

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

11 September 2012

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

Present:

Councillor Cath Hill (Children's and Community Services Portfolio Holder)

Officers: John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services
Wendy Rudd, Head of Business Unit
Jane Young, Business Unit Manager – Specialist Services
Danielle Swainston, Head of Access and Strategic Planning
Roni Checksfield, Youth Inclusion Custody Coordinator
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Rachael White, Democratic Services Officer
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

20. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Update 2011-2012

(Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

Non key decision.

Purpose of report

For the Portfolio Holder to approve the publication of the childcare sufficiency update 2011-2012.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Head of Access and Strategic Planning reported that the Childcare Act 2006 required local authorities to undertake a number of new duties one of which was to shape and support the development of childcare provision in their local area in order to make it flexible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of the community. The overall aim of the Childcare Act is that parents would be able to find childcare locally that met their needs and enables them to make a real choice about training and work.

Local authorities are required under Clause 11 of the Act to assess childcare provision in their area. The results of the assessment form the basis of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA). Local authorities

were required to undertake their first Childcare Sufficiency Assessment during 2007-2008. There is a further requirement to keep the assessment under review (annually) with a full assessment repeated every three years. Hartlepool Published a full assessment in May 2008 and updates for the next two years. A full childcare sufficiency assessment was approved and published in April 2011.

Although the number of childcare places had decreased slightly there still seemed to be adequate childcare places for demand although this was being monitored closely. The vacancy information indicated that settings did have places for children. The government had recently introduced a duty for Local Authorities to ensure that all vulnerable two year olds had access to a free 15 hours childcare place. Estimations indicated that the local authority would need to ensure that there were approximately 400 two year old places based on the eligibility criteria. There were currently a number of vacancies for 2 years olds across Hartlepool.

The Portfolio Holder questioned the effects of the current economic situation on childcare places. The Officer commented that many families were struggling and that they were using friends and family for childcare as they could not afford nursery care. The Portfolio Holder commented that the changes to benefits proposed by the government would have a huge impact on families. The Officer reported that child poverty was likely to increase but the Council was working with partner agencies in providing help and advice to attempt to mitigate the affects of the changes.

Decision

That the publication of the childcare sufficiency update 2011-2012 be approved.

21. Oscars – Out of School and Holiday Care Ofsted Inspection *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

For the Portfolio Holder to note the inspection report and outcome from Oscars Ofsted inspection.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Sure Start, Extended Services and Early Years Manager reported on the recent Ofsted inspection of OSCARS Out of School and Holiday Care. The Officer indicated that the service had received a very positive inspection report with the service being graded as 'outstanding'. She explained that the staff had worked incredibly hard to move to new premises and through this continued to provide an outstanding service.

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the report and indicated that she would

formally write congratulating the staff on the inspection outcome.

Decision

That the inspection report and outcome for OSCARS out of School and Holiday Care Scheme Ofsted inspection be noted.

22. Hartlepool Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
(Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

Non key decision.

Purpose of report

To determine the Hartlepool Agreed Syllabus for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary and Secondary Schools in Hartlepool for the school years 2012/17 following consultation with SACRE, schools and religious groups.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Governor Support Officer reported that the Local Authority has an agreed syllabus document that detailed the statutory requirement for all community and voluntary controlled schools in a Local Authority which required that Religious Education must be provided for all registered pupils in maintained schools, including those in reception classes and in the sixth form as set out in the Education act 1988 and confirmed by the Education Acts of 1996 and School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The main changes outlined in the introduction to the Agreed Syllabus are:

- The introduction of three key elements in RE (Knowledge and Understanding of Religion, Critical Thinking, Personal Reflection) to replace the Attainment Targets (learning about and from religion).
- A greater emphasis on continuity and progression with revised programmes of study and key focus of learning for each key stage.
- The separation of Key Stage 2 into Lower and Upper Key Stage 2.
- Revised levels for RE.
- The introduction of enquiry questions and enquiry based learning.
- A revised bridging unit between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.
- Revised exemplar plans for each key stage.

It was intended that the agreed Syllabus would be launched on 11th October 2012.

Decision

That the Hartlepool Agreed Syllabus for 2012/17 be approved as the Authority's agreed Syllabus for circulation and use by, all community and voluntary controlled schools to inform teaching and learning.

23. Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to

Serve on School Governing Bodies *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key decision.

Purpose of report

To request the Portfolio Holder for Children's and Community Services consideration and approval of the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school governing bodies where, interest has been expressed in the vacancies.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Governor Support Officer reported that at the General Purposes Committee held on 6th August 2012, a schedule setting out details of vacancies together with applications received in respect of the vacancies were considered by the members and recommendations were made in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school Governing Bodies.

Decision

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

24. Mill House Leisure Centre – Alteration to Health Suite Sessions *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to seek approval to make alterations to the operation of Health Suite sessions at Mill House Leisure Centre with effect from October 1st 2012.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director, Community Services reported that at Mill House Leisure Centre, amongst a range of services on offer included a Health Suite area comprising Sauna and Steam facilities. These were operated daily as either mixed, male or female days in 2 hourly sessions but uptake of these by service users over the past two years had been on a downward trend and it was therefore proposed that all of the sessions be made mixed sessions. On researching other sports facilities both locally and regionally, most other operators of similar facilities already offer mixed sessions and this had resulted in the facilities being better utilised, resulting in increased income and usage. A survey had also recently been carried out at the

Leisure Centre which, whilst having a low response, did indicate that the majority of respondents were positive about the introduction of mixed sessions.

The Portfolio Holder raised concern in relation to the needs of the ethnic minority groups. The Assistant Director indicated that there was flexibility in the booking arrangements to accommodate these groups. The Portfolio Holder questioned the utilisation of the Fitness Suite and if a separate charge would be applied for using both the Health Suite and Fitness Suite. The Assistant Director reported that there were separate charges for both. However whilst the refurbished Fitness Suite was increasingly well utilised however due to the current timetabling of the Health Suite, fitness users did not always have the opportunity to use both facilities, this situation will be overcome with the adoption of mixed sessions at all times.

Decision

That the revision to Mill House Leisure Centre Health Suite operating arrangements be approved for introduction from October 1st, 2012.

25. Youth Offending Service Peer Review (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

To present to Portfolio Holder information regarding the Youth Offending Service Peer Review which is scheduled to take place in Hartlepool between the 25th and 27th September 2012.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Youth Inclusion Custody Coordinator reported that the primary purpose of the Peer Review is to help a Youth Offending Service and its partners identify their strengths and to highlight areas of potential improvement in the current provision of youth justice services. The review would be lead by Nick Metcalf, Head of Youth Justice Services for Hull together with a team of specialist from other authorities from across England. The main focus of the review would be the performance of the Hartlepool Youth Offending Service on the local rate of proven reoffending.

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the review and commented that the work involved could assist the service prepare for future formal inspections.

Decision

That the arrangements for the Youth Justice Peer Review be noted.

26. Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool (*Director of Child and*

Adult Services)

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

To present information on the workload of children's social work teams in providing service to children in need in Hartlepool including those in need of protection and children looked after.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Head of Business Unit reported on the workload of children's social work teams and the current demands on the service. The information provided was an analysis of the activity during April to June of 2012/13. The report set out details of the numbers of children referred for and receiving services, workload and workforce information and details of complaints, comments and compliments received by the service during the quarter.

The Portfolio Holder commented that the number of children in need in Hartlepool was a great concern and that it was important that the authority delivered the best service to children in need. The Portfolio Holder expressed her appreciation for the work of the staff within the service unit. The Officer reported that Ofsted recognised that the authority was taking account of the opinions of the parents and children the service was working with and how the authority is able to apply that feedback into providing the service.

Decision

That the report of activity within children's social care be noted.

27. Hartlepool Council Fostering Service (*Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information only.

Purpose of report

To inform Portfolio member of the outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection of Hartlepool Borough Council's Fostering Service.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Business Unit Manager, Specialist Services, reported that fostering services were inspected by OFSTED on a three yearly cycle against the National Minimum Standards 2011 and Fostering Regulations 2011. The inspection was of the service and its impact on the outcomes for children and young people. In April 2012 a revised framework for conducting inspection of fostering service was introduced, with Hartlepool being one of the first local authorities in the North East to be inspected under this new

arrangement. The authority received two weeks notice of the inspection; the previous inspection regime gave six weeks notice. The revised framework was supported by a new set of grade descriptors to evaluate performance with an increased emphasis on the outcomes and impact for children and young people. Within this inspection regime OFSTED had significantly raised the threshold expected to be achieved within each of the judgement. Hartlepool's fostering service was judged GOOD overall however there was a recommendation to ensure that training is made available to foster carers, including hard-to-reach carers to assist them in meeting to specific needs, including specialised provisions as required.

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the review and commented that staff were to be congratulated on delivering a high quality service. The Portfolio Holder questioned the reference to 'hard to reach carers' in the report. The Officer confirmed that as part of inspection, foster carers were given a questionnaire to complete and that the response to training was varied as currently foster carers are encouraged to attend multi agency training courses. However some carers did not feel comfortable with these and to overcome this, four separate courses were to be provided specifically for foster carers.

Decision

That the positive performance and outcomes of the inspection of the fostering service be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10.50am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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