

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

27 March 2012

The meeting commenced at 10.35 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services
Peter McIntosh, Head of Planning and Development
Danielle Swainston, Sure Start and Extended Services and Early Years Manager
Sue Beevers, Admissions, School Place Planning and Support Services Manager
James Sinclair, Youth Support Manager
Graham Bryson, Integrated Youth support Service Planning Officer

28. Admission Arrangements for Admissions to Schools 2013-14 and Co-ordinated Admissions to Primary and Secondary Schools and In-Year Transfers 2013-14 and Update on New School Admissions Code 2012 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key decision test (ii)

Purpose of report

To determine the admission policy for community and voluntary controlled primary schools in Hartlepool for the school year 2012/13 and the coordinated admissions procedures to primary and secondary schools for 2012/13 following consultation with governing bodies, other admissions authorities and the general public.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Head of Planning and Development reported on the main changes within the School Admissions Code that came into force on 1 February 2012 as set out in the report.

In accordance with usual practice, the Council as admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled schools were required to consult on

admission arrangements for these schools each year.

Submitted as an appendix to the report was a summary of the consultation responses received. The views expressed were considered by the Admissions Forum on 6 February 2012. The Forum discussed in detail the implications of moving sibling above admission zone and voted two for, four against with two abstentions. Following the forum meeting the issue was raised with the Primary Head teachers and, following much debate, a 'straw poll' of community and voluntary controlled heads was taken with 6 for and 9 against moving sibling above zone. Not every Head teacher from these sectors was present at the meeting. It was noted that the final decision on this matter would rest with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

Revised admission limits had been discussed with schools on the basis of revised net capacity figures, and these were attached at Appendix 1.

The co-ordinated schemes for primary and secondary admissions and In Year Transfers agreed by the Admission Forum were also attached as appendices.

The Head of Planning and Development reported that on the basis of the consultation exercise, it was proposed that the admissions policy for entry to community and voluntary controlled primary schools in 2013/14 be as follows:-

- Parents / carers be invited to express preferences for up to 3 primary schools in priority order and give reasons for their preferences.
- In the first instance, places would be awarded to those pupils with a statement of special educational needs where the school was named in the statement.
- The remaining places will be awarded in the following priority order:
 - 1) those children who are looked after children and previously looked after children (*previously looked after children are children who were looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order*);
 - 2) those children who have older brothers or sisters who will be attending the school in September 2013; (previously number 3)
 - 3) those children who live in the school's admission zone; (previously number 2)
 - 4) those children who are distinguished from the great majority of other applicants whether on medical grounds or by other

exceptional circumstances and who would suffer significant hardship if they were unable to attend the school;

- 5) those children who live closest to the school as determined by the shortest suitable walking distance (*measured by the shortest suitable walking route from the (ordnance survey) address point of the child's home address to the main entrance of the school, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system*).

It was reported that the Admissions Forum no longer had a statutory standing following the new codes. The Admissions Forum can continue as a voluntary arrangement if it was of benefit. The consensus view from schools and the existing Forum was that it was prudent to retain the Forum and it should be kept, as it was an effective arrangement for receiving updates on codes, general matters of interest, feedback, debate etc, and the members were able to report back to other head teachers as necessary.

Decision

- (i) That the proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled primary schools which proposes to promote the sibling criteria above school admission zone criteria set out in paragraph 4.1.1 of the report be approved.
- (ii) The revised admission limits attached be agreed.
- (iii) The Primary and Secondary and In Year Transfers co-ordinated admissions schemes be approved.
- (iv) That changes to the new school admissions code which came into force on 1st February 2012 be noted.
- (v) The proposal that the Admissions Forum should continue to meet in an advisory form be noted.

29. Schools Capital Works Programme 2012/13 (*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 Schools' Capital Works Programme for 2012/13.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out background information relating to capital allocations together with funding available for 2012/13 following the Government's announcement that the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme would be cancelled.

Cabinet had received a report on 24 October 2011 indicating that expressions of interest for Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP)

had been submitted to Partnerships for Schools (PfS) for the following schools:

- Manor College of Technology
- Barnard Grove Primary School
- West View Primary School
- Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School

The LA carried out an analysis of condition data across Hartlepool schools which identified four schools as having exceeded the 30% value for money threshold set out by PfS. The applications for these schools were in line with Cabinet's existing strategy under the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programmes.

The PSBP will be privately financed and was intended to replace those schools nationally deemed to be in the worst condition. Announcements on the applications had been expected by late December 2011 but due to the unexpected high volume of LAs submitting interest and the consequential delays, we are still unsure as to whether any of the above are to be included in either the initial or later phases. Because the programme is aimed at rebuilding schools in the worst condition, it is not possible to fully set the 2012/13 capital programme in line with the usual criteria.

All three LA capital funded schools (Barnard Grove, West View and Manor) would figure as high priorities in the programme but it is felt prudent to defer their respective schemes together with the associated funding until announcements were made on the PSBP and certainty about their future position was gained.

It was therefore proposed that in order to make best use of the schools' summer break, the capital programme should be phased with the initial phase concentrating on those schemes that will be unaffected by national announcements on the PSBP. Funding in the order of £1.9m would be retained to mainly support those high priority schemes for the three schools where a decision was awaited and which, if required, will be selected in line with the assessment criteria outlined in paragraph 6 of this report. The funding would only be released if the schools were not being included in the PSBP in order to avoid financial resources being wasted should the school be rebuilt in the near future.

A further, more detailed report will be brought back to the Portfolio Holder after the announcement was made in order to set out a clearer position on the second phase of the 2012/13 schools capital programme.

The report included details of funding available for 2012/13 together with funding figures for the previous year as a comparator.

In relation to the proposed programme of works for 2012/13, a schedule of condition priorities had been derived from the most recent condition surveys, as set out in the report. The report included an explanation of prioritisation categories, the outcome of fire safety inspections of all

schools, special educational needs considerations, development funding schemes together with a summary of funding allocations and a breakdown of Phase 1 funding.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the recent condition surveys, concerns expressed from a resident regarding the condition of Manor School and the benefits of undertaking improvement works if a decision was taken to demolish in the near future. The Head of Planning and Development provided assurances that condition surveys were undertaken annually by competent surveyors to ensure schools remained safe. Whilst the Portfolio Holder raised concerns regarding the value of undertaking improvement works and commented on her reluctance to agree decisions of this type, it was acknowledged that maintenance works were necessary to minimise health and safety risks and to address areas/sections of schools which showed clear signs of failure given the decision of the government to cancel the BSF programme.

Decision

- (i) The schedule of 2012/13 capital condition items be approved as summarised at Appendix 1, subject to the LA agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum.
- (ii) The schedule of Fire Safety and Special Educational Needs schemes be approved as summarised at Appendix 1, subject to the LA agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum.
- (iii) The Basic Need allocation to the Diocese and Contingency be approved as summarised at Appendix 1.
- (iv) The schedule of Development Funding schemes be approved as detailed in Appendix 1, subject to the LA agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum.
- (v) The Child and Adult Services Department 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.

30. Approval of a Permanence Policy, Special Guardianship Policy, Resident Order Policy and Connected Persons Policy *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek approval for the implementation of new policies in relation to Achieving Permanence for Children Looked After (Appendix 1), Special Guardianship (Appendix 2), Residence Order (Appendix 3) and Connected Persons, Appendix 4

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director reported that the Care Planning Regulations 2010 introduced a requirement upon local authorities to produce a Policy relating to the assessment and provision of services to 'Connected Persons' (Family and Friends) caring for a child or young person who otherwise would be looked after in a foster placement or residential care. In the development of the Connected Person's Policy and Procedure, the service had reviewed all associated policies relating to the care of children living outside of their immediate family, in particular those subject to Residence or Special Guardianship Orders who had been or would otherwise have been looked after by the local authority. The review also included the local authority's Adoption Policy which was currently being revised to ensure new requirements had been met within the Adoption Regulations 2010 which would be presented to a future meeting for approval.

The Special Guardianship, Connected Person and Residence Order policies detail the statutory requirements and the Council's vision in ensuring the most appropriate order was in place to meet the individual needs of a child and his/her family.

It was noted that within the Special Guardianship and Residence Order policies, the service had introduced a time limit of three years for the agreement of financial allowance payable to carers and as such there was a risk that this could be a disincentive for carers to apply for such an order resulting in young people remaining looked after. However, at the end of a three year period a new assessment would be completed, details of which were set out in the report. The changes suggested in relation to the financial support would provide an opportunity to maintain the financial commitments at manageable levels and offer more predictability in relation to future budget planning and expenditure.

Decision

That the implementation of the Permanence Policy, Special Guardianship Policy, Residence Order Policy and Connected Persons Policy, be approved.

31. Performance Update on the Delivery of the September Guarantee and the Numbers of Young People (16-18) Not in Education, Employment or Training *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information only

Purpose of report

To advise and update the Portfolio Holder on the progress made in relation to the reduction of the number of young people (16-18) locally who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and the delivery of the local September Guarantee.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided background information relating to these two key performance indicators and detailed Hartlepool's performance in relation to the numbers of young people (16-18) who were not in education, employment or training and the delivery of the September Guarantee in comparison to the regional and national picture.

In relation to local performance, the report highlighted Hartlepool's historical year on year progress in relation to the reduction in the number of young people who were not in education, employment or training since 2006. The figure for 2011 was higher than in previous years at 7.4% as a consequence of the introduction of new reporting guidelines.

In terms of Hartlepool's performance in relation to the delivery of the September Guarantee for 2011, Hartlepool continued to be higher than both the regional and national averages and, as a result, Hartlepool had some of the highest numbers of young people (16-18) staying on in learning which continued to stand the Council in good stead for the raising of the participation age in 2013 to 17 and 2015 to 18.

The Portfolio Holder raised concerns regarding the number of children leaving school who were unable to read and the adverse impact on further education and training as a result. In response, it was reported that the new Ofsted inspection framework focussed more strongly on reading skills. In the debate that followed, the Portfolio Holder questioned the outcomes of Ofsted inspections and emphasised the need for Youth Support Officers to share any evidence of poor literacy with chief officers responsible for

schools with a view to addressing any poor performance issues.

Decision

- (i) That progress made regarding the delivery of the September Guarantee be noted.
- (ii) That the continued emphasis placed upon the reduction in the numbers of young people who were not in education, employment or training in preparation for the Raising of the Participation Age be noted.

32. Update on the Use of Web Based Systems to Promote the Youth Offer in Hartlepool *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information only

Purpose of report

To provide the Portfolio Holder with an update on progress made in expanding the Hartlepool Now website and developing a Facebook page to promote the local Youth Offer through media that are reflective of the preferences of local young people.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided information and the rationale regarding the use of web based systems and social networks to promote the Youth Offer for Hartlepool by the Integrated Youth Support Service and provided an update on progress to date.

Reference was made to the report of the young people – Youth Involvement/Participation in the Development of Council Services, attached at Appendix A, which highlighted that Social Networking was an excellent tool to engage young people and promote council activities and made recommendations on how to support the safe implementation of Social Networking across the authority.

There had been much work undertaken both corporately and by young people around the issues of staying safe on-line particularly around the use of Facebook as set out in the report. Responsibility for maintaining the Youth Offer aspect of Facebook and Hartlepool Now would transfer to Child and Adult Services Family Information and Support Hub which was currently under development as part of the Early Intervention Strategy. Details of the risk and benefits as well as the financial considerations were provided, as set out in the report.

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the proposals and monitoring arrangements emphasising the importance of ensuring young people remained safe when using social networks.

Decision

That progress made regarding the developing Hartlepool Now website and Facebook to promote the Youth Offer by the Integrated Youth Support Service be noted.

33. Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 34 Children's Services Contracts: Exceptions to the Contract Procedure Rules – Short Breaks - paragraph 3 namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

34. Children's Services Contracts: Exceptions to the Contract Procedure Rules – Short Breaks (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek Portfolio Holder approval to make an exception to the contract procedure rules in relation to the following services:

- Specialist Toy Library/Loan Service
- Extended activity provision for children with disabilities and additional needs

Issue(s) for consideration by Cabinet

Details were set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

Decision

The decision was set out in the exempt section of the minutes.

The meeting concluded at 11.40 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 2 APRIL 2012