

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

11 March 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

Young people's representatives: Shay Miah

Officers: Gill Alexander, Director of Child and Adult Services
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education
David Ward, Head of Finance (Child, Adult Services and Public Health)
Laura Stones, Scrutiny Support Officer
Steve Hilton, Public Relations Officer
Helen Hadfield, Participation Worker
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

113. Apologies for Absence

The Chair submitted apologies on behalf the Co-opted Members whose term of office had recently expired. It was highlighted that the Chief Solicitor was currently exploring this issue with a view to co-ordinating terms of office of Co-opted Members with the Council's municipal year and this would be examined as part of the Constitutional Review.

114. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin and Chris Simmons declared personal interests in Minute 118.

115. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014

Received.

116. Nursery Provision in Seaton Carew – Outcome of Statutory Notice *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference CAS012/13.

Purpose of report

To inform Children's Services Committee of the outcome of the publication of the statutory notice on the proposed closure of Seaton Carew Nursery School and the extension of the age range of Holy Trinity CE Voluntary Aided Primary School from 4-11 year olds to 3-11 year olds.

To seek approval to the recommendations outlined in the report.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director reported on the background and outcome of the formal consultation process in relation to the proposed closure of Seaton Carew Nursery School and the extension of the age range of Holy Trinity CE Voluntary Aided Primary School. The report included the outcome of responses to the subsequent publication of the statutory public notice as well as the next steps in the process.

With regard to the financial considerations, the Committee was advised that in light of the submission made under the Priority Schools Building Programme for a new build at Holy Trinity, additional funding would need to be provided to support the development of a 26 FTE nursery provision on the Holy Trinity site. This had been reported to the Finance and Policy Committee on 19 September where it had been agreed that full Council approval would be sought if a decision was made to proceed with public notices.

The Committee noted that the Governing Body of Holy Trinity had agreed to pay a 10% contribution of the overall cost of the 26 place nursery places and Seaton Carew Nursery was no longer financially viable and was currently reliant upon additional Schools Forum funding which was only guaranteed until August 2014.

In response to a query raised by a Member, the Assistant Director confirmed that TUPE arrangements would apply for any remaining staff.

Members reiterated the reasons for the decision as outlined in previous meetings of this Committee which included surplus places at Seaton Carew

Nursery School, Ofsted report outcome requiring improvement, financial sustainability and replacement provision proposed at Holy Trinity offered quality early years provision with no loss of expertise or specialism.

Decision

- (i) That the outcomes of the statutory notice period in relation to the closure of Seaton Carew Nursery School and the extension of the age range of Holy Trinity CE Voluntary Aided Primary School from 4-11 year olds to 3-11 year olds be noted.
- (ii) The Committee approved the proposal to close Seaton Carew Nursery School and extend the age range of Holy Trinity CE Voluntary Aided Primary School from 4-11 year olds to 3-11 year olds and implement the proposals with effect from 31 August 2014.

117. Six Monthly Monitoring of Agreed Scrutiny Recommendations (*Scrutiny Manager*)

Type of decision

Non key decision.

Purpose of report

To provide Members with the six monthly progress made on the delivery of scrutiny recommendations that fell within the remit of this Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided details of progress made against the investigations undertaken by the previous Children's Services Scrutiny Forum. The report included a chart which provided the overall progress made against each scrutiny recommendation since the last six monthly monitoring report was presented to the Children's Services Committee in September 2013.

It was noted that five actions remained in progress and Members were asked to consider whether it was more appropriate to continue to monitor these through the Overview of Performance and Risk 2013/14 which was reported to the Finance and Policy Committee on a quarterly basis. If agreed, it was noted that this would complete the monitoring of scrutiny recommendations through this Committee.

In the discussion that followed, Members were of the view that this

Committee should continue to monitor scrutiny recommendations until such time as all outstanding actions were completed.

In relation to the investigation undertaken regarding closure of Youth Centres and Children's Centres, the young people's representative, who was in attendance at the meeting, sought feedback from the report that was submitted by the young people which the Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to explore following the meeting.

With regard to the JSNA investigation undertaken in relation to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing, the young people's representative indicated that the Youth Parliament would be keen to undertake some further research. The Chair highlighted the opportunity to present their findings to a future meeting of this Committee.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the remaining scrutiny actions continue to be monitored through the Children's Services Committee until such time as all outstanding actions were completed.
- (iii) That feedback be provided to the Young People in relation to the investigation undertaken regarding closure of Youth Centres and Children's Centres.
- (iv) That the findings from further research, to be undertaken by the Young People in relation to the topic of Emotional and Mental Wellbeing, be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

118. Hartlepool School Admission Arrangements for 2015/2016 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key decision

Purpose of report

During the Autumn Term the Local Authority consulted on a minor change to the admission arrangements for 2015/16. The report presented details of responses to the consultation and sought approval to set admission arrangements for 2015/16 with the Secretary of State on 15 April 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director reported on a proposed change to the definition of the distance criteria used for oversubscription in Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. The oversubscription criterion was only used when a school received more applications than places available. The distance criterion was used as a tie breaker to distinguish between applications.

The proposed changes were consulted upon, the outcome of which was provided, as set out in the report. It was noted that only two responses to the consultation had been received, both of which were in favour of the change.

The Assistant Director sought approval to a change to the definition of the admissions policy for entry to community and voluntary controlled primary schools in 2015/16. The proposed policy was as follows:-

Parents/carers are invited to express preference for up to three primary schools in order and give reasons for their preferences.

- In the first instance, places will be awarded to those pupils with a statement of special educational needs where the school is named in the statement.
- The remaining places will be awarded in the following priority order:
 - 1) *those children who are looked after children and previously looked after children (previously looked after children are children looked after, but ceased to be so because they were adopted or became subject to a residence order or special guardianship order);*
 - 2) *those children who have brothers or sisters who will be attending the school in September 2015;*
 - 3) *those children who live in the school's admission zone;*
 - 4) *those children who are distinguished from the great majority of other applicants whether on medical grounds or by other exceptional circumstances and who would suffer significant hardship if they were unable to attend the school;*
 - 5) *those children who live closest to the school as determined by a 'straight line' distance measurement from the (ordnance survey) address point of the child's home address to the (ordnance survey) address point of the school.*

The Assistant Director responded to issues raised by Members in relation to the admission arrangements and the proposed changes. Whilst Members welcomed the change to a straight line measuring system, a Member commented on the importance of young people utilising safe walking routes to school. The Chair referred to the Living Streets initiative and hoped that initiatives of this type would encourage young people to utilise the safest walking routes at all times.

Decision

That the proposed admission arrangements for 2015/16, as set out above, be approved for submission to the Secretary of State.

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

Type of decision

Non key decision.

Purpose of report

The report informed Members of the 2013/14 Forecast General Fund Outturn; 2013/14 Capital Programme Monitoring, and provided details for the specific budget areas that the Committee was responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Finance (Child, Adult Services and Public Health) indicated that a report had been submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee on 27 February 2014 and the report advised Members that there would be an overall underspend at the year end of between £0.729m and £1.160m. As a minimum the lower forecast 2013/14 uncommitted underspend of £0.729m should be available to support the Medium Term Financial Strategy over the period 2014/15 and 2016/17 and this had been taken into account in the final Medium Term Financial Strategy Report presented to Finance and Policy on 31 January 2014.

Members were referred to the overall budget position for Children's Services, the reasons for the forecast outturn, planned use of reserves together with details of the capital programme, as set out in the report.

Members' retrospective approval was sought in relation to urgent roof and lintel works at Rossmere School at an estimated cost of £9,000 and the roof overlay scheme at High Tunstall College of Science at an estimated cost of

£90,000, details of which were included in the report.

Decision

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That retrospective approval be granted for the roof and lintel works at Rossmere School and the roof overlay scheme at High Tunstall College of Science.

120. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Chair advised that the next meeting scheduled to take place on Tuesday 1 April had been rescheduled and would now be held on Monday 31 March at 4.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.35 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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