Additional Information: Children's Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTF) 2012/13 to 2014/15 – Initial Consultation Proposals – Covering Report - *Scrutiny Support Officer*

8. **ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM FORWARD PLAN**

9. **ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

i) **Date of Next Meeting Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber**

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

## MINUTES

1 November 2011

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Councillor: Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Peter Ingham, Paul Thompson and Angie Wilcox

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 (ii), Councillor Brenda Loynes was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Ray Wells

Co-opted Members:

David Relton

Young Peoples Representatives:

Hannah Bew

Also Present:

Councillor Chris Simmons, Children's Services Portfolio Holder

Officers: Caroline O'Neill, Assistant Director, Performance and Achievement  
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services  
Juliette Ward, Participation Worker  
Laura Stones, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **46. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Ray Wells

### **47. Declarations of interest by Members**

Councillor Paul Thompson declared a personal interest in minutes 52 and 53. Councillor Chris Simmons, Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin and Brenda Loynes declared personal interests in Minute 58.

**48. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2011**

The minutes of 18 October 2011, a copy of which was tabled at the meeting, were confirmed.

**49. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this Forum**

None.

**50. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee**

None.

**51. Investigation into 'Youth Involvement/Participation – Verbal Update on the progress of the investigation into Young People's Access to Transport (Young People's Representatives)**

As part of the current investigation into Young People's Access to Transport, the young people in attendance provided Members with a verbal update on progress to date which included:-

- A questionnaire had been developed and circulated across the town to assist with information gathering in terms of the impact of withdrawal of certain bus routes, which transport services were required, popular routes, how often young people required transport as well the types of youth organisations young people attended,.
- Upon receipt of feedback from the questionnaires, it was intended that focus groups would be held to explore the issues raised.
- Current bus timetables had been examined and would be looked at in further detail. It was noted that bus timetables available on the internet were not up to date.
- The Young People had arranged to attend a transport meeting on 23 November, feedback from which would be provided at the next meeting of the Forum on 23 November.

The Chair thanked the representative for the update and contribution to the investigation.

**Recommended**

That the information given be noted.

## 52. Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services Budget Consultation – Covering Report/Presentation

*(Scrutiny Support Officer/Assistant Director of Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer referred to the meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on Friday 24 June 2011, when it was agreed that the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum would consider Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services. As part of the consultation process, the Assistant Director of Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services had been invited to the meeting to provide a presentation in relation to this budget area.

The Assistant Director, who was in attendance at the meeting, provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation which focussed on the following:-

### **Proposed Savings for 2012/13 in relation to the following projects:-**

- Children's Social Care Commissioning - £348,000
- Workforce Development - £10,000
- Phase 2 Review of Youth Offending Service - £15,000
- Review of Divisional Management Structure - £20,000
- Review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) funding and services - £15,000

In relation to the review of Children's Social Care Commissioning, Members were advised that the aim of the review was to realise a savings target of £348,000 by reducing the level of expenditure on commissioned services whilst continuing to maintain high quality provision for children in need and children looked after. A number of objectives had been identified, details of which were provided.

It was highlighted that the numbers of looked after children was increasing and the largest expenditure related to placements for looked after children. Where possible children were placed within Council resources with 71% of children placed with foster carers approved by the Council which compared well to neighbouring authorities with a figure of 54%. The average cost of in-house foster placements was £362 compared to £1,034 for independent foster placements.

In relation to residential care provision, it was reported that there was no council residential provision and all residential care was commissioned through the independent sector. The average cost of a commissioned placement was £3,068 with a projected cost of delivering the service in house at £3,682.

The presentation included details of the role of the Placement Support Officer, a budget breakdown for placements for looked after children and the proposals in place to reduce the number of looked after children and meet the savings targets.

In terms of savings, there was no scope to reduce in house foster care. There was a £400k budget pressure relating to residential care, the background of which was provided.

Details of proposals to achieve the required savings were provided which included a review of contract arrangements with providers, re-commissioning of services, rigorous contract monitoring, challenging providers on statutory responsibilities, review of divisional management structure, savings from costs centres with uncommitted balances, review of workforce development arrangements as well as the Phase 2 review of the youth offending service. The risks, staffing implications together with a summary of savings were provided, as set out in the presentation.

A Member raised concerns that the proposal to reduce the number of children looked after by developing a support foster care scheme to enable children to remain in the family home could potentially increase the risks to the child. The Assistant Director provided assurances that the proposal was to strengthen provision of support to children on the edge of care by preventing family breakdown and would only be utilised in such circumstances where the child was not considered to be at risk of harm. It was highlighted there was a statutory duty upon the local authority to do as much as possible to maintain a child in the family home, however, where there was a clear risk to the child arrangements were in place to take decisive action to protect them.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, a number of queries/views/issues were raised which included the following:-

- (i) In response to a request for clarification, the Assistant Director provided clarification in relation to the average cost of commissioned residential provision and projected cost of delivering this service in house. A full detailed breakdown of how the figure of £3,682 for in-house residential provision had been identified was requested as well as details of the costs of using a collaborative approach to staffing with the third sector as a comparator. In addition, it was suggested that the costs of utilising a council owned building or a building currently included on the asset transfer list for this purpose be explored for further consideration by the Forum.
- (ii) A number of queries were raised in relation to the fostering and adoption process, agency residential care, other commissioned services and supported lodging arrangements to which the Assistant Director responded.
- (iii) The Forum discussed the funding arrangements for the Looked After Children Nurse. Assurances were sought that when the PCT ceases to exist, the Looked After Children Nurse position should be retained and that this arrangement be referred to the new Clinical Commissioning Group and endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- (iv) Reference was made to the divisional management restructure, the options in relation to the vacant Head of Service position within

- the Youth Offending Service and how the decision would be made in this regard. It was suggested that the option of a secondment from the third sector to undertake this role be explored.
- (v) Members requested clarification on the reserves at year end 2010/11, before we had a favourable outturn confirmed. The favourable outturn was then converted, approx £2 million into specific reserves. What went into specific reserves around Children's Services, what was already in the reserves as at 1 April 2011 before Cabinet divided them up and what was the current reserve position?

### **Recommended**

- (i) That the comments of the Forum as outlined above, be noted and fed into the budget decision making process.
- (ii) That the additional information requested and suggestions of the Forum, as detailed above, be explored and provided for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum.

## **53. Consideration of Progress Reports/Budget and Policy Framework Documents – Children's Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/13 to 2014/15 – Initial Consultation Proposals (Scrutiny Support Officer)**

The Scrutiny Support Officer introduced the report which included the Executive's initial budget consultation proposals for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/13 to 2014/15. The Forum's views were requested in relation to the initial proposals for those service areas within the Child and Adult Services Department following the meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 23 September 2011 when it was agreed that the initial consultation proposals would be considered on a departmental basis by the appropriate Scrutiny Forum. The comments of the Forum would be presented to Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 2 December and included in the formal Overview and Scrutiny response to be presented to Cabinet on 19 December 2010.

The Assistant Director of Performance and Achievement presented the budget consultation proposals, budget pressures, reserves and grants which were attached as appendices to the report.

### **Reserves**

The Chair questioned the accuracy of the information contained within Appendix A, Page 5 in the extract of the minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 10 October relating to the Chief Finance Officer's indication regarding

the net reserves available. Clarification was requested as to whether the following information was accurate:-

“an amount that needed to be included back into the reserves to reflect the Transitional Grant that was used to meet redundancy costs” and whether the shortfall came from the insurance fund. The Assistant Director agreed to provide clarification following the meeting.

### **Proposed Budget Reductions**

The Chair sought clarification on the impact that savings and/or staffing changes, identified in Appendix b, would place on service provision as well as the impact on the general public. It was suggested that an additional column be added to Appendix B in relation to each proposed saving.

#### Social Care Commissioning – Provision of Children's Home

A full detailed breakdown was requested on how the figure of £3,682.00 had been established for the in-house provision of a Children's Home, the costs of using a collaborative approach to staffing with the third sector as well as the cost of utilising a Council owned building – minute 52 above refers.

#### Social Care Commissioning – LAC Nurse

Assurances were sought that when the PCT ceases to exist, the Looked After Children Nurse position should be retained – minute 52 above refers.

#### Reduction in Youth Support Commissioning Budget

Members did not support this reduction and reaffirmed their views expressed at the last meeting that the youth provision at the Headland should be retained until such time as alternative arrangements were in place. Following discussion regarding the commissioning arrangements and legal implications of extending the service and the Assistant Director's clarification that reserves would be utilised to continue service provision until a new contract was introduced, Members emphasised the need to advise all service providers that the service would not be withdrawn on 1 April and would continue for up to 6 months until a new contract was introduced/awarded.

#### Review of Divisional Management Structures

It was suggested that the option of a secondment from the third sector to undertake the Head of Service role for youth offending be explored - minute 52 above refers.

### **Budget Pressures**

#### School Catering

In response to a request for clarification, the Director of Regeneration and



Neighbourhoods outlined the benefits of supporting this budget pressure, the schools reluctance to contribute and the risk of price increases. The Forum went on to discuss statutory responsibilities in terms of provision, child poverty issues as well as potential funding from other sources like the health improvement grant. Following further debate, the Forum indicated that they could not support this pressure until the position was clear in relation to alternative sources of funding, what the impact would be on weekly charges for school meals and until such time as feedback from communication with the schools had taken place in terms of their contribution towards school meals provision to establish whether they would subsidise school meals with the grant or whether it would be utilised for another purpose. Clarification was also requested as to whether this would be a 140k or 286K pressure.

### **Reserves to be Reviewed**

#### Brierton/Dyke House BSF Costs

Following a question and answer session in relation to potential reserves, Members requested further information in this regard as to the level of reserves at the end of the transition period.

#### City Learning Centre

Clarification was sought in relation to the £32,000 reserves. The Assistant Director explained the background to the relocation of the City Learning Centre and the implications of withdrawal of the building schools for the future proposals in relation to this issue. The Assistant Director advised that the Schools Forum decided to continue funding for this facility and it was envisaged that the building formed part of a 5 year lease and was owned by the church. Concerns were raised regarding the costs incurred in funding redundancy costs for a facility that was not Council owned given the current budgetary situation and a query was raised regarding the Council's legal position in terms of funding such costs. Confirmation as to whether the building could be sold was sought.

With regard to the long term use of the building, it was suggested that the possibility of soft market testing be pursued. In light of Members comments, it was suggested that the issues raised be further examined and reported back to a future meeting of the Forum.

In conclusion, the Chair referred to the 2010/11 outturn position/reserve balances and requested clarification as to what had transferred to specific reserves, what was already in the reserves and the reserves position as at 1 April 2011 prior to Cabinet allocating reserves as well as the current reserve position.

### **Schedule of Grants which transferred into Formula Grant**

In relation to the Learning Disability and Health Improvement Grant, a query was raised as to whether this would be part of the formula grant. Further

information in relation to allocations was requested for consideration at a future meeting of the Forum. Concern was raised as to the likelihood of the service becoming a budget pressure at the end of the 18 month pathfinder.

**Recommended**

- (i) That the pressures relating to school catering within the Child and Adult Services area of service provision were not supported as part of the Budget and Policy Framework initial consultation proposals and further information, as detailed above, be awaited.
- (ii) That the comments/views of the Forum in relation to proposed budget reductions, reserves and grants, as detailed above be reported to the meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee to enable a formal response to Cabinet on 19 December 2011.
- (iii) That further information in response to queries raised by the Forum in relation to proposed budget reductions, reserves and grant information, be awaited.

The meeting stood adjourned at 6.30 pm.

**Upon being reconvened on Thursday 10 November 2011  
at 4.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

**Present:**

Councillor: Christopher Akers-Belcher (In the Chair)

Councillors: Mary Fleet

Resident Representative: Joan Steel

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services  
Peter McIntosh, Head of Planning and Development, Child and Adult Services  
Sue Beevers, Admissions, School Place Planning and Support Services Manager  
Laura Stones, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## 54. Inquorate Meeting

It was noted that the meeting was not quorate.

## 55. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Griffin, P Thompson Wells, Wilcox and Co-opted Member Eira Ballingall.

## 56. Declarations of interest by Members

None

## 57. The Executive's Forward Plan *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Executive's Forward Plan for November to February 2012 relating to the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum was provided to give Members of the Forum the opportunity to consider whether any items within the Plan should be considered by this Forum.

In looking at the Forward Plan in detail, discussions ensued on the following items.

- 1) Ref: CAS 101/11 – Review of Children's Social Care Commissioning and 2012/13 Savings Proposal

The Chair stated that a number of queries had been raised in relation to this issue at a previous meeting, responses to which would feed into a future meeting of this Forum. The Assistant Director provided details of the in-house and independent foster care arrangements in response to a request for clarification.

**At this point in the meeting Councillor Mary Fleet declared a personal interest in this item of business.**

- 2) Ref: CAS 102/11 – Early Intervention Strategy Service Restructure

It was reported that this issue had been considered at a recent joint meeting of this Forum and clarification was sought as to whether the Children's Trust had combined with the Children's Partnership given that the Children's Trust had been referred to in the budget documentation. The Assistant Director advised that the Children's Trust was no longer a statutory requirement and had merged with the Children's Partnership until such time as it became a sub group of the health and wellbeing board.

- 3) Ref: CAS 103/11 – Special Educational Needs (SEN) Pathfinder

It was noted that this issue had recently been considered by Cabinet. Whilst

the level of work undertaken on this issue was applauded, some concern was raised as to whether in the longer term, when funding ceased, this would result in a budget pressure.

4) Ref: CAS 106/11 – Priority Schools Building Programme

Reference was made to the impact of the withdrawal of Building Schools for the Future funding and further details of this funding opportunity was requested. Members were advised that a funding bid had been submitted for 4 schools who met the Government's criteria in terms of value for money.

In response to a query regarding the proposals for Catcote and Springwell schools, it was reported that Springwell was not part of the original BSF proposals and as a result of the withdrawal of BSF funding Catcote School would remain on its existing site. The proposal to move the school to the Brierton site was no longer an option due to the cost implications. The Chair emphasised the importance of maintaining the vision of the learning village proposal in respect of these two schools in the Council's future plans.

5) Ref CAS110/11 – Home to School Transport Savings

With regard to who would be consulted and how, reference was made to the guidance issued the previous year in relation to the Council's duty to engage with all stakeholders including parents, guardians and ward members when taking financial decisions and the need to reflect this in the Forward Plan as part of the consultation process.

6) Ref: CAS 111/11 – Education Services and Out of School Activities Savings

With regard to the consultation process, it was requested that the Portfolio Holder, parents or providers as well as any other necessary consultees be included in the consultation process in accordance with the Council's consultation requirements in respect of financial decisions referred to above.

**Recommended**

That the comments of the Forum be noted and reflected in the Forward Plan where necessary.

**58. Draft Admissions Arrangements for Admissions to Schools 2013/14** (*Chief Finance Officer*)

The report outlined the draft admission arrangements for admissions to schools in 2013/2014 for community and voluntary controlled schools in Hartlepool, to the co-ordinated admissions schemes. The report included details of the way in which Admissions Authorities must determine admission arrangements,

mandatory requirements, admissions policy for 2013/14, consultation timetable, consideration of the admission policy for 2013/14, admission limits together with the co-ordinated admissions scheme for secondary and primary schools.

### **Recommended**

That the contents of the report, be noted.

## **59. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

## **60. Any Other Business - Feedback from Consideration of Progress Reports/Budget and Policy Framework Documents – Children's Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2012/13 to 2014/15 – Initial Consultation Proposals** *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Chair reported that feedback in response to queries raised in relation to the budget had been provided in part which included estimated costs for in-house provision of a residential home, details of which were tabled at the meeting. The Chair expressed concerns that the proposed staffing and food costs were excessive and reiterated the views outlined at the first part of the meeting that the costs of utilising a council owned building for this purpose be explored. The Assistant Director stated that this issue had been considered and would be further explored. The possibility of utilising the savings achieved from Church Square to facilitate this proposal was suggested.

The Chair referred to the outstanding budget information from the first part of the meeting and requested that this be provided in readiness for consideration at the next meeting.

### **Recommended**

- (i) That the outstanding information in response to queries raised by the Forum in relation to the budget be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the Forum.
- (ii) That the estimated costings provided in relation to in-house provision of a residential home, be noted and considered at the next meeting of the Forum.

The meeting concluded at 5.00 pm

CHAIR

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

23 November 2011



**Report of:** Scrutiny Support Officer

**Subject:** INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT AND SERVICES TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE – GROUP EXERCISES - COVERING REPORT

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the Forum that officers from the Child and Adult Services Department, partner organisations, foster carers and looked after children / young people have been invited to attend this meeting to discuss how looked after children / young people are supported across all aspects of their lives.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 18 October 2011, the Terms of Reference and Potential Areas of Inquiry/Sources of Evidence were approved by the Forum for this scrutiny investigation.

2.2 Subsequently, officers from the Child and Adult Services Department, partner organisations, foster carers and looked after children / young people have been invited to attend this meeting to explore how the Council and partner organisations support looked after children / young people across all aspects of their lives (clearly defining what is a statutory requirement and what the Council does over and above these requirements in terms of the provision of services and support).

2.3 It is suggested that the Forum split into small groups to explore how looked after children / young people are supported across all aspects of their lives.

The aims of the group exercise are to:

- (a) Enable everyone to speak and put forward their opinions;
- (b) Pick up key themes / issues throughout the discussion and report them back at the end of the meeting; and
- (c) Prepare final notes following the meeting.

- 2.4 It is suggested that each group focus on a specific theme and each theme focus on the following key questions (*Questions from the Centre for Public Scrutiny Guidance on 10 Questions to ask if you're Scrutinising Services for Looked After Children*):-

### **Corporate Parenting**

- (1) *How well does the Council do in commissioning or providing services for looked after children / young people?*
- (2) *How stable and secure are the lives of looked after children / young people while they are in care? Could this be improved? If yes, how?*
- (3) *What more could be done to fulfil the Council's responsibilities as a 'corporate parent'?*

### **Placements**

- (1) *How well does the Council do at finding appropriate adoptive families for children for whom it is decided this is the right option?*
- (2) *How well do foster care arrangements work? Could this be improved? If yes, how?*
- (3) *What support does the Council provide to children / young people leaving care and how effective is it?*

### **Health and Housing**

- (1) *How good is the health and wellbeing of children in care? Could this be improved, if yes, how?*
- (2) *How good is the standard of any residential care provided or used by the Council? Could this be improved, if yes? how?*

### **Education**

- (1) *How well do looked after children / young people do at school, both academically and in terms of other kind of achievements? Could this be improved, if yes, how?*
- (2) *How effective is the professional workforce of social workers and others responsible for running services for and working with looked after children / young people?*



**3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the views of each group in relation to the questions outlined in section 2.4 of this report.

**CONTACT OFFICER**

Laura Stones – Scrutiny Support Officer  
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Tel: 01429 523647  
Email: [laura.stones@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:laura.stones@hartlepool.gov.uk)

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background paper was used in preparation of this report:-

- (a) Scrutiny Investigation into the 'Provision of Support and Services to Looked After Children / Young People' - Scoping Report (Scrutiny Support Officer) – 18.10.11

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

23 November 2011



**Report of:** Scrutiny Support Officer

**Subject:** ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - CHILDREN'S SERVICES: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTF) 2012/13 TO 2014/15 – INITIAL CONSULTATION PROPOSALS - COVERING REPORT

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide the opportunity for the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum to consider the additional information requested by Members at their meeting of 1 November 2011 on the Children's Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTF) 2012/13 to 2014/15 – Initial Consultation Proposals.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of this Forum on 1 November 2011, Member requested additional information on the Children's Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTF) 2012/13 to 2014/15 – Initial Consultation Proposals.

2.2 In accordance with the Authority's Access to Information Rules, it has not been possible to include the additional information within the statutory requirements for the dispatch of the agenda and papers for this meeting, therefore it will be circulated under separate cover, as **Appendix A** to this report, prior to the meeting.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the additional information and seek clarification on any relevant issues where appropriate.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

Laura Stones – Scrutiny Support Officer  
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Tel: 01429 523647  
Email: [laura.stones@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:laura.stones@hartlepool.gov.uk)

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background paper was used in preparation of this report:-

- (a) Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer – Children's Services: Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTF) 2012/13 to 2014/15 – Initial Consultation Proposals

CSSF Additional Information Requests:-

Appendix A

Cabinet minutes of 24 October 2011

Reference in the minutes to 'The Chief Finance Officer indicated that a review of the reserves and risks had been undertaken as an integral part of the process. At the 31st March 2011 the Council had total reserves of £39.023m. This included reserves held in trust for schools which could not be spent by the Council and capital reserves earmarked to fund capital expenditure commitments re-phased into 2011/12. When account is taken of these amounts and an amount that needed to be included back into the reserves to reflect the Transitional Grant that was used to meet redundancy costs, the net reserves available for review was £25.379m.

Would like clarification on the sentence 'an amount that needed to be included back into the reserves to reflect the Transitional Grant that was used to meet redundancy costs'? Is this accurate? Did the shortfall come from the insurance fund?

***In February 2011 Council agreed to use the Transitional Grant to fund redundancy/early retirement costs relating to the budget reductions which needed to be made to address the significant cut in Formal Grant for 2011/12.***

***The Transitional Grant was not received until 2011/12. As redundancy/early retirement costs relating to the 2011/12 budget year were paid in 2010/11 (as staff made redundant left before the 31.03.11) a temporary funding solution for these costs was needed. Therefore, in 2010/11 redundancy/early retirement costs were temporarily funded from the Insurance Fund and this money was repaid in 2011/12 when the Transitional Grant was received.***

***The final Transitional Grant paid by the Government was higher than the indicative allocation, therefore the additional amount was transferred to the General Fund.***

Appendix B

Cost of a Children's Home - Requested a full detailed breakdown of how the figure of £3,682 was reached by finance for delivering in house residential provision

Requested a comparison of what it would cost if use a collaborative approach to staffing with third sector? And what it would cost if utilise a building that the Council currently own / on asset transfer list?

***See attached***

Appendix C

- (a) School Meals - Cannot agree as a Corporate Parent to a pressure of this magnitude. Cannot make informed decision until know what is happening with the learning disability and health improvement grant – could this money be used to fulfil this pressure? Cannot agree to pressure until we know what the schools are doing with the healthy eating grant as outlined in Appendix D. Want clarification from schools. What impact will this have on weekly charge for school meals? Need dialogue to be opened up with schools? Need to know whether looking at a 140k or 286k pressure. Will schools subsidise meals with grant or will they use it for some other purpose?

*The MTFs draws a distinction between pressures which are unavoidable and which are therefore included in the updated 2012/13 budget deficit (the £140k fall into this category) and pressures which are being flagged as potential risks. The latter haven't yet been included in the revised budget deficit as it is hoped these issues won't materialise. This category includes the £146k healthy eating grant, which it is hoped will continue to be received via schools.*

*The MTFs draws a distinction between pressures which are unavoidable and which are therefore included in the updated 2012/13 budget deficit (the £140k fall into this category) and pressures which are being flagged as potential risks. The latter haven't yet been included in the revised budget deficit as it is hoped these issues won't materialise. This category includes the £146k healthy eating grant, which it is hoped will continue to be received via schools.*

*From 2008/09 to 2010/11 the School Lunch Grant was a ring-fenced grant received by the LA as part of the Standards Fund allocations. The value was in the region of £165k of which the School Forum had agreed a small amount would be paid to the two schools who provide their own catering arrangements (Dyke House and Catcote) with the balance (c£145k) paid to Neighbourhood Services.*

*Commencing this financial year (2011/12) the DfE merged a number of the Standards Fund grants into the Dedicated Schools Grant, effectively ending any ring-fencing arrangements and also stating that all of these former separate grants had to form part of individual schools budgets unless there was explicit School Forum approval to retain some amounts centrally.*

*Hartlepool's Schools Forum determined on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011 that, although the grants were no longer separately identified, they would continue to allocate them to schools pro-rata to the previous allocations and that on their School Funding Sheets the amounts they were receiving for each grant would be separately*

*identified . The LA requested at the Schools Budget Consultation Event that they wished to continue with the previous arrangements and following unanimous support in the questionnaire responses the Minutes of the March 2011 Schools Forum showed that “Forum Members agreed that the School Lunch Grant should be allocated to those schools that provide their own meals with the balance being allocated to Neighbourhood Services”.*

*Following the calculation of the formula this resulted in the following allocations in 2011/12:-*

*Neighbourhood Services £147,127*

*Dyke House School £16,427*

*Catcote School £1,475*

*We do not yet know the likely level of next years DSG allocation as the DfE have not given us the per pupil funding amount nor have we confirmed pupil numbers - we are currently working on a ‘cash freeze’ position for budget working papers so would assume that the above figures are unchanged.*

*The next Schools Forum meeting is 11<sup>th</sup> January 2012 (the Consultation Event is 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 and then the final budget decisions will be made at the 29<sup>th</sup> Feb 2012 Forum meeting).*

*It is the Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services) intention to write to Head Teachers and Governors on this topic and raise the concerns of the Council. He Assistant Director has also been invited to the next school governors briefing where we can raise this issue with them and Caroline O'Neill is briefing Cllr Chris Simmons at the next portfolio meeting.*

## Estimated Costings of a 4-bed 'In-House' Residential Home

	Basic £	NI £	Super £	Total Cost £	
<u>Staffing</u>					
Manager	38,042	2,943	6,239	47,224	
Deputy-Manager	36,186	2,737	5,935	44,858	
Staff - Bands 7-9	377,000	28,451	61,828	467,279	2 staff on duty at all times; includes Shift Allowance & Weekend & Night Enhancements
Cook	16,900	1,300	2,800	21,000	
Cover / Overtime	56,000	4,000	0	60,000	
	524,128	39,431	76,802	640,361	
Utilities				16,000	
Cleaning				12,000	
Maintenance				15,000	
Other Premises				10,000	inc Insurance, Trade Waste, Grounds Maintenance
Food				20,000	
Transport				13,000	
General Equipment etc				6,500	inc phones, ICT, office equipment etc
OFSTED Registration				2,000	
Activities				11,000	
Prudential Borrowing				22,000	Cost of £0.5m capital
<b>Total Cost</b>				<b>767,861</b>	
<b>Cost per Placement per week</b>				<b>3,682</b>	Assumes 100% occupancy throughout year