

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD 5 March 2013

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: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director (Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services)
Zoe Westley, Head of Social and Education Inclusion
Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer
Maggie Heaps, Adult Education Coordinator
Rachael White, Democratic Services Officer

51. Provision for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) at Key Stage 2 (Outcome of Consultation) *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision (test (ii)) Forward Plan Reference No. CAS139/12

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the outcome of consultation in relation to the proposal to discontinue the additionally resourced facility for pupils with Special Educational Needs relating to moderate learning difficulties at Grange Primary School.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

On the 6th November 2012 the Portfolio Holder had authorised formal consultation on the closure of the additionally resourced facility for pupils with Special Educational Needs relating to moderate learning difficulties at Grange Primary School. Consultation began on 7th January 2013 and closed on 1st February 2013. Meetings were held at Grange Primary School involving teaching and support staff, Governing Body, parents and public. The consultation offered 2 options for further provision, as detailed in the

report, and the summary of the individual responses identified that of the 9 responses received, all were in favour of option 2.

In conclusion, it was proposed to discontinue the additionally resourced facility. It was suggested that the statutory notices be published on 18th March 2013 and the outcome of the process be reported in June 2013.

The Portfolio Holder queried whether staff redundancies would be included in the issuing of the statutory notices. The Head of Social and Education Inclusion advised that there would be no staff redundancies as a result of the facility closing.

Decision

The proposal to discontinue the additional resource support base at Grange Primary School was approved.

52. Appointment of Local Authority Representatives to Serve on School Governing Bodies *(Assistant Director, 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 appointment of Local Authority representative governors to serve on school governing bodies where, interest had been expressed in the vacancies.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Applications had been invited from members of the general public, Elected Members and those governors who were interested in serving or wished to continue serving as a Local Authority representative governor on school governing bodies. Details of the criteria agreed by Hartlepool Borough Council for the recruitment of Local Education Authority representative governors in 2000 were provided in the report. A schedule setting out details of vacancies together with applications received was considered by Members of the General Purposes Committee at their meeting held on 28th January 2013 and the recommendations were outlined in Appendix 1.

The Portfolio Holder expressed concern regarding the lack of interest in becoming a governor especially with the expectation from Ofsted that Governors should question and challenge Headteachers on the performance of their school. The Governor Support Officer advised that information was being regularly circulated regarding recruitment of Governors and that there were additional options available for help with

training.

Decision

The recommendations of the General Purpose Committee in respect of the appointment of Local Authority representative governors were approved.

53. Short Breaks Services Statement *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non Key Decision

Purpose of report

To present the reviewed Short Breaks Services Statement and seek approval for the 2013 Statement to be published in accordance with the regulations.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report noted that the Children Act 1989 required Local Authorities to provide a short break services designed to assist individuals caring for disabled children. It was a requirement that the Statement be reviewed on an annual basis. The revised Statement for 2013 was subject to wide consultation and was circulated to the members of the Parent Lead forum (1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future), Specialist Provider of services to share with their members, officers of the Local Authority, Health and the Voluntary and Community Sector. All comments received were incorporated into the final version which formed the foundation of short breaks services for disabled children and their families and the commissioning delivery plan for 2013/14.

The Assistant Director and Head of Social and Education Inclusion advised that a national interest in the statement had been received as not all local authorities had published Short Breaks Services Statement. The interest was in relation to what the statement had achieved and how it this had been accomplished.

Decision

The Short Breaks Service Statement 2013 was approved.

54. Exmoor Grove Regulation 33/34 Reports *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information

Purpose of report

To present the regulation 33/34 reports of visits to Exmoor Grove, Children's Home covering the months of October, November and December 2012, which were attached as **Appendix 1; This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to any individual (para 1) and Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual (para 2)**

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

It was reported that the Children's Home Regulation 2011 required that the Members receive regular reports on the conduct of Children's Homes with the aim to ensure that the quality of care provided to children is improved. Under Regulation 33, monthly visits and reports were completed by an officer within Child and Adult Services. Regulation 33 reports were an essential safeguarding practice which provided Members and management with an oversight of the care provided both from the reporter's independent view, but also that of parents, carers, children and young people. The Assistant Director advised that the department were continuously developing and improving the service.

The Portfolio Holder noted the improvements and changes made and thanked the Assistant Director and her team for the work that had been undertaken to improve service provision.

Decision

The contents of the report were noted.

55. Fulfilling Lives: A Better Start *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the submission of an Expression of Interest to the Big Lottery Fund to deliver preventative approaches in pregnancy and the first three years of life to improve life chances of babies and young children. If short listed and ultimately successful, it would bring a significant investment over an 8 to 10 year period.

The invitation to submit an Expression of Interest was received on the 18th January 2013. As often the case with the type of funding, there was a very tight deadline for the submission of response return by the 22nd February

2013. In these circumstances, the Corporate Management Team agreed to proceed with the submission of an Expression of Interest and a retrospective report to be submitted to the Portfolio Holder.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Big Lottery Fulfilling Lives: A Better Start initiative aimed to deliver a step change in preventative approaches in pregnancy and the first three years of life to improve the life chances of babies and young children. The key features of the programme were detailed in the report. Following the submission of Expressions of Interest in the Big Lottery Fund would identify a list of 30-50 areas, from which they would produce a shortlist of around 10-15 areas by Summer 2013, with 3-5 awards announced by March 2014. As local health agencies would be key partners, the local Director of Public Health was also required to support the application and had confirmed her full support.

In response to queries, the Assistant Director advised that if shortlisted, the final application would be submitted by a Voluntary and Community Sector organisation and the Local Authority had a partner for taking on this lead role. The department would work very closely alongside the organisation and it would be a joint effort to prepare the vision and bid for the service. The Officer also advised that if successful, the initiative would be underpinned by the Early Intervention Strategy and it was felt that the success of the application would allow the department to continue to provide the services it feels necessary.

Decision

The submission of an Expression of Interest to the Big Lottery Fund was noted.

56. Funding of Qualifications at Level 3 and Above
(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services – Community Services)

Type of decision

For Information

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the proposed changes to the funding of qualifications at level 3 and above.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

It was noted that the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) provided the Adult Education service with funding to provide courses which lead to a qualification at level 3 or above. The amount of funding provided depended on factors such as age of the learner and whether they were employed or

unemployed. As from the 1st August 2013, the funding of level 3 or higher qualifications by the SFA was to change. From this date only learners aged 19-23 who did not already have a level 3 qualification would be eligible for full funding. The removal of funding for the level 3 or higher qualifications would impact on potential learners as they would need to pay for the course themselves or obtain a student loan. The service was currently working on the possible level of fees which would need to be charged to learners and this would be the subject of a future report.

Concern was expressed on the impact of learners aged 24+ having to apply for a student loan or fund the tuition fees themselves as it was felt that the loss of funding would cause several limitations. In response to queries, the Adult Education Coordinator advised that the department would only receive the funding if individuals took out a loan with a Student Loan Company who would then transfer the money to the Adult Education Service.

Decision

The contents of the report were noted.

57. Special Educational Needs (SEN) Pathfinder Programme *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information

Purpose of report

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

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

It reported that since the previous progress update in November 2012, the DfE had informed the Local Authority that they would like the programme to be continued until September 2014. Progress had been monitored by the Pathfinder Steering Group and a representative of the DfE and feedback had been very positive. Specific grant conditions had been identified and a brief overview of what Hartlepool would be expected to undertake was provided.

In addition to core grant funding, the DfE were offering further funding to around 9-15 pathfinder Local Authority's to act as Pathfinder Champions. Hartlepool had submitted an application to become a national champion and the Head of Social and Education Inclusion had received a phone call on the day of the meeting from the DfE advising that Hartlepool's application had been successful.

In response to query in relation to the personal budgets offered to families, the Head of Social and Education Inclusion explained that the personal budgets offered to families provided the opportunity to manage the funding available to their children. Feedback from families showed that parents were happier knowing where the funding for their child was being spent however would not necessarily like to take on the responsibility of managing the budget. If a family chose to manage the full budget, there would be information in relation to education establishments and services made available to them.

The Portfolio Holder congratulated the department on becoming a National Champion and the work undertaken to accomplish this.

Decision

The contents of the report were noted.

58. Statutory Duties and Powers Concerning the use of Alternative Provision *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information

Purpose of report

To highlight the implications for the local authority of the new statutory guidance on Alternative Provision which was published in January 2013.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

It was reported that the new statutory guidance had effect from 1 January 2013 and replaced several guidance documents, which were detailed in the report. The Statutory guidance had to be implemented with plans in place to ensure the new requirements were met. The main changes required in Hartlepool were:

- Ensure a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) representative was appointed to the School Forum; this had been acted upon;
- A revised budget for the PRU had been agreed which would be delegated to the Management Committee from 1st April 2013;
- The current Management Committee would continue to operate to prepare for the changes of the constitution and responsibility and plans were in place to change its composition to meet the new requirements from September 2013.

The new guidance outlined a number of key changes in relation to the delivery of PRU's and the role of local authorities; these were outlined in the report. The statutory changes meant that the PRU was no longer under the control of the Local Authority and responsibility was transferred to the Management Committee so that it became a Local Authority maintained

school. As a result, from 1st April 2013, responsibility for all decisions regarding the recruitment and management of staff would be sit with the Management Committee of the PRU.

The Portfolio Holder questioned to composition of the Management Committee. The Head of Social and Education Inclusion advised that the Management Committee would comprise of parent governors, school representatives and partner organisations and the final membership would be decided by the Management Committee. Local Authority staff would be able to attend the committee however only to provide advice. Concern was expressed regarding the future funding and use of the Pupil Referral Unit. The Assistant Director (Prevention, Safeguarding and Specialist Services) advised that work was ongoing to ensure that the PRU was a valuable asset to schools as this would help ensure funding in the future.

Decision

That the changes to be made as a result of the new statutory guidance be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11.13am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 11th March 2013