

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

5 November 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 and Marjorie James

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Paul Thompson was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Cath Hill and Councillor Alison Lilley was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Kelly Atkinson.

Co-opted members:
Michael Lee

Young people's representatives:
Shay Miah, Matthew Streeting, Adam Davison, Tom Clennett and Sara Razzaq.

Officers:
Gill Alexander, Director of Child and Adult Services
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education
Mark Smith, Head of Youth Support Services
David Ward, Group Accountant (Corporate and Schools)
Laura Stones, Scrutiny Support Officer
Katy Larkin, Participation Worker
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

66. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kelly Atkinson and Cath Hill.

67. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Chris Simmons declared a personal interest in minute 79 and Councillor Mary Fleet declared a personal interest in minute 73.

68. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2013

Received.

69. 2013/14 Schools' Capital Works Programme – Phase 2 (Rossmere Capital Project Bid) *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Reference CAS 016/13.

Purpose of report

To consider the Rossmere Primary School Development Funding bid.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the Funding Bid for a proposed development at Rossmere Primary School and the original proposals were detailed in Appendices 1 and 1a. Members of the Committee has visited the Rossmere site and heard further representations from the school where revised proposals were produced and were attached at Appendix 2. The costings for both the original and revised proposals were detailed in the confidential appendices attached to the report. **This item contained 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).**

The Chair wished to pass on the gratitude of the Committee Members who had attended the visit to the school as the children and staff from Rossmere Primary and other schools in attendance, helped them gain a fuller understanding of the proposals. The Chair added that the visit had been very interesting and the enthusiasm of all those involved was evident. Members echoed the Chair's comments and added that the visit had been a very pleasant experience which had helped develop a greater understanding of the benefits of this capital investment for the town wide educational arrangements and had shown the support for the proposal from other primary schools in the town. Members were very impressed with the proposals and indicated their support for the original application for the larger school site.

It was suggested by one of the co-opted members of the Committee that the possibility of holding future meetings of this Committee in school premises be explored to encourage participation with students and school councils.

As Members had found the visit to the school so beneficial on this occasion, it was suggested that consideration be given to further visits to sites where a significant capital expenditure was proposed.

During the discussion that followed it was acknowledged that the decision making process on the Rossmere School proposals for capital expenditure had taken longer than anticipated. However, Members recognised that when proposals involved a significant amount of capital expenditure and were an imaginative departure from the usual proposals, Members needed to be sure they considered the proposals in detail. It was noted that whilst this process may take slightly longer than anticipated, Members would be confident that any decisions taken were robust and were an effective use of capital resources.

Decision

- (i) The original proposals for the development of the Rossmere Forest School scheme on the larger school site as detailed in Appendices 1 and 1a were approved.
- (ii) That the Local Authority agree a contribution from Rossmere Primary School towards the scheme which was in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum.
- (iii) That consideration be given to Members of the Committee visiting the sites of future proposals where a significant amount of capital expenditure was involved.
- (iv) That consideration be given to the potential of holding future meetings of the Committee within school premises.

70. Commissioning of Restorative Justice Service

(Assistant Director, Children's Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference CAS 19/13.

Purpose of report

To request approval to implement a procurement exercise through tender submissions for the delivery of Restorative Justice Services in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the current Restorative Justice Services which were provided by the Children's Society through a contract which was due to end in March 2014. It was noted that the decrease in levels of youth crime had prompted the Youth Offending Service to reduce the contract value of the Restorative Justice Service contract to £40,000.00 per annum to reflect the reduced need for restorative activities. It was suggested that a three year contract at a value of up to £120,000.00 would provide stability and permit the successful provider to innovate and further develop services for victims of youth crime in Hartlepool.

A discussion ensued on the permitted arrangements for extending contracts. The Assistant Director, Children's Services indicated that it was her understanding that it was permitted to extend contracts up to a maximum duration equal to the length of the original contract. However, this would be clarified for future reference.

Decision

That the Youth Offending Services implement a procurement exercise through tender submissions for a three year contract for the delivery of restorative justice services in Hartlepool.

71. Training for School Governors *(Assistant Director, Education)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To propose a series of training events for Chairs of School Governors and other Interested Governors over a period of 12 months in order to increase the effectiveness of governance in Hartlepool's schools.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report outlined the revised inspection schedule for OFSTED which including reporting on governance in much greater detail. It was noted that the Governor Support Service in Hartlepool was one of the most highly regarded services offered to schools by the Council and continued to achieve 100% buy back from all schools, including academies in Hartlepool. One of the services offered by Governor Support was the provision of bespoke school governor training events. This was offered over three

modules as follows:

Module	Date	Content
Improving Governance	Nov/Dec 2013 9.30am-11.30am 5pm-7pm 7pm-9pm	Background to current position Ofsted expectations Effective/ineffective governance Good Practice The strong governing body
Understanding School Data	Jan-March 2014 9.30am-11.30am 5pm-7pm 7pm-9pm	What Governors need and do not need to know RAISE Online/Data dashboard/ School data Target setting Other useful data
Challenge and Support: the Critical Friend	April-July 2014 9.30am-10.30am 5pm-7pm 7pm-9pm	The headteacher's report Asking the right questions Gathering your evidence Evaluating your school accurately

One of the young people representatives questioned whether they would be invited to attend the above training sessions. The Chair indicated that inviting the young people to attend the training sessions would prove very useful if it did not affect their schedule of learning at school.

Decision

- (i) That the proposals for Governor training outlined above were approved with the launch of the programme to commence in November 2013.
- (ii) That the young people's representatives from the Children's Services Committee be invited to attend the training programme.

72. Training for Children's Services Committee Members *(Assistant Director, Education)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To propose a series of training sessions for members of the Children's

Services Committee as requested at its inception over a period of twelve months in order to increase Members' understanding of educational issues and to prepare Members for any future OFSTED inspection of school improvement services.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the request for training from the Children's Services Committee.

Module	Date	Content
The national, regional and local picture	Nov – Dec 2013	National issues for education – Ofsted, DfE, standards Regional issues: key areas for improvement in the NE Local issues; how to improve Hartlepool's education provision
Schools causing concern; support and challenge	Jan- March 2014	The legislative framework and context What does support and challenge look like How Hartlepool monitors its schools
Inclusion and SEN	April – June 2014	The current legislation and our response The inclusive approach in Hartlepool High needs/SEN/Educational Psychology/ Looked after Children

The Chair extended the invitation to attend the above training events to the young people's representatives on the Committee and it was noted that to enable their attendance, it would be helpful if the training could be scheduled to commence after 4pm. It was suggested that a range of dates be circulated to Members and the dates where the majority of Members were available would be chosen. A Member suggested that by way of a general principle, whilst acknowledging the young people's commitment to examinations and their ongoing education, should any young people have difficulty securing time away from school to attend events connected with their involvement in this Committee, Officers and Members should be made aware of this.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to nominated substitute Members of the Committee, the Chair confirmed that all Members would be invited to attend the above training programme.

Decision

- (i) The training proposals outlined above were approved to enable the programme to commence in November 2013.
- (ii) That all Members and co-opted members of the Committee, including the young people's representatives be invited to attend the above training programme.

73. Commissioning of Children's Social Care Services (Children's Advocacy Service) *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

Commissioning of Children's Social Care Services (After Adoption Support Service) *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To request approval to implement a procurement exercise through tender submissions for the delivery of a Children's Advocacy Service and an After Adoption Support Service.

Issue(s) for consideration

As the above reports were similar, the Committee considered them together. The reports both provided the background to the requirements to service provision for Children's Advocacy Service and After Adoption Support Service. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that the proposals involved a collaborative arrangement with partners across the Tees Valley for both contracts. It was noted that both contracts were for four years with the cost of the Children's Advocacy Service being £50k and the cost of the After Adoption Support Service being £49k.

Decision

- (i) That Children's Services implement a procurement exercise through tender submissions for a four year contract for the delivery of Advocacy Services for the children and young people from Hartlepool.
- (ii) That Children's Services implement a procurement exercise through tender submissions for a four year contract for the delivery of an

Adoption Support and Special Guardianship Service.

74. Savings Programme 2014/15 Education (*Assistant Director, Education*)

Type of decision

For information, Members of the Committee are recommended to note the content of this report and formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

Purpose of report

To identify proposals for the delivery of savings in respect of the Education Service for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget process.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education presented the report which included the proposals for delivery of savings in the Education Service as part of the 2014/15 budget process, the risks associated with the proposals and the considerations which had been taken into account in developing them.

The savings target for the Education Service for 2014/15 was £487,000. Details of how the savings target would be achieved were detailed in the report. Members were referred to the risk implications, financial equality and diversity considerations and staff considerations, as set out in the report. The report highlighted that a Review of the Discretionary Transport Plan was underway and a separate report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee with further detail.

A number of areas of potential additional income generation were highlighted to Members including the Education Psychology and Data Management services.

One of the young people representatives questioned whether any of the proposed savings would impact on children and young people's learning. The Assistant Director, Education acknowledged that whilst there may be an indirect impact on schools as a result of the required savings, every effort was being made to ensure this would not impact on the provision of education to children and young people and that the target of all young people achieving at least 5 A*-C grades in their GCSE's was fulfilled.

A Member did express concerns that some of the proposed targets were very challenging. The Assistant Director, Education confirmed that whilst some of the targets were challenging, every effort would be made to ensure they were met.

It was highlighted by one of the co-opted Members that at least one secondary school in the town had a buy-back service in place with another local authority and reassured the Committee that all schools would be keen to support the buy back of services from this local authority should those services be available and cost effective. The Assistant Director, Education indicated he would explore this issue further.

Decision

- (i) The content of the report was noted.
- (ii) That the proposed savings in respect of the Education Service as part of the 2014/15 process be supported with the exception of the Review of the Discretionary Transport Plan which was subject to a further report.
- (iii) That the contents of the report and Members' comments noted above be utilised to formulate a response to be presented to the Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

75. Savings Programme 2014/15 – Children's Services (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

For information, Members of the Committee are recommended to note the content of this report and formulate a response to be presented to Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

Purpose of report

To identify proposals for the delivery of savings in respect of the Children's Services division of Child and Adult Services for consideration as part of the 2014/15 budget process.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services presented the report which included the proposals for delivery of savings in the Children's Services as part of the 2014/15 budget process, the risks associated with the proposals and the considerations which had been taken into account in developing them.

The savings target for the Children's Services for 2014/15 was £268,000 with £40,000 of this saving having already been identified in the earlier report delivering savings of £1.52m. Details of how the savings target would be achieved were detailed in the report. Members were referred to the risk implications, financial equality and diversity considerations and staff considerations, as set out in the report.

The Chair referred to the Staff Considerations and was pleased to note that consultations were ongoing in relation to potential redundancies with staff and relevant trades unions.

Decision

- (i) The Committee reluctantly agreed the savings proposed in relation to Children's Services.
- (ii) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted and utilised to formulate a response to be presented to the Finance and Policy Committee on 29 November 2013.

76. Outcome of Recent OFSTED Inspection of Exmoor Grove Children's Home *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To present feedback regarding the recent inspection of Exmoor Grove Children's Home by OFSTED.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided a summary of the inspection findings and highlighted that the overall effectiveness of the home was judged to be Good. It was noted that the Inspector found overall that the home provided a good quality of care for children, staff were good at seeking and taking into account children's wishes and feelings about how they should be cared for, creating a caring atmosphere which enabled children to relax and feel comfortable during their time at the home.

It was noted that one issue that had arisen during the inspection had been the allocation and use of a 'safe space' within the home, however after making further enquiries that Inspector had been satisfied this was appropriate. .

The Chair indicated he would write to the Manager of the home to pass on the Committee's appreciation to all the staff at Exmoor Grove for their hard work and commitment in the operation of this children's home which had led to a good result from the OFSTED inspection for the fourth consecutive time.

Decision

- (i) The inspection report was noted.
- (ii) It was noted that Exmoor Grove had consistently been judged as a good provision over four inspections which demonstrated the hard work and commitment of the staff team as a whole and positive management and leadership of the Registered Manager.
- (iii) The Chair to forward a letter to the Manager of Exmoor Grove to pass on the Committee's appreciation to all the staff in recognition of their hard work and commitment which led to a good result from the OFSTED inspection for the fourth consecutive time.

77. Framework and Evaluation Schedule for the Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the revised inspection framework for local authority children's services.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the inspection of services for children and the framework which governed these inspections which was periodically updated in line with learning and developments in practice. The revised framework was attached at Appendix 1.

It was anticipated that Hartlepool will receive an early inspection given the length of time since the Authority was last inspected. Ofsted had made it clear that the inspections would not be proportionate with a focus on those previously judged adequate and inadequate as was the case during the past year.

Decision

The revised framework for the inspection of children's services and the work of officers to prepare for this inspection visit were noted.

78. Annual Complaints Report – 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013 (*Assistant Director, Children's Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To present the Annual Complaints Report of the Child and Adult Services Department on complaints and representations for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background information on the complaints and representation frameworks appropriate in the Department. The Annual report was attached at Appendix A.

The report presented the opportunity to demonstrate the learning that had occurred from complaints and also consideration of trends emerging through the year's activity within the Complaints Framework. The content of the report included the following:

- Types of complaints and representations received 2012/13;
- Profile data on service users;
- Outcomes of complaints;
- Compliance with timescales;
- Learning lessons and service improvement.

Decision

The Annual Report was noted.

79. Strategic Financial Management Report as at 31 August 2013 *(Director of Child and Adult Services and Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the 2013/14 Forecast General Fund Outturn; 2013/14 Capital Programme Monitoring and provide details for the specific budget areas that this Committee is responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Child and Adult Services indicated that the latest report submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee on 18 October 2013 advised Members that there would be an overall underspend in the current year. The report also advised Members that this position reflected action taken by the Corporate Management Team to achieve underspends to help address the significant financial challenges facing the Council over the next few years and to fund one-off commitments not provided for in the approved 2013/14 budget as these items were not known at the time.

The agreed approach was that no specific decisions would be taken on the underspends until the details of the Government's grant settlement were known. It was likely that this would not be available to the Council until November/December. Members were advised of the overall budget position for Child and Adult Services by Committee, the reasons for the forecast outturn together with planned capital expenditure, as detailed in the report.

It was highlighted that as a result of the earlier timeframe and advancement of the Priority Schools Building Programme, the proposed works at Barnard Grove and Manor College of Technology were no longer required. In addition, the report listed a number of schemes where a significant health and safety risk was exposed, however it was highlighted that a contingency of £0.058m was currently uncommitted from this particular section of budget. The report included a number of revised budgets for the capital schemes for several schools which reflected a cost reduction of £0.112m which would be transferred to the 'Schools General – Unallocated' Capital budget.

The Chair acknowledged the funding being provided through the Priority Schools Building Programme to improve some of the schools in the town. It

was noted that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee exploring the potential for the remaining capital expenditure, including a site visit by Members as noted earlier in the minutes, should this be considered appropriate.

Decision

- (i) The report was noted.
- (ii) It was noted that the Barnard Grove and Manor College (as identified in Appendix B) were not required as a result of the earlier timeframe for the Priority Schools Building Programme.
- (iii) The health and safety works identified from the 'contingency' fund in paragraph 5.7 of the report were noted.
- (iv) The final budgets for the schemes outlined in paragraph 5.9 of the report were noted.

80. 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.

81. Letter from Iain Wright MP – Safety of World War II Gas Masks

The Chair brought to Members' attention a letter that had been received from Iain Wright MP for Hartlepool, which outlined a number of concerns with the safety of World War II gas masks. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Occupational Health and Safety had highlighted that World War II gas masks released asbestos fibres when placed over the face of when handled. It was noted that the Joint Union Asbestos Union had written to the Department for Education to highlight this matter.

In view of the up and coming celebrations of the centenary of World War I, it was suggested that this potential risk be highlighted to all Head Teachers. The Director of Child and Adult Services confirmed that this will be discussed at the Head Teachers Forum meeting and in addition to this, a letter outlining the risks will also be forwarded to all schools.

Decision

That the Director of Child and Adult Services highlight the potential risks associated with World War II gas masks to all Head Teachers at the forthcoming Forum meeting and through a letter to all schools.

The meeting concluded at 5.14pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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