

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE DECISION RECORD

2 July 2013

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: Cath Hill, Marjorie James and John Lauderdale.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Alison Lilley was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Kelly Atkinson

Young people's representatives:

Tom Clennett, Adam Davison, Syed Miah, Matthew Streeting and Aimee Wilson.

Also present:

Councillor Geoff Lilley

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education  
Danielle Swainston, Head of Access and Strategic Planning  
Jane Young, Head of Business Unit (Resources and Specialist Services)  
Mark Smith, Head of Youth Support Services  
John Robinson, Head of Localities and Family Support  
Kim Bell, Participation Worker  
Katy Larkin, Participation Worker  
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## **13. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kelly Atkinson, Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin and co-opted members Sacha Paul Bedding and Michael Lee.

## **14. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Chris Simmons declared a personal interest in minutes 18 and 26 as a Local Authority representative and Chair of Governors of West View Primary School and in minute 17 as a Non Stipendiary Director for West View Advice and Resource Centre.

**15. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2013.**

Received.

**16. Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2013/14** (*Assistant Director, Children's Services*)

**Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

**Purpose of report**

To present to Children's Services Committee the final draft of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2013/14 attached as Appendix 1 and seek ratification from the Committee prior to the Plan being considered by Council in July 2013.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the primary functions of Youth Offending Services and highlighted that the local youth justice partnership had been particularly effective in reducing the numbers of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time. In addition, there had also been a reduction in the rate of crime being committed by those young people who had previously offended. The planning framework supported the development of the 2013/14 Youth Justice Strategic Plan and included a number of strategic priorities for 2013/14 which were detailed in the report. The Plan established responsibility across the Youth Offending Service and the Youth Offending Strategic Board for taking each improvement activity forward within agreed timescales.

A Member commented that whilst they were happy to accept the plan as a whole, it was disappointing to note that young people were still engaging in violent crime, particularly sexual offending or aggravation by racial activity. It was hoped that schools would play a key role in ensuring that young people in mainstream education recognised the value in respect and consideration for others and support the Council to challenge incidents of violent behaviour.

It was noted that the issue of young vulnerable people in custody had been discussed previously and the Chair highlighted that the Plan included reference to a new Remand Framework for Young People which addressed that issue. A Member noted the importance of ensuring all relevant agencies were aware of the new Framework. The Head of Youth Support Services confirmed that the Youth Justice Strategic Board was chaired by the local Chief Inspector of Police and was integral to supporting the

development of the Youth Justice Plan. It was noted that all new policy developments were cascaded to police station staff through shift briefings to further cement the partnership working ethos. The Assistant Director, Children's Services informed Members that this issue was due for further consideration by the Children's Strategic Partnership.

The Chair sought clarification on the budgetary position in view of the introduction of the Police and Crime Panel. The Head of Youth Support Services confirmed that due to the historical high performance of the youth justice service in Hartlepool, the budget allocated to the Panel for Hartlepool would be passported back to Hartlepool's Youth Offending Service. In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland was encouraging other Youth Offending Services in the local area to adopt similar practices to those in Hartlepool.

In relation to the Youth Offending Services Strategic Management Board, the Chair was pleased to note that the inclusion of a young person who has successfully moved on from offending behaviour would be explored.

### **Decision**

The Youth Justice Plan for 2013-14 was ratified and referred to Council for approval.

## **17. Updated Child Poverty Strategy** (*Assistant Director, Children's Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision – Test (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference CAS136/12.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval for the publication of a revised Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2015.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the Government's pledge to halve child poverty by 2015 with an aim to eradicate it fully through the introduction of the Child Poverty Act 2010. The Act placed three duties on Local Authorities and these were detailed in the report along with the definition of child poverty. In May 2011, Cabinet approved the publication of the Council's Child Poverty Strategy. Following this a number of Government policies had been introduced and it was considered timely to update the Child Poverty Strategy in line with these policy changes.

Members noted with disappointment that child poverty had increased and that this trend was likely to continue given the impact of the recent social welfare reforms introduced by the Government. The importance of ensuring a single route for families to follow to maximise the potential financial benefit to them was emphasised, along with making the best use of the common assessment framework as a key aid to early intervention. The Chair highlighted that the Committee had recently been allocated £100k within the current financial year to raise educational attainment across all secondary schools. This funding would be match funded by each school involved. Whilst it was recognised that eradicating child poverty by 2020 was a very high aspiration, the Local Authority must do its best to achieve this and the Committee will endorse this to minimise impact and manage favourable outcomes for families wherever possible.

A Member sought clarification on the monitoring of the use of the pupil premium schools receive for children who were in receipt of free school meals. The Assistant Director, Education confirmed that monitoring of the use of the pupil premium was part of any OfSTED inspection undertaken. However, it was suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to inform Members of the performance of children in receipt of free school meals across the Borough. It was noted that part of the responsibilities of a school's governing body was to ensure the pupil premium was being correctly applied to those children for whom it was awarded.

### **Decision**

- (i) The publication of the updated Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan was approved.
- (ii) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee providing details of the performance of children in receipt of free school meals across the Borough.

## **18. 2013/14 Schools' Capital Works Programme – Phase 2** *(Assistant Director, Education)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference CAS/009.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval to the 2013-14 Schools' Capital Programme – Phase 2 – Development Schemes.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the Development Funding Schemes and it was noted that all community, foundation and special schools had been asked to submit expressions of interest for the funding of innovative schemes within school premises and/or infrastructure. It was noted that eight expressions of interest had been received and evaluated by the Schools Capital Sub Group. As such, three proposals were included in the report as follows:

- Rossmere Primary School – Creation of School Forest;
- West View Primary School – Early Years Foundation Stage Improvements;
- Rift House Primary School – Early Years Foundation Stage Outside Area.

Members considered the details of each proposal. It was noted that whilst the proposed development at Rossmere Primary School would be beneficial, Members felt that a similar facility had already been developed at Summerhill which was within easy reach of Rossmere Primary School. It was noted that there was also a similar development at Wynyard which may also be accessible. In addition to this, Members also considered that the commitment of resources over 3-4 years was a significant period of time and it was imperative that in view of budgetary cuts currently being faced by the Council, each proposal delivered value for money. It was suggested that the proposal for Rossmere Primary School be deferred to enable further information and a presentation to be provided to the Committee from the Schools Capital Sub Group and Rossmere Primary School on the benefits of the proposal to the wider school community within Hartlepool. It was suggested that it would also be helpful if the Committee could be provided with details of the proposals submitted by other schools.

Members were supportive of the proposals for West View Primary School and Rift House Primary School.

One of the young people's representatives commented that a 4 year commitment of resources was significant when there were other similar facilities that could be accessed.

Clarification was sought on the arrangements between the Schools Capital Sub Group and this Committee under the new governance arrangements. It was therefore suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee exploring this arrangement.

## **Decision**

- (i) That the schedule of Development Funding schemes as detailed in Appendix 2 for the following schools be approved, subject to the Local Authority agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum:
  - West View Primary School
  - Rift House Primary School
- (ii) That a further report be submitted to the Committee in relation to the Rossmere Primary School proposal, detailing the benefits to the wider school community.
- (iii) That details of the other proposals received as part of the Development Funding be submitted to the Committee for further consideration.
- (iv) That further examination of the arrangements between the Capital Schools Sub-Group and the Children's Services Committee be undertaken.

## **19. Children and Young People's Strategic Framework** (Assistant Director, Children's Services)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To approve the publication of the Children and Young People's Strategic Framework 2012-2015 attached as Appendix 1.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the Children and Young People's Strategic Framework which was a visual one page document that set out the priorities for Children and Young People's Plan in Hartlepool 2012-2015. The Plan focussed on the following areas:

- Child Poverty
- Children's Safeguarding
- Looked After Children
- Early Intervention
- Health
- Youth Offending

- Education
- Transitions
- Children with additional needs/disabled children.

It was noted that once approved, the plan would be printed for public display across the town where children and their families access services.

The Chair commented that this plan should identify the aspirations of young people in the town.

### **Decision**

The publication of the Children and Young People's Strategic Framework 2012-2015 was approved.

## **20. Early Intervention and Children's Centres Governance Process** *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval to amend the governance arrangements for Children's Centres to include other aspects of the Early Intervention Strategy.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the Local Authority's statutory duty to ensure that Children's Centres had an Advisory Board to oversee and support work done by each centre. In view of new OfSTED Regulations, the proposal outlined the suggested governance arrangements and those partners who had been identified as key to the further development of the service.

The Chair was pleased to note that young people's representatives were included within the membership of the Advisory Board and asked Officers to be mindful of meeting times to ensure the young people could attend regularly. It was suggested that it would be useful if one Member from the Committee could participate in each of the Advisory Boards and it was noted relevant Ward Members would also be invited to attend. Several nominations were received from within the membership of the Committee.

## Decision

- (i) The suggested changes to the governance arrangements for Children's Centres were approved.
- (ii) That the following Members be invited to attend the Advisory Boards as representatives of this Committee:

North 1 Advisory Board (Hindpool) – Councillor Sheila Griffin

North 2 Advisory Board (Chatham) – Councillor Chris Simmons

South 1 Advisory Board (Stranton) – Councillor John Lauderdale

South 2 Advisory Board (Rossmere) – Councillor Marjorie James

- (iii) That all Members be invited to the Advisory Board that incorporates their Ward Area.

## 21. **School Term and Holiday Dates 2014-15** (*Assistant Director, Education*)

### Type of decision

Non key.

### Purpose of report

To seek agreement to the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2014/15.

To seek agreement to recommending these dates to governing bodies of Aided and Foundation Schools and Academies in Hartlepool.

### Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the Council's responsibility to set the school term and holiday dates for Community and Controlled Schools in Hartlepool. As part of the process, consultation had been undertaken with all Head Teachers in Hartlepool along with relevant associations/unions. One response had been received which expressed a number of points in relation to the guiding principles and these were detailed in the report.

Upon completion of the consultation undertaken in the region, the general consensus from the Local Authorities was to adopt the model attached at Appendix 2 for school term dates for 2014/15.

## **Decision**

- (i) The scheduled term and holiday dates for 2014/15 for Community and Controlled Schools as shown in Appendix 2 were approved.
- (ii) The scheduled term and holiday dates for 2014/15 be recommended to governing bodies of all Voluntary Aided, Foundation Schools and Academies in Hartlepool as shown in Appendix 2.

## **22. Statement of Purposes for Exmoor Grove Residential Unit** *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To present the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide for Exmoor Grove 2013/14.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the Local Authority's responsibility to review the Statement of Purpose for Children's Homes on an annual basis. The Statement of Purpose was attached at Appendix 1 and detailed the arrangements for the management and delivery of the Home, how outcomes for children were promoted and the staffing arrangements with a pen portrait of the staff. Also attached to the report was the Children's Guide to Exmoor Grove which included information on how the children can find out their rights, contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director and OfSTED if they wish and how to secure an independent advocate.

### **Decision**

The Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide were approved in line with the Children's Home National Minimum Standards 2011.

## **23. Adoption Reforms** (*Assistant Director, Children's Services and Chief Finance Officer*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Committee of the Department for Education, Adoption Reforms, how the Council proposes to implement the reforms and its financial priorities for the (2013-2014) Adoption Reform Grant.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the Local Authority's responsibility in relation to adoption and noted that the Government had raised the profile of adoption through the publication of the report 'Action Plan for Adoption – Tackling Delay' in March 2012. To support the required reform of adoption services, the Department for Education has provided additional monies to Local Authorities through a one year Adoption Reform Grant. Their key areas included within the adoption reforms were as follows:

- Publication of adoption scorecards detailing local authorities' performance;
- Finding children loving homes without delay;
- Securing early permanence;
- Adoption support; and
- System reform.

The proposals to utilise the Adoption Reform Grant were outlined in the report. Given the short term nature of the grant funding, it was noted that the additional posts would be for a one year fixed term and it was proposed that officers be seconded into these posts from within the existing team and wider children's social care workforce.

The Chair noted that the performance of placing children for adoption in Hartlepool was the 3<sup>rd</sup> best in the Country and this was a great tribute to the officers and operating practices. It was noted that all officers involved in the process considered the best interest of the child to be of paramount importance and everyone was congratulated on their commitment and hard work in achieving this.

## **Decision**

- (i) The Adoption Reforms taking place at national level were noted.
- (ii) The plans for local implementation as detailed in the report and the use of the one-off grant provided by the Government were approved.

## **24. Adoption Annual Report 2012/13 and Adoption Agency Statement of Purposes 2013/14** (*Assistant Director, Children's Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To present the Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2012/13, the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2013/14 and the Children's Guide.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the work of the Adoption Services which was subject to National Minimum Standards. It was a requirement of those Standards that an Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide for adoption services were produced and reviewed at least annually, these were attached by way of Appendix. The Head of Business Unit confirmed that the service will ensure that positive practices were retained whilst the Government reforms were embraced. Members were informed that a successful recruitment campaign had been undertaken to meet the service needs and children waiting.

The Chair congratulated Officers on an excellent report and child friendly appendix.

### **Decision**

The Adoption Agency Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide were approved in line with the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.

**25. Fostering Services Annual Report 2013/13 and Statement of Purpose 2013-14** (*Assistant Director, Children's Services*)

**Type of decision**

Non key

**Purpose of report**

To present the Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2012/13, the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose for 2013/14 and the Young Persons' Fostering Guide.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the work of the Fostering Services which was subject to National Minimum Standards. It was a requirement of those Standards that an Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and a Young Person's Fostering Guide for adoption services were produced and reviewed at least annually, these were attached by way of Appendix.

The Chair congratulated all officers involved in developing such a robust process to select people to undertake this very valuable work on behalf of the Local Authority as corporate parents of all Looked After Children.

**Decision**

The Fostering Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and Young Person's Fostering Guide were all approved in line with the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.

**26. Free Early Education for Two Year olds** (*Assistant Director, Children's Services*)

**Type of decision**

For information.

**Purpose of report**

To outline the Local Authority's duties to deliver free early education for two year olds.

To outline the demand for two year old childcare.

To outline current availability of two year old childcare.

To outline the work in progress to develop further two year old childcare places.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the extension to 'Free Nursery Entitlement' to target the 20% most disadvantaged two year olds in the Country. Hartlepool was an early pathfinder for two year old childcare and had developed experience of this over the past three years. There was revenue funding for the period April 2013 to March 2014 of £964,348 to place around 400 children, in addition the DfE had awarded £371,511 to prepare the additional eligible children that will come on board in 2014/15, around 130 children. A schedule of current and proposed availability was summarised within the report.

Further work was being undertaken to develop the two year old childcare market in areas with the highest prevalence of potentially eligible children. As such contact had been undertaken with schools to discuss their interest in delivering care for two year olds.

During the discussions that followed it was suggested that the promotion of care for two year olds within a child minding setting should be explored further. The Head of Access and Strategic Planning indicated that whilst in principle, child minders were a good provision, the majority of parents were currently seeking care within a day care setting and the promotion of child minders would need to commence with parents. A Member highlighted that child minding may be an alternative employment for women at home with young children of their own. However, it was noted that a lot of parents sought to place their children within a school setting where they were likely to continue with their education and schools should be asked to consider the important role they can play in the uptake of care provision for two year olds. It was highlighted that the key driver behind the Government's initiative to provide care for two year olds was to enable disadvantaged families to take up this provision and help with that child's development. The Head of Access and Strategic Planning confirmed that the delivery of free child care for two year olds would be delivered in conjunction with a number of other strategies, including the Early Intervention Strategy.

### **Decision**

The progress to deliver the Local Authority's duties for free early education for two year olds and the further development of two year old childcare places was noted.

**27. Short Quality Screening Inspection of Hartlepool Youth Offending Service** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

**Type of decision**

For information.

**Purpose of report**

To present the outcome of the recent Short Quality Screening Inspection of Hartlepool Youth Offending Service which was undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the Short Quality Screening inspection of the initial assessment, planning, effective management and partnership working undertaken by the Youth Offending Service in response to young people who are subject to a court order. It was noted that the inspection had recorded a 'very positive picture' in Hartlepool adding that Hartlepool Youth Service can be 'rightly proud of the substantial progress it has made since our previous inspection in 2011'. The Inspectors highlighted that staff were well supported, committed and were delivering high quality services. Further details of the inspection were included in the report.

The Chair noted the success in this area and forwarded congratulations on behalf of the Committee to the whole team for a well deserved outcome and report.

**Decision**

The findings of the recent Short Quality Screening Inspection of Hartlepool Youth Offending Service undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and the substantial progress the service had made since its previous inspection in 2011 were noted.

**28. Safeguarding Children in Hartlepool** (*Assistant Director, Children's 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 reporting of workload of children's social care services to Members. The report related to the fourth quarter of 2012/13 but reflected performance and activity across the whole year to provide the Committee with a full year of data for consideration. Detailed performance information for referrals and assessment was included within the report. However, in summary it was noted that there were 5187 contacts into Children's Services with 1280 progressing to referral in 2012/13. It was noted that re-referral rates had averaged at 21%.

In relation to child protection it was noted that there were 136 children subject to a child protection plan at 31 March 2013 with neglect accounting for the highest proportion of child protection plans. It was noted that there were 190 looked after children within Hartlepool at the end of March 2013 and the Edge of Care Team were continuing to work with a small number of young people at risk of family breakdown and therefore becoming looked after. In conclusion it was noted that as of 31 March 2013 there were 1091 children in Hartlepool receiving support either through Child in Need, Children in Need of Protection or Looked After.

The Assistant Director, Children's Services informed Members that social workers' caseloads had risen and on average were approximately 28 per social worker. A number of compliments and complaints had been received during 2012/13 and these were outlined in the report.

Clarification was sought on the redistribution of workload when social workers were on sickness absence. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that work was reallocated to another social worker in times of sickness absence. In addition to this, two agency workers were employed as part of the initial response team. Members were informed that there had been two recent additions to the team through newly qualified social workers.

The Chair thanked all officers involved in compiling this very informative and detailed report.

## **Decision**

The contents of the report and activity within children's social care were

noted.

**29. 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.

**30. Any Other Business – Safeguarding Training for Children's Services Committee**

The Assistant Director, Children's Services informed Members that the Local Safeguarding Board delivered an Introduction to Safeguarding programme of training as part of the Annual Workforce Development Programme. It was suggested that this programme could be opened up to Members and a wider audience from partner agencies.

**Decision**

That Members and partner agencies be invited to attend the Introduction to Safeguarding programme of training on a date and time to be agreed with the Chair.

**31. Any Other Business – Reading List for Children's Services Committee**

The Chair informed Members that the Head of Access and Strategic Planning had identified a reading list for Members of the Committee and Members views were sought on how this should be provided. Whilst the majority of Member present indicated they would prefer electronic circulation through a hyperlink as this would ensure that the documentation was continuously updated, all Members would be contacted to ascertain their individual views. It was noted that the reading list and the safeguarding training noted in minute 30, would also be available to the young people on the Committee.

**Decision**

That an email be forwarded to all Members of the Committee to ascertain their views on the dissemination of the reading list.

The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 9 July 2013**