

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

1 October 2013

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

Present:

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Marjorie James and John Lauderdale.

Co-opted Member: Mr Michael Lee.

Young People's Representatives:

Shay Miah, Matthew Streeting, Aimee Wilson, Adam Davison,
Tom Clennet and Sara Razzaq.

Also in attendance:

Councillor G Lilley as substitute for Councillor Atkinson in
accordance with Council Procedure rule 5.2

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education
Christine Croft, Team Manager
Mark Patton, Senior School Improvement Advisor
Mark Smith, Head of Youth Support Services
Danielle Swainston, Head of Access and Strategic Planning
John Robinson, Head of Localities and Family Support
Jane Young, Business Unit Manager
Katy Larkin, Participation Worker
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

54. Apologies for Absence

Kelly Atkinson, Cath Hill, and Co-opted Member Sacha Bedding.

55. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Fleet, Griffin and Simmons declared personal interests in
Minute No. 57.

56. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2013

Received.

57. Savings Proposals for Early Intervention Services (Assistant Director, Children's Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Reference CAS 13/13.

Purpose of report

To identify proposals for the delivery of savings in respect of the Early Intervention Grant for consideration in the context of significant cuts to this grant in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that in September 2012, local authorities were notified of significant cuts to the Early Intervention Grant. For Hartlepool this amounted to £1.52m in the two years 2013/14 and 2014/15. In response to this risk, a careful assessment of commitments was adopted and this delivered an under-spend in 2012/13. The underspend has enabled one off funding to temporarily offset the grant cuts in 2013/14 providing a longer lead in time to assess the implications of reducing early intervention services and make informed decisions about how these cuts will be managed.

The extent of the funding cuts to the early intervention grant mean significant reductions would have to be made on the current commitments and some services will have to cease. The proposals detailed in this section of the report would support Members to make informed decisions on the priorities for early intervention services going forward maximizing the available resources and investing in services that improved the outcomes and life chances for children and young people. A spreadsheet was attached as Appendix 1 to the report which summarised the current budget commitments, Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rated the proposed savings and underpins the narrative contained in the report.

The Assistant Director went on to outline the proposed savings to be achieved and as set out in detail in the report. The table below summarised the proposed savings as outlined in the report: -

Service	Proposed Savings	Staffing Implications
Reduce Marketing budget	£30,000	
Early Years Foundation Stage Quality Improvement	£50,208	1.2 post

Reduce Childcare budget	£37,291	
Short Breaks	£68,456	
Small Steps School Assistant	£23,000	1 post
Remove Band 13 Principal Practitioner post	£47,386	1 post
Reduction in Children's Centre operating costs	£88,062	
Rationalisation of staffing group	£161,386	1 post
Reduce family budgets	£10,000	
Remove Healthy Eating Early Years settings post	£34,366	1 post
Reduce staffing in Rainbow Café	£20,240	1 post
Renegotiating IT system fees and reducing central costs	£28,000	
Income generation of participation team	£30,000	
Closure of Brinkburn and Jutland Road Youth Clubs	£103,000	14 staff 3.6 FTE's
Reduction in sessional hours	£95,000	All youth centre workers will have 30 minute reduction in working time.
Reduction of 1 Youth Work Manager post	£41,000	1 post
Remove YCAP element of the grant	£169,814	Further work required re delivered in house or commissioned
Reduce Youth Opportunities Fund	£80,000	
Cease funding additional Speech and Language Services	£120,000	
Transfer substance misuse service to Public Health	£122,000	
Reduce mentoring and activities contract value by 10%	£48,000	
Transfer parenting service in house	£105,000	TUPE will apply
Total Proposed Savings	£1,512,209	

The Assistant Director highlighted that the size of the cuts to the Early Intervention Grant (EIG) over two years equated to almost 25% of the 2012/13 grant which was huge for a single service area and therefore there were significant risks associated with the proposals and the impact will be significant. The proposals outlined and detailed in the spreadsheet at

appendix 1 had been RAG rated according to the level of risk. Some savings have been rated as green as these could be realized from non-staff costs and general efficiencies delivered throughout the service. However, a number of the proposed savings had been rated as amber as there were risks associated with compulsory redundancies, the cessation of certain services or risks in relation to whether they could be fully achieved. The attached spreadsheet also included details of the services which were not being proposed for cuts and were therefore rated as red. This enabled Members to know which services these were and have a full understanding of their costs.

The Chair commented that it was entirely regrettable that the EIG had been cut to this extent. Early intervention was still being promoted as a key service yet after only one year it was being cut by 20%. Members were concerned that the remaining provision of services would not extend to all the town with areas such as Manor House having no based service provision. In relation to the service provision at Jutland Road it was suggested that discussions be held with the provider to bring the age range of the service more into line with other provision.

One of the young people's representatives questioned the cuts to the Youth Opportunities Fund and the proposals to increase the income generated from the Young Inspectors. The Assistant Director commented that the Youth Opportunities Fund had been under spent over recent years. In terms of the Young Inspectors, the level of support associated with them was largely unrecognised in the budget and the proposed increase would reflect more appropriately the costs involved. The young peoples representatives expressed their concern at the increase in charges and the potential for them to put off potential users of the service. It was also suggested that as an alternative, that the £25,000 allocated to the Youth Opportunities Fund be transferred to fund the young inspectors and alternative external sources of funding for the YOF be found. It was indicated by officers that they did not feel that in the current economic situation going to external agencies would be particularly fruitful.

The young peoples representatives considered that asking higher fees for the inspections would not raise the amount require to cover the costs of the post highlighted within the report. The Assistant Director indicated that any additional funding would be met from the reserve should the income generated be insufficient.

The young peoples representatives raised concerns in relation to the cuts to Children and Young People's Youth Offer and Entitlement, particularly to the outreach services. Officers indicated that the service review aimed to take the best of the two elements and carry those forward into the new service. The closure of the Brinkburn Youth Centre was also raised by the young people. Officers indicated that of the three local authority centres, Brinkburn was by far the least heavily used and steps would be put in place to ensure that all the young people who attended Brinkburn were advised of alternative provision they could access elsewhere. Members noted that as

the Seaton Youth Centre provision was to be moved to Golden Flatts, there would be two youth provision venues (Golden Flatts and Jutland Road) in very close proximity to each other.

Paul Thompson (Hartlepool Families First) addressed the Committee and highlighted the effects of the cuts to the short breaks service to disabled children and young people. The cuts to the Toy Library were also highlighted as being of concern. This service allowed families access to toys and other play provision with their children that they may not be able to afford themselves. A significant number of children and families benefitted from this relatively low cost front line service. Officers acknowledged that the service was well regarded and questioned if it was now being said that the cuts would make the service unviable. Paul Thompson commented that this was not the case, though the operational hours would be reduced significantly but he wished to stress the significant benefit that was drawn from a service that cost relatively little in comparison.

Following the debate Members agreed that subject to the comments and further discussions in relation to the Young Peoples Inspectors, the Jutland Road facility and the comments on the short breaks service, the recommendations, however unpalatable, should be agreed. It was clarified that those further issues related to;

discussions with the provider of services through Jutland Road extending the age range of services to match the statutory age range imposed on the council;
further consideration of the comments made by the young peoples representatives in relation to the charges relating to Young Peoples Inspections; and
the 50% reduction in services provided through Families First.

The Chair indicated that this would not mean that the full amount of savings could be referred to the Finance and Policy Committee but that the total would be close to the required amount, subject to the further consideration of the issues outlined above.

Decision

1. That the savings programme to manage the cuts to the Early Intervention Grant as set out in detail in the report be approved, subject to further discussion on the implementation of: -
 - the changes to youth service provision at Jutland Road through further discussions with the provider of services to extending the age range of services to match the statutory age range imposed on the council;
 - the changes to the Young Peoples Inspections in light of the comments made by the young peoples representatives in relation to the charges relating to; and

- that the 50% reduction in services provided through Families First be reconsidered.
- 2. That the report be forwarded to Finance and Policy Committee for approval of the savings programme and to carry forward of the unused Early Intervention Grant Reserves of £350,000 to manage financial risks of delivering the saving programme in 2014/15, and these issues be referred to full Council in February 2014 as part of the final budget proposals for 2014/15.
- 3. That the Finance and Policy Committee note that commitments against the £350,000 Early Intervention Grant reserve would be reviewed during 2014/15 as the savings were implemented which would then enable a strategy for using any uncommitted balance on this reserve to be developed as part of the 2015/16 budget.
- 4. That the decision on discontinuing the early intervention speech and language contract to the Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration of impact and how this can be mitigated.

58. OFSTED Inspections of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement
(Assistant Director, Education)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To update Children's Services Committee members on the recently introduced OFSTED inspections of Local Authority arrangements for supporting school improvement and to make members aware of their potential involvement in the inspection.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education reported that in June 2013, OFSTED published both the Framework and the Handbook for the Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement under Section 136 (1) (b) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Both documents were submitted as appendices to the report.

The aim of the inspection was to 'inspect how well the local authority is fulfilling its general duty to promote high standards and fulfilment by every child of their educational potential as set out in section 13A of the Education Act 1996'.

Inspections would not be universal. OFSTED would inspect only where concerns about performance were apparent or where requested to do so by the Secretary of State. Given that Hartlepool LA is specifically mentioned in the OFSTED North-East, Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Plan, August 2013 attached as a confidential appendix to the report (This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely; Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (para.3)), it was likely that this local authority would be inspected within the next 18 months.

The Assistant Director sought comment from Members as to what level of assistance would be required prior to such an inspection as Members involvement in the process through meetings with the inspectors would be key. Members indicated that training should be provided for any Members likely to be involved in the process. Members also commented that additional training should be provided for LEA appointed governors, whether they were Councillors or not to enhance the role they played with governing bodies, particularly with the potential for governing bodies to be discussing the retention of council services.

The Assistant Director indicated that a report setting out a schedule of training for the Committee would be submitted to the next meeting. The issue of LEA appointed governor training would also be addressed

Decision

1. That the report and the attached appendices be noted.
2. That a programme of training for Committee Member be reported to the next meeting of the Committee designed to prepare Members sufficiently for any future meeting with an OFSTED inspection team during Local Authority inspection.
3. That the training provided for LEA appointed school governors be reviewed and a further report submitted on enhancing the programme of training currently offered.

59. Vulnerable Schools and Schools Causing Concern (Assistant Director, Education)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To present the updated 'Schools causing Concern: Support and Challenge Protocol' (Appendix 1) originally adopted by the Children and Communities Services Portfolio on 23 October 2012.

The 'Schools Causing Concern: Support and Challenge Protocol' details the procedures that the Local Authority will follow for:

- (a) identifying a school judged to be temporarily vulnerable or, over time, causing concern;
- (b) supporting and challenging the school to bring about improvement;
- (c) monitoring the school's self evaluation of its improvement.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education reported that the provisions in Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as updated by September 2012 Advice to Local Authorities) relating to schools causing concern placed a responsibility upon a Local Authority to identify any of its schools that are causing concern and to act accordingly to bring about improvement in order to "... ensure that every pupil is provided with the education and opportunities they deserve".

To address this issue and to further develop an understanding of the overall performance of all of its schools and to identify any specific school(s) causing concern, the 'Schools Causing Concern: Support and Challenge Protocol' had been updated. This would ensure that schools and the Local Authority work together to address identified areas of concern promptly and effectively. The overriding priority was to support the school to provide the best possible environment to help children and young people maximize their potential and make the progress they deserve.

The updated 'Schools Causing Concern: Support and Challenge Protocol' now reflected the requirements of the OFSTED 'Framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for Supporting School Improvement', introduced in May 2013.

Decision

That the report be noted and the implementation of the updated processes for supporting and challenging Hartlepool schools to further improve be approved.

60. OFSTED Inspection Outcomes: March-July 2013 (Senior School Improvement Advisor)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide a summary of the outcomes of Ofsted inspections of Hartlepool schools in the period March-July 2013.

To provide a summary of the proportion of good and outstanding schools in Hartlepool at the end of the academic year 2012-13.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Senior School Improvement Advisor reported that Ofsted introduced a revised school inspection framework in September 2012. The aim of the revised schedule was to ensure that all schools in England are judged to be Outstanding (Grade 1) or Good (Grade 2). Any school judged to 'Require Improvement' (Grade 3) will be 'supported' by Ofsted to improve quickly. Schools judged to be 'Inadequate' (Grade 4) will be monitored by Ofsted half-termly.

The report gave details of the recent inspections completed on the following Hartlepool schools –

Catcote Special School, March 2013, judged GOOD overall
Greatham Primary School, March 2013, judged GOOD overall
Owton Manor Primary School, March 2013, judged GOOD overall
St Teresa's RC Primary School, April 2013, judged GOOD overall
Kingsley Primary School, May 2013, judged GOOD overall
Grange Primary School, May 2013, judged to REQUIRE IMPROVEMENT
Rossmere Primary School, May 2013, judged GOOD overall
West Park Primary School, June 2013, judged GOOD overall
St. Peter's CE Primary School, Elwick, June 2013, judged to REQUIRE IMPROVEMENT

Proportions of schools* in each Ofsted category at the end of 2012-13:

Ofsted category	Primary	Secondary	Overall
Outstanding	16%	17%	16%
Good	66%	33%	61%
Good or better	81%	50%	76%
Requires Improvement	19%	50%	24%
Inadequate	0%	0%	0%

* including special schools, but not PRU

Schools judged to Require Improvement under the revised September 2012 framework are supported by Local Authority officer-led Focus Groups, as well as by a nominated HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector).

The Chair reminded Members that a request for a report on the use of the pupil premium and how it had impacted on schools had been requested and would be brought to the meeting on 5 November. Members indicated that they were aware that schools used the pupil premium in different ways and requested that the report reflect this and the success or otherwise of the different approaches.

Members noted that the allocation of pupil premium was based on the numbers of children taking up free school meals and questioned how the recent announcement by the government that all school children up the age of seven would receive free school meals. Officers indicated that the calculation was based on the numbers of free school meals over the last six years so there would be no initial impact.

Decision

That the report be noted.

61. Fostering Service Quarterly Update *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the first quarter of 2013/14. The fostering service is a regulated service and as such there is a requirement to provide the executive side of the Council with performance information on a quarterly basis.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Business Unit Manager reported that the Quarterly Report provided details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff and foster carers, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective foster carers and progress against the priorities set out in the Fostering Annual Report.

Decision

That the report be noted.

62. Pupil Achievement Summary 2013 (Provisional)

(Assistant Director, Education)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide a summary of pupil achievement outcomes from public examinations 2012/13 and to indicate any significant trends. Graphical and tabulated data will be presented alongside this report.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Senior School Improvement Advisor reported that children and young people in Hartlepool undertook formal assessments of their attainment and progress throughout each academic year. These assessments were a mixture of teacher assessments, which were moderated and standardised, and tests or examinations that were set nationally. Formal national testing and examinations usually happen in the summer term each year, although some 'early entry' public examinations were taken by Year 10 and Year 11 students at other times throughout Key Stage 4.

There were nationally benchmarked outcomes for children and young people at the end of Reception and Years 1, 2, 6 and 11. Details were set out in detail in the report but officers advised Members that the National figures presented were very early figures, taken from a (large) sub-set of all schools, and should be considered as indicative only at this stage.

Members and Young People's representatives questioned some of the benchmarking exercises and their application at the different age levels.

The Chair referred to the School Improvement Fund and commented that as yet no proposals for use of the funding had come forward from schools. The Assistant Director, Education commented that work was ongoing with a number of schools on developing bids for the funding which would be reported to Members at the earliest opportunity.

Decision

That the report be noted.

63. 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.

64. Direction under section 7A of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 – flexible assessment processes *(Assistant Director, Education)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To inform Members of receipt of the letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary for State for Children and Families.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services submitted for Members information a letter recently received for the Parliamentary Under Secretary for State for Children and Families welcoming Hartlepool's involvement in the testing of the flexible assessment process with the aim of delivering improved outcomes and focused interventions for children and young people.

The Assistant Director sought the Committee's approval for the department's involvement in the testing of the flexible assessment process. The Chair welcomed the project which would be in the best interest of the children involved.

Decision

That Hartlepool's involvement in the testing of the flexible assessment process be approved and welcomed.

65. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

Flu Vaccinations.

Members sought details of the numbers of children that would be involved in the flu vaccination programme in Hartlepool. The Assistant Director, Education indicated that he would write to Members with information on the programme.

Visit to Rossmere Primary School Forest Proposal

The Chair indicated that arrangements were being made for the Committee to visit Rossmere School to discuss the School Forrest proposal. Members suggested that ward representatives from the neighbouring wards also be invited to the presentation as it was likely that children from their ward attended the school. It was also suggested that the young people's representatives be invited to the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 5.40 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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