

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

DECISION RECORD

22 May 2013

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: Sheila Griffin, Marjorie James and John Lauderdale

Co-opted Members:

Michael Lee, Ashleigh Bostock and Kim Henry

Officers:

Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education
Danielle Swainston, Head of Access and Strategic Planning
Ian Merritt, Strategic Commissioner, Children's Services
John Robinson, Head of Localities and Family Support
Kim Bell, Participation Worker
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions

As this was the first meeting of the Children's Services Committee, introductions were undertaken and the Chair provided the following as the aims and objectives of the Committee as a decision making body:

"We will work with our schools to achieve our aim of all Hartlepool Schools being judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding by the end of 2015, offering practical support to schools to ensure the improvement of the educational attainment of all our children.

We shall continue to strive for better educational outcomes for Children Looked After.

We are committed to review and strengthen our Early Intervention Strategy so that all children living in Hartlepool have the best possible start in life.

We shall ensure that safeguarding and the health of children and young people continue to be at the centre of all the work we do.

We will work with schools that are seeking Academy status and develop a cohesive local Academies strategy that ensures the best possible outcomes for our young people.

We value the contribution that our young people have made to local decision making and we intend to ensure that children and young people have a voice in all areas of Children's Services where decisions are taken that affect them.

We will work with schools and other agencies to ensure that we have an affordable, comprehensive and inclusive school holiday activities programme available for all children of school age.

We will undertake a comprehensive training programme to ensure that all Members were experienced in all areas of Children's Services. The first training session would be on the Early Intervention Strategy."

Decision

The above aims and objectives of the Children's Services Committee were accepted.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary Fleet and Cath Hill.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Minutes

None.

5. Provision for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (ii) applied – Forward Plan Reference CAS139/12.

Purpose of report

To inform the Children's Services Committee of the outcomes of the publication of the Statutory Notice:

- To discontinue the additionally resourced support base at Grange Primary School for pupils in the range 7 years to 11 years (Key Stage 2) with moderate learning difficulties.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background and decision making route for the proposal. It was noted that public notices had been published for the statutory 6 week period to enable any formal objections to be submitted. Members were informed that there had been no representations received during the statutory six week period which ended on 29 April 2013. A number of options were provided for Members' consideration and they were detailed in the report.

Decision

- (i) The outcome of the statutory notice period relating to the proposal to discontinue the additionally resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties at Grange Primary School was noted.
- (ii) The proposal that the additionally resourced facility at Grange Primary School for pupils in the age range 7 years to 11 years with moderate learning difficulties be discontinued with effect from 1 September 2013 was agreed.

6. Support for Secondary Schools *(Assistant Director, Education)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applied – Forward Plan Reference CAS008/13.

Purpose of report

Following the publication of the validated 2012 GCSE results and pupil progress data for secondary schools in February 2013 (see **Appendix 1**), the Council decided to allocate up to £200,000 of the net forecast uncommitted 2012-13 underspend, subject to the provision of a detailed business plan, to support the five Hartlepool secondary schools in bringing about improvements in pupil outcomes over the next three years.

This report detailed how the Council decision can be implemented, outlined the range of proposals made for supporting secondary education and suggested which of these offers the best course of action to bring about improvement. It also detailed the current actions being taken to support and challenge secondary schools in order that all five schools are judged by OFSTED to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by September 2015.

The report provided the Children's Services Committee with the information

to:

- consider the options presented and, from these, decide upon the improvement strategy to be implemented;
- agree to the accompanying costs associated with these actions.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the proposal which included the results of OfSTED Inspections; Pupil Attainment; and Pupil Progress. Members were informed that Local Authority Officer Groups and a Hartlepool 11-19 Partnership Group met regularly to support and challenge schools as well as ensuring there was a continuous focus on rapid improvement. In addition, Local Authority Assisted Reviews were available to schools as part of the Support and Challenge Protocol and it was proposed that a Review would take place in all Hartlepool secondary schools prior to September 2015, unless an OfSTED inspection was undertaken within this timescale. It was highlighted that a previous Council decision had allocated up to £200,000 to support the five Hartlepool secondary schools in bringing about improvements in pupil outcomes over the next three years.

A number of proposals for the utilisation of the additional Local Authority funding for secondary school improvement were considered by Officers and secondary Head Teachers and they were included within the report.

During the discussions that followed, Members recognised that schools were best placed to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and also identify areas that would improve the quality of teaching and standard of teaching and learning. It was suggested that undertaking forensic investigations of the schools would assist with this process through the implementation of Local Authority Assisted Reviews which would be carried out by an independent review team.

It was noted by one of the co-opted members that a number of the secondary schools had robust action plans in place as a result of previous OfSTED inspections and he was not sure if reviews would provide any more information than that provided within the previous OfSTED reports. In addition, concern was expressed that further reviews would place additional pressure on teachers, especially in view of the current industrial action being taken within schools. However, Members were keen to ensure that schools were challenged to ensure that children reached their maximum potential and raise educational attainment for young people. One of the young people's representatives commented that inspections of schools also placed additional pressures on the young people within that school.

It was highlighted that one of the secondary schools had already had a Local Authority Assisted Review and a Member commented that if all secondary schools undertake a similar review, there would be an equal

understanding of the positions of all secondary schools. In relation to the additional funding that was available to undertake the Reviews, it was suggested that each school should be assessed individually to ascertain how much Local Authority funding was required which would then be match funded by the school.

The Assistant Director, Education indicated that even where schools had an action plan in place from the previous OfSTED inspection, an independent review would act as a measure of how the school was progressing and responding to that action plan. In relation to the Local Authority Assisted Review already undertaken in a secondary school in the town, whilst it was acknowledged that not all staff agreed to be observed, there were sufficient staff observed and discussions with the young people undertaken within the school to facilitate a robust review to be undertaken and enable the independent review team to provide a route map to assist the school to move forward and improve on the previous OfSTED inspection.

It was suggested that where a school had been inspected by OfSTED since September 2012, that inspection would be accepted as the baseline for that school. However, where schools had not been inspected within that timescale, a request should be made to the school that an independent Local Authority Assisted Review be undertaken and associated Local Authority funding be provided, subject to match funding being provided by the school.

Members discussed the proposal to create a new post of Secondary School Improvement Officer – Teaching and Learning and it was suggested that further consideration be given to this proposal once the outcome of the Reviews was known.

Decision

- (i) That the proposals for Local Authority Assisted Reviews as detailed in the report as the most educationally and cost-effective way in which to support secondary schools to improve over the next two years be adopted.
- (ii) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee seeking authorisation to set aside £100,000 in 2013-14 to match-fund the secondary school improvement proposals detailed in the report.
- (iii) That the creation of a new post of Secondary School Improvement Officer – Teaching and Learning be considered once the outcome of the Reviews was known.

7. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Update 2012/13

(Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval to the publication of the childcare sufficiency update 2012/13.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the requirement to keep the assessment under annual review. The key findings from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Update 2012-13 were detailed in the report and whilst the number of child care schemes had decreased, there was approximately the same number of childcare places. A number of actions had been identified through the assessment which will enable Officers to effectively manage the childcare market. It was noted that the Government were currently consulting on changes to Local Authorities' roles in early education and childcare to be implemented from September 2013, which would result in no requirement for the Local Authority to carry out a childcare sufficiency assessment in the future. Members were informed that future development of childcare for two year olds, paying particular attention to the most disadvantaged wards of the town, and would be implemented in September 2013.

A Member had concerns that some areas of the town within deprived wards did not have sufficient childcare provision. In addition, it was questioned whether the further education sector would be able to adequately deal with additional pupils once the Government changes which would result in compulsory education for 17-19 years olds.

Clarification was sought on whether all child care providers were subject to OfSTED inspections. The Head of Access and Strategic Planning confirmed that all child care providers for children under 5, including child minders were regulated by OfSTED and were subject to inspection.

A Member questioned whether reassurance could be provided that adequate childcare provision was available in those areas of most need. The Head of Access and Strategic Planning commented that participation across the town was excellent although further work on the existing provision was required to ensure that all areas were provided for. A Member commented that within wards with higher deprivation, parents may

utilise extended services within schools rather than private child care providers.

A Member sought clarification on the child to care worker ratio. The Head of Access and Strategic Planning confirmed that the current ratio for two year olds was 4 children to 1 care worker but Government proposals aimed to increase this to 6 children to 1 carer. In response to a question raised by a Member, the Head of Access and Strategic Planning confirmed that funding was available through the Dedicated School Grant to fund a child's place but there was no additional funding to support the development of two year old places. Members were informed that Officers were working closely with schools and child minders in relation to child care for two year olds and a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Children's Services Committee.

In response to an earlier query on the capacity of further education to provide compulsory education for 17-19 year olds when the Government changes were implemented, a co-opted member commented that in view of the current economic climate, the majority of young people were continuing with some form of further education. However, Members requested that a further report be submitted to a future meeting to provide more detailed information on the future education provision for 17-19 year olds in view of the forthcoming Government changes to compulsory education.

Decision

- (i) The publication of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment update 2012-13 was approved.
- (ii) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Children's Services Committee on the development of child care provision for 2 year olds.
- (iii) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Children's Services Committee on the future education provision for 17-19 year olds in view of the forthcoming Government changes to compulsory education.

8. Development of Academies in Hartlepool (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To consider the approach to be adopted for the development of Academies in Hartlepool and decide which approach to follow.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background and current position in Hartlepool in relation to Academies. As the number of schools in Hartlepool considering academy status increases, the Local Authority needed to agree an approach regarding academy conversion, whilst acknowledging that the key driver for extending the academy programme in the country was to remove schools from Local Authority control or influence. A number of suggested approaches were included within the report for Members' consideration including:

- (a) The Local Authority plays no role in a school's decision as to whether or not to become an academy;
- (b) The Local Authority plays a more proactive role and encourages schools to become academies over a designated time period;
- (c) The Local Authority and Schools collaboratively develop an approach to academies;
- (d) Mixed economy approach.

The financial and resource implications for the Local Authority were detailed in the report. The Assistant Director, Education confirmed that upon achieving academy status, the funding provided for Local Authority to buy back services would be transferred to schools and Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) funding will also be transferred to the school. However, it was noted that schools would be encouraged to continue buying services from the Local Authority.

There was some concerns expressed by Members that a piecemeal approach to academy conversions may not be the most effective way to shape future services for the young people of the town and ensure that the parents of children working for the Local Authority maintained employment. During the discussions that followed, Members considered that the creation of Multi Academy Trusts would be the most effective way forward with all schools working in partnership with the Local Authority to deal with any issues that may occur. The Chair highlighted that the decision to move to academy status was within the gift of the governing body of individual schools and their decision would be firmly based on what was in the best interest of the children. Members were encouraged to hear that Local Authority services were responding to individual schools' needs with regards to service provision. Members highlighted the risk of schools not buying back Local Authority services, as a lack of demand for such services may result in the discontinuation of such services which may cause a problem for schools in the future, should they wish to return to Local Authority service provision. The co-opted member in attendance confirmed that recent contracts with schools for the provision of Local Authority services had been secured for a 2 year term as schools recognised the benefit of buying back Local Authority services and wished this to continue. The Assistant Director, Education acknowledged that 2 year contracts were

a positive move to further developing the excellent working relationship and stability of service provision with schools.

During the discussions that followed, Members recognised that as Hartlepool was a relatively small area, both primary and secondary schools worked well together through effective communication.

In order to pursue this option, Members considered that the recommendation to develop the Academy Conversion Co-ordinator was paramount.

Decision

- (i) That the Local Authority and Schools collaboratively develop an approach to academies.
- (ii) That the position of Academy Conversion Co-ordinator be developed.

9. Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

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

The report provided the background to the requirement to report to Members and the current arrangements for providing these reports. The number of referrals and assessments during the third quarter of 2012 were detailed in the report and showed a slight decrease in the number of referrals for services. In relation to child protection there had been a slight increase in the number of children who had become subject to a protection plan at 36 compared to 34 in the previous quarter. Details of the number of children looked after by the Local Authority were included in the report and provided information on how the Edge of Care Team continued to work with a small number of young people who were at risk of coming into care. In summary, it was noted that the service was currently working with 1073 children in total across the town. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that three quarters of the social workers in the service were experienced and had worked for two or more years since qualifying.

Details of the comments, complaints and compliments were also provided in the report. The Assistant Director, Children's Services informed Members that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee containing details of the workload in the final quarter of 2012/13 as well as a full year analysis.

A Member commented that it was an excellent report which was very informative. However, further details were requested on the increase in demand to ensure that support was targeted where it was most needed. Members were concerned that the recent changes to the benefits system would result in additional financial stress and strain on families as a consequence of which could lead to a further increase in demand of children's social care and possible evictions of families from their homes.

It was requested that the reporting to the Children's Services Committee of the workload of children's social care continue on a quarterly basis.

Decision

- (i) The contents of the report of activity within children's social care was noted.
- (ii) That future reporting to the Children's Services Committee continue on a quarterly basis.
- (iii) That a report detailing the increase in demand for children's social care service be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

10. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following items of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

11. Any Other Business – Appointment of Local Authority School Governors

Members were informed that a report had been submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee seeking approval for the appointment of Local Authority School Governors. The Chair confirmed that he had expressed concerns to the Chair of the Finance and Policy Committee as it was considered that the Children's Services Committee would be a more appropriate decision making route for this issue. This would enable the full consideration of all issues affecting Local Authority School Governors to be considered by the same Committee, including future training requirements for Governors as well as the need to ensure all Governors were knowledgeable in relation to the implications of any future academy

conversions.

Decision

That the Chair raise this issue at the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee on 31 May with a view to transferring the responsibility of considering the appointment of Local Authority School Governors to the Children's Services Committee.

12. Any Other Business – Children's Services Committee Member Training

Members were informed that a programme of training would be developed for Members of the Children's Services Committee during the first six months of operation of the new Committee. The first training session would be on the Early Intervention Strategy and Members will be informed of the details once they were confirmed.

A Member commented that it may be useful to identify one or two informal meetings of the Committee during the course of the year to enable all Members and co-opted members of the Committee to participate in more informal discussions around particular issues.

Decision

That Members note the position in relation to future training requirements for all Members of the Children's Services Committee.

The meeting concluded at 5.48 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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