

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

9 April 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)

Officers: Dean Jackson, Assistant Director (Performance and Achievement)
Maggie Heaps, Adult Education Co-ordinator
Albert Williams, Property Manager
Peter McIntosh, Head of Planning and Development
David Worthington, Head of Culture and Information
Jo Stubbs, Democratic Services Officer

Also present:

Councillors Atkinson, James, Lauderdale and Simmons

59. Declarations of interest

The Portfolio Holder and Councillors James, Lauderdale and Simmons declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 1.1 Schools Capital Works Programme 2013/14 – Phase 1

60. School's Capital Works Programme 2013/14 – Phase 1 *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key – tests 1 and 2 apply

Purpose of report

To seek approval to the formation of a first phase of the Schools' Capital Works Programme for 2013/14

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out background information relating to capital allocations together with funding available for 2013/14. A schedule of condition priorities had been derived from the most recent condition surveys, as set

out in the report.

Condition surveys carried out late 2012/early 2013 had identified a number of proposed schemes, details of which were appended to the report. These included issues identified during fire safety inspections and special educational needs requirements. Monies had also been set aside to carry out asbestos surveys. Previously it had been agreed to set aside 'development funding' to enable schools to create premises more fit for purpose in a 21st century setting. Details of these proposed schemes, including costings would be brought to a future meeting

The Portfolio Holder was also given an update on the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) which would benefit 3 Hartlepool schools. The Education Funding Agency had contacted officers to advise that the PSBP would be delivered by grouping schools into batches with those schools in the worst condition being dealt with first. Hartlepool's projected date for initial contact was 2015 meaning that construction works would be unlikely to commence before 2016/17.

Details on procurement routes for schemes and risk implications were also given within the report

A member queried whether asbestos surveys would be carried out prior to capital works programmes at relevant schools. The Property Manager advised that a further asbestos survey would be undertaken prior to the commencement of any works. He advised that the previous asbestos surveys had been undertaken 10 years ago and these were being viewed as a top-up of that information rather than being a requirement due to any pressing concerns. The member was disappointed to note the loss of half a million pounds worth of funding.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the delay in the PSBP which she felt gave the impression that children and young people were not valued. She noted the difference in attitude among the pupils which had resulted from the refurbishment of Dyke House and felt this showed that learning was affected by the state of the building. The Assistant Director agreed with these comments, noting that there was always the risk that the programme could be pulled with a change in government at which point necessary works might have been delayed.

The Portfolio Holder was happy to approve the recommendations particularly that the department be given discretion to authorise urgent works which she felt was common sense.

Decision

- I. That the schedule of 2013/14 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. That 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. That further approval be sought for Development Funding schemes
- IV. That 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 and Community Services

61. Adult Education Fees – Academic Year 2013-2014 (Assistant Director of Child and Adult Services (Community Services))

Type of decision

Key – test 2 applies

Purpose of report

To consider the level of adult education fees for the academic year 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The report set out the current fee levels for Adult Education courses funded through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and other sources in 2012/13 and looked at options for fee levels. Recommendations were made regarding the level of adult education fees for the academic year August 2013 to July 2014. No fees were charged to learners studying English, Maths, Family Learning or Family Literacy Language or Numeracy. There were also no charges for groups falling into a number of categories including deprived communities, 19-23 year-olds and those claiming state benefits including JSA. This extensive remission of fees had led to a low income from adult education courses, 3% of the budget for 2012/13

A number of options were proposed and detailed in the report which were required to satisfy the reduced eligibility of fee remission and the need to collect sufficient fee income. The options covered:

- Skills courses
- Community learning
- Courses which attract no fee at present
- Remitted fee
- Fee remission

The Portfolio Holder was advised that there would be financial implications for the Council if no increase in fees was agreed however an increase in fees could result in a loss of student numbers which might result in reduced funding from the SFA. If fees were set in accordance with SFA guidance

there would be no financial implications for the Council budget and no risk of reduced funding in the future. The Adult Education Co-ordinator advised the Portfolio Holder that officers were recommending no increase in fees for 2013/14 and an increase in fee remission to include anyone on state benefit studying skills or leisure-based courses. This would be in addition to full remission for English or maths courses, family learning, family literacy language and numeracy or for learning in deprived communities. The overall aim was to encourage more people to better themselves through education.

A member asked that remission for people on state benefits be expanded to include those who might not be claiming in their own right but were dependent on a claimant such as carers. The Portfolio Holder was happy to approve this amendment commenting that self-improvement should be facilitated wherever possible.

The Assistant Director highlighted the recent OFSTED inspection which had been carried out on Hartlepool College of Further Education. A number of concerns would need to be addressed, chief among which was the current relationship between the Council and the College and the need to clarify what the Council's expectations were of the College. A member acknowledged this but felt the more pressing need was the gap between primary education and secondary education in Hartlepool which needed addressing as a matter of urgency. The Portfolio Holder believed that the College would be happy to work with the Council to make the necessary improvements.

The Portfolio Holder was happy to approve the recommendations, including the amendment on dependents of benefit claimants.

Decision

- I. That Adult Skills courses remain at £105 for a 60 hour course and £35 for a 20 hour course
- II. That Community Learning Courses remain at £150 for a 60 hour course and £50 for a 20 hour course
- III. That no course fees be charged to students entitled under the SFA guidance on remitted fees
- IV. That the fee remission policy be extended as detailed in Appendix 2
- V. That the remitted fee should remain at current levels of £10 for skills courses and £15 for community learning courses
- VI. That courses not supported through SFA funding or other income streams be delivered at the Full Cost rate

62. Centenary of World War I - 2014 *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform how Hartlepool will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I and the centenary of the Bombardment of the Hartlepoons on 16th December 2014

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Following a successful bid to the Strategic Renaissance Fund £394,775 had been allocated to the Tees Valley Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Renaissance programme to hold commemorate the centenary of the start of World War I. Hartlepool had led the bid which would benefit the Tees Valley and Heugh Gun Battery. A further bid from a Youth Services group to the Young Roots element of the Heritage Lottery Fund had been refused due to the funding already having been allocated. However the organisers had advised the bidders to resubmit their bid at the first opportunity in the hope of a positive outcome.

A variety of projects were proposed over a 2 year period from April 2013 to celebrate the centenary including live theatre performances, exhibitions and outreach events. Financial support would also be provided for the Heugh Gun Battery as the site of the first bombardment of World War I. Detailed information was given within the report. It was noted that weatherproofing would be provided at the final performance, scheduled for 16th December 2014 on Hartlepool's Town Moor.

A member asked that officers engage proactively with schools as part of their history programme. The Assistant Director confirmed that work on this was ongoing.

A member raised concerns that historical artefacts and information might be lost through the years and asked what could be done to collect and collate. The Head of Culture and Information referred to the outreach events whereby people would be encouraged to share what their family memories and artefacts. There were also discussions ongoing with Middlesbrough Archives regarding any information they might hold.

The Portfolio Holder commented that aside from the local aspects the most important thing was to highlight to young people what a terrible war it was. If one wanted to demonstrate the futility of war this was a perfect example as it did not have one redeeming feature.

Decision

That the successful outcome of the bid be noted.

63. The Changes to Community Learning *(Assistant Director of Child and Adult Services (Community Services))*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform of the proposed changes affecting the funding and delivery of Community Learning

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Details were given within the report of proposed changes to Community Learning through the paper 'new challenges, new chances'. As part of this all Community Learning providers were required to work toward a number of objectives including widening of participation, collection of income from those who could afford to pay a focus of spending on the disadvantaged who were least likely to participate. 15 Community Learning providers had taken part in a pilot programme to assist other providers in their delivery, the results of which were expected at the end of the current academic year. Funding for 2013/14 would remain at the same level as previous years however there were no safeguards after that. The Adult Education Co-ordinator also highlighted the concept of 'Pound Plus' whereby all providers were required to lever in additional funding through Community Learning funds. She felt this funding would be easy to raise but difficult to record.

The Portfolio Holder expressed disappointment that the primary aim of 'new challenges, new chances' appeared to be to raise as much money as possible.

Decision

That the report be noted.

64. Safeguarding children in Hartlepool *(Assistant Director, Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

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 Portfolio Holder asked that this report be deferred to the first meeting of the Children's Services Committee.

Decision

That the report be deferred

The meeting concluded at 10:50 am

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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