

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

23 January 2014

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

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Allan Barclay was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Marjorie James and Councillor Paul Thompson was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Cath Hill.

Co-opted members:

Michael Lee

Young People's Representatives:

Shay Miah and Aimee Wilson

Also present:

Edwin Jeffries, HJTUC

Officers:

Dave Stubbs, Chief Executive

Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services

Dean Jackson, Assistant Director Education

John Mennear, Assistant Director, Community Services

David Ward, Head of Finance, Child, Adult Services and Public Health

Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **91. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cath Hill and Councillor Marjorie James.

### **92. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Sheila Griffin declared a prejudicial interest in minute 94 and indicated she would leave the meeting at that point. Councillor Paul Thompson declared a personal interest in minute 94. See also minute 98 for a further declaration of interest.

### **93. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2013**

Received.

**In accordance with her earlier declaration of interest, Councillor Sheila Griffin left the meeting at this point.**

### **94. Discretionary School Transport: Savings Options**

*(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

#### **Purpose of report**

To consider the proposed efficiency savings in relation to discretionary school transport following the consultation carried out by the local authority between November 2013 and January 2014 with The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College and St Teresa's RC Primary School.

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

The report provided a detailed background on discretionary school transport and outlined the Council's current Home to School Transport Policy. Statutory consultation on the future of discretionary school transport was undertaken, details of which were attached by way of appendices. A number of the concerns raised as part of the consultation were outlined in the report including a particular concern about the parents that had already applied to the schools for 2014 entry on the understanding that free discretionary school transport would be provided. The consultation response suggested that the schools wished to work with the Local Authority to manage a phased removal of Local Authority financial support for discretionary school transport over a five year period beginning September 2015 and replacing it with parental and/or school contributions.

In order to progress this, a number of options were provided for Members consideration and it was noted that all the options included the continuation of low-income transport. It was noted that Officers recommended Option 4. However, it was also noted that the 12 month delay in phasing out the current financial support for discretionary transport would result in the potential saving of £19,000 being lost. It was therefore suggested that the schools be requested to make a voluntary contribution of £9,500 towards the Council's savings target.

During the discussions that followed a Member sought clarification on the

actual level of saving that would be achieved should the Local Authority cease to support discretionary school transport. The Assistant Director, Education indicated that the level of savings to be achieved from this proposal would be in the region of approximately £130k. Members were aware that there would be some difficult decisions to be made in view of the current budget cuts facing the Council and reluctantly supported the proposal to cease financial support to the provision of discretionary school transport on a phased basis. It was noted that Option 4 was a compromise that was acceptable to both the schools and the Local Authority. It was highlighted that Option 4 provided the schools and the Local Authority with time to work together and progress an alternative way of providing transport at the most reasonable cost.

The Head Teacher from English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College was in attendance and indicated that whilst he was saddened at the loss of financial support for the discretionary school transport, he recognised the financial pressures currently faced by the Local Authority and was encouraged by the approach taken to delay implementation to enable further discussion on an alternative provision to be undertaken.

### **Decision**

- (i) Option 4 – the phased removal of Local Authority funded discretionary home to school transport from 2015 was approved, subject to a 50% contribution from the schools towards the Council's estimated 2014 savings shortfall of £19,000.
- (ii) The Local Authority and the Schools to develop an appropriate transport offer for Local Authority funded low income family places and parental and/or school funded additional places.
- (iii) That approval be sought from the Finance and Policy Committee to fund the savings shortfall in 2014/15 of £125,000 as detailed in the report.

**Councillor Sheila Griffin re-joined the meeting.**

## **95. Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2014-2015** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

To set out proposals for the strategic planning of local Youth Justice priorities in Hartlepool for 2014/15 and provide the Children's Services Committee with an opportunity to comment on the initial priorities identified

as part of the planning process.

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

The report provided the background to the national Youth Justice Performance Improvement Framework and the primary functions of the Youth Offending Services. It was noted that the planning framework to support the development of the 2014/15 Youth Justice Strategic Plan would draw upon the appraisal of the Youth Justice Boards Regional Partnership Manager, the local Youth Offending Service Strategic Management Board and the views and opinions of service users, staff and key partners. The timetable for approving the plan was set out in the report. Early planning had incorporated a review of progress made against last year's plan and performance and informed the initial priorities for 2014/15 which were included in the report. The local Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2014/15 will establish responsibility across the Youth Offending Service and the Youth Offending Strategic Board for taking each improvement activity forward within agreed timescales.

The Chair highlighted that he had suggested a young person's representative be included within the membership of the Youth Offending Service Management Board to ensure younger people's involvement in all aspects of decision making.

### **Decision**

The initial priorities identified as part of the planning process for the development of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2014/15 were noted.

## **96. Priority Schools Building Programme – Barnard Grove Primary School** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To update on the Department for Education (DfE) proposals for the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) and to seek agreement on increasing the pupil places at Barnard Grove Primary School from 300 places to 315 places.

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

The report provided the background to the PSPB along with an update on the current position. It was noted that Barnard Grove Primary School was one of the first schools in the NE2 batch to begin the design process. The proposal recommended that in view of pupil projection figures for future years and the current housing developments in the northern area of the town, that the number of places within the school be increased from 300 to 315 which would result in the Published Admission Number (PAN) being formally changed to 45 in line with the pupil projections for the school. The formal estimate from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for the provision of an additional 15 places as part of the PSBP was £86,784. This would be made up of £8,678 from school funds and £78,106 of Basic Need Funding which was carried forward from 2012/13 to meet the need for school places.

### **Decision**

The funding for the additional 15 places at Barnard Grove Primary School under the Priority Schools Building Programme was approved.

## **97. Carlton Outdoor Education Centre – Proposed Fees and Charges 2014-2015 and Evaluation Report Outcomes 2012-2013** *(Assistant Director, Community Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key decision.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the Committee with an update on service outcomes at Carlton Outdoor Education Centre for the period September 2012 to August 2013 and to highlight proposed fees and charges for the forthcoming financial and academic year 2014-2015.

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

The report provided the recent history to the operation and financial revival that had been achieved at the Carlton Centre and it was noted that Officers continue to work towards achieving a cost neutral budget base for the Centre. An Evaluation Report was attached at Appendix 1 and detailed the areas of the service that were monitored across a number of different categories. Overall it was highlighted that feedback showed 96% of respondents felt that the Centre offered an overall service/experience either

above or exceeding expectations. It was noted that this was a 10% increase in comparison with feedback from the previous year and Officers were congratulated by Members for their continuing hard work and commitment to the operation of the Centre.

Members were informed that the Carlton Steering Group had recently reviewed and considered the pricing for the forthcoming financial and academic years. It was noted that the fees and charges were significantly remodelled and introduced at the beginning of this current financial year and as the results of this remodelling had not yet been fully evaluated, it was proposed that a price freeze for 2014/15 would be justified. The proposed fees and charges which have the full support of the Carlton Trustees were attached at Appendix 2.

The Chair commended the staff for their dedication and expertise in making the Centre such a success and noted the importance of recognising the role of staff in maintaining the existence of such an important facility.

### **Decision**

- (i) The proposed fees and charges for the financial and academic years 2014/15 were approved.
- (ii) The outcomes of the Evaluation Report for the period September 2012 – August 2013 were noted.

## **98. Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 31 October 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 was responsible for.

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

The report provided the background and reporting arrangements for 2013/14. It was highlighted that there was a net forecast of uncommitted underspend at the year end of between £0.729m and £1.160m. This range had been reduced after reflecting the completion of further work to assess the year end position and the creation of a reserve to support the Local

Plan over the period 2014/15 and 2015/16. The 2013/14 Forecast General Fund Outturn for the Children's Services Committee's responsibilities was detailed in the report along with the planned capital expenditure for 2013/14.

Members were reminded of the delegated authority to the Child and Adult Services Department to allocate part of the identified £0.2m 'contingency' fund where a significant health and safety risk was exposed. In view of this, Members were asked to note that 'contingency' funding had been allocated to Lynnfield School for the erection of new secure fencing totalling £12,000 with the school agreeing to contribute £5,000.

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Simmons declared a personal interest in this item.

### **Decision**

- (i) The report was noted.
- (ii) The health and safety works identified from the 'contingency' fund at Lynnfield School be noted.

## **99. 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.

## **100. Any Other Business – GCSE Results 2013**

The Chair highlighted the recently publicity in relation to the pass results and good outcomes on GCSE results and congratulated the teaching staff, young people and school governors for their hard work in achieving these remarkable results.

The meeting concluded at 4:49 pm

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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