

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD 6 November 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)

Also Present: Councillor Chris Simmons

Officers: Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Prevention Safeguarding
and Specialist Services
Zoe Westley, Head of Social and Education Inclusion
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

32. Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to Serve on School Governing Bodies *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

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 submitted a schedule setting out details of current Governing Body vacancies together with applications received in respect of those vacancies which was considered by the General Purposes Committee at the meeting on 24 September 2012.

The Portfolio Holder expressed disappointment that appointments had not been recommended for Manor College of Technology and St Cuthbert's RC Primary school given that expressions of interest had been received.

Decision

That the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school Governing Bodies as set out below be approved: -

Jesmond Gardens Primary School – Councillor Linda Shields
West Park Primary School – Councillor Brenda Loynes

33. Fostering Quarterly Report 1st July to 30th September 2012 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the activity and progress of the Fostering Service from 1 July to 30 September 2012

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Assistant Director, Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services reported on the activity and work of the Fostering Team. The report included statistical information relating to the number of looked after children by month, the number of approved foster carers as well as details of foster care recruitment activity. Recent recruitment activity had been positive with 16 enquiries received and 10 information packs issued. At present there were 88% of children and young people in foster placements in Hartlepool compared with the national average of 74%.

Details of placement activity as well as progress made to date on the proposed Edge of Care Scheme for the period July to September 2012 were provided, as set out in the report. It was reported that in the second quarter of the year the Adoption and Fostering Panel had considered and recommended the plan for long term fostering for 8 children and there had been 5 matches taken to Panel which involved 10 children achieving permanency in their foster placement. This included one placement of 4 siblings being matched long term.

Reference was made to the positive outcome of the recent Ofsted Inspection in relation to the Fostering Service, as outlined in the report, further details of which had been reported to Portfolio Holder separately. The Portfolio Holder was referred to the challenges ahead and actions in place to address the issues raised.

With regard to the current budget position, details of which were set out in the report, it was reported that the increasing number of looked after children had resulted in an overspend on the projected budget for this

period on looked after allowances.

In response to a request for clarification, the Assistant Director stated that an independent person had been procured specifically to undertake two Form F assessments as part of the continuing efforts to acquire more in-house foster carers.

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the continued improvements of the service, the positive outcome of the recent inspection and active participation of the looked after children in a recent event.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding educational outcomes for looked after children and the potential reasons why attainment levels of looked after children remained lower than their peers. Whilst it was acknowledged that this was a national problem and not unique to Hartlepool the Portfolio Holder was keen to see educational outcomes for looked after children improved. The Portfolio Holder was advised of the measures in place to address this issue which included attempts to influence how the pupil premium was spent in schools. The importance of monitoring outcomes in this regard was emphasised.

Decision

That the report and positive outcomes achieved within the reporting period be noted and the commitment to deliver continuous improvement be supported.

34. Provision for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) at Key Stage 2 (Approval to Consult) *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

- (i) Review the provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in the age range 7 – 11 years.
- (ii) Consider a proposal to discontinue the additionally resourced facility providing for up to 12 pupils with Special Educational Needs relating to moderate learning difficulties at Grange Primary School.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided background information relating to the requirement of the Council to provide support for pupils with a range of Special Educational Needs.

It was reported that Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) was a term used to cover a wide range of difficulties which pupils may experience who had difficulty in keeping up with the pace of learning in the classroom but who generally did not have a clear, identified diagnosis of a particular disability or special education need. The report outlined previous and current provision for pupils with MLD. Support bases at Key Stage 2 (age range 7 to 11 years) for pupils with moderate learning difficulties had become out of step with the town's programme for inclusion.

The Portfolio Holder was referred to statistical information relating to pupil numbers in Key Stage 2 bases for pupils with MLD together with the reasons for considering a change, as set out in the report.

With regard to options for future provision, option 1 would be to continue with the present arrangement and option 2 would be to close the Key Stage 2 support base for pupils with MLD at Grange Primary School. The financial considerations of both options were outlined in the report.

The Head of Social and Educational Inclusion advised that having considered the options, it was clear that the proposal to discontinue the additional resourced facilities at Key Stage 2 for pupils with MLD at Grange Primary School should be progressed. The proposals to formally discontinue the additional resources support base at the school were statutory proposals and required a period of consultation, details of which were included in the report.

In response to a request for clarification in relation to the financial implications of the proposal, the Portfolio Holder was advised that current funding would be retained and the Head Teacher, during earlier consultation, had indicated support for the proposal. However, further consultation would be undertaken to ensure the reasons for closure were fully appreciated. Assurances were sought that the proposed closure would not result in additional pressures on Springwell School to which it was reported that the learning difficulties of the children affected were not at a level which would require transfer to Springwell School and their needs could be accommodated in a mainstream school.

Decision

- (i) That the proposal to discontinue the additional resource support base at Grange Primary School for children in the age range 7-11 years with moderate learning difficulties, be agreed
- (ii) That the Director of Child and Adult Services be authorised to carry out the appropriate consultation, the outcome of which to be reported to the Portfolio Holder in due course.

35. Special Educational Needs (SEN) Pathfinder Programme *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To update the Portfolio Holder on the progress of the SEN Pathfinder in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report provided background information to the Government's green paper, support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and the Council's success in becoming a SEN Pathfinder in September 2012.

As part of the Pathfinder Hartlepool and Darlington would have the opportunity to develop and test a new assessment process, participate in a national evaluated pathfinder, test the use of personal budgets in children's services, test the impact of NHS changes on commissioning for children's services and develop strong partnership working between all local services and agencies to help disabled children and those with SEN.

The Pathfinder attracted an income of up to £150,000 annually (pro rata) for 18 months starting part way through 2011-12 with the possibility of extending for a further two years.

Details of progress made against a number of key milestones for the programme, were set out in detail in the report.

With regard to progress made to date to establish a model and trial personal budgets with 15 children and young people using a single plan, the Portfolio Holder made reference to the 3 personal budgets in place and the 6 in the development stage and sought clarification as to how this was progressing. In response the Head of Social and Education Inclusion provided an update in this regard and advised that the majority of parents involved had not taken up the option of a personal budget in relation to education. Reference was made to a case in which parents had played an active role in their child's educational needs and had resulted in a positive outcome, details of which were provided.

Following further discussion in relation to the types of support which may be of benefit to children with special educational needs, the importance of schools exploring all possible options to ensure the best outcomes for children was emphasised.

The Portfolio Holder requested that a progress report in relation to the programme be provided at all future Portfolio Holder meetings.

programme be provided.

Decision

- (i) That progress made against the key milestones for the programme, as detailed in the report, be noted.
- (ii) That a progress report in relation to the programme be provided at all future Portfolio Holder meetings.

36. 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 paragraphs 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 37 Proposal to Provide Funding for HBC Foster Carers's to Extend their House - paragraphs 1, namely information relating to any individual, paragraph 2, information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and paragraph 3 information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

37. Proposal to Provide Funding for HBC Foster Carers to Extend Their House *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder for Children's and Community Services to provide a grant and interest free loan to Foster Carers to extend their house to offer a permanent placement to a looked after child.

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 10.55 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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