

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

31 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.

Co-opted Member: Michael Lee

Young people's representatives:

Shay Miah, Sara Razzaq, Bilaal Saddiq, Robyn Reid, Rebecca Hanlon, Jannot Khanum

Officers: Gill Alexander, Director of Child and Adult Services
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education
Jane Young, Head of Business Unit Manager (Resources and Specialist Services)
Danielle Swainston, Head of Access and Strategic Planning
Hayley Martin, Administrative and Constitutional Solicitor
Naomi Ward, Participation Worker
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

121. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Kelly Atkinson.

122. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Simmons declared a personal interest in Minute 126, Councillor Fleet declared a personal interest in Minute 128 and Councillor James declared a personal interest in Minute 130.

123. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2014

Received.

124. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following item 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.

125. Any Other Business – Education Representatives

Type of decision

Non-key decision

Purpose of report

To consider the status and arrangements for appointments of education representatives upon the Children's Services Committee when that Committee discharges education functions. To assist the Council in the formulation of its recommendations in its review of the Council's Constitution in conjunction with the report to be presented to Council on 3 April 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information on the regulations and arrangements for appointments of education representatives upon the Children's Services Committee when discharging education functions and the voting rights of these representatives. The Regulations were prescriptive insofar that each local authority must appoint at least two and no more than five Parent Governor representatives to each Committee or Sub-Committee in dealing with education issues. The Council's constitution arrangements made provision for the appointment of three such representatives. The term of office for Parent Governor representatives should be not less than two but no more than four years. In respect of education representatives from a diocesan body, regulations provided that a committee exercising education functions should have at least one diocesan representative. The Council's Constitution allowed for two such representatives. There was no defined term of office for a representative appointed from a diocesan body but generally appointments were made for a period of four years.

It was noted that local authorities had a general power to co-opt individuals from outside their membership for any Committee, other than a Committee "for regulating or controlling finance", details of which were included in the

report. Whilst the power to co-opt rested with full Council and not with Committees, the selection of persons to act as co-opted Members could be left to the discretion of a Committee.

Members, views were sought as to whether recommendations should be made to Council to permit co-option of individuals as part of the Constitution Review to be considered by Council on 3 April 2014.

In the discussion that followed Members were of the view that the current education representatives should be reappointed to this Committee. Given that the current education representatives term of office had expired in January, it was suggested that their future term of office should be aligned with the Council's municipal year. With regard to the current co-option arrangements resting with Council, the Committee suggested that authority be delegated to this Committee to appoint such additional Co-optees (outside the definition of 'education representatives') as required. The Committee requested that their recommendations be considered as part of the Constitution Review.

Decision

- (i) That the Committee would support the reappointment of the current education representatives to the Committee.
- (ii) That the term of office of education representatives be aligned with the Council's municipal year.
- (iii) That Council be asked to delegate authority to this Committee to appoint such additional Co-optees (outside the current definition of 'education representatives') as required.

126. 2014/15 Schools' Capital Works Programme (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference CAS 024/14.

Purpose of report

To seek approval to the Schools' Capital Works Programme for 2014/15, as detailed in confidential Appendix 1 in order to progress the majority of works in time for them to be carried out during the summer holiday period. **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).

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to funding allocations which included details of universal free school meals initiative, capital allocations, capital maintenance/devolved formula capital, dedicated schools grant. In relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant it was noted that the Schools Forum had recommended that this funding should be treated separately to the Capital Maintenance Grant funding as all schools were eligible to access it. Details of which schools would benefit from this funding would be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

Members were advised that a new phase of school roof surveys had been commissioned by the Child and Adult Services Department and, as a result of the intrusive surveys and data obtained a number of high priority roofing schemes had been identified, details of which were set out in a confidential appendix 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 schedule of priorities, had highlighted priorities across a wide range of issues. The schemes had been provisionally costed and an explanation of prioritisation categories was provided, as set out in the report.

Approval was sought to fund these schemes from the 2014/15 Capital Maintenance allocation of £878,528 and the unallocated funding of £835,000. Schools would be expected to contribute 10% towards each scheme. The total funding available was £1,876,857. Whilst Members were asked to approve works totalling £1,884,294 which slightly exceeded the available funding, all schemes had a contingency figure built into the cost and, therefore, officers were confident that the programme was affordable.

With regard to the request for the Committee's approval to allow the Director of Child and Adult Services dispensation and discretion to authorise works where a significant health and safety risk was exposed in the advance of formal approval by the Children's Services Committee, whilst Members were happy to support this recommendation, the Committee was of the view that any dispensation and discretion to authorise works of this type should be undertaken in consultation with the Chair of this Committee.

Decision

- (i) The Committee approved the schedule of 2014/15 capital works as summarised in a confidential appendix 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).**
- (ii) That the Director of Child and Adult Services, in consultation with the Chair be allowed dispensation and discretion to authorise works where a significant health and safety risk was exposed in advance of formal approval by the Children's Services Committee.

127. **Short Breaks Services Statement** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To present to the Committee the 2014/15 Short Breaks Services Statement and seek approval for the Statement to be published in accordance with the regulations.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Business Unit (Resources) reported on the background and requirement of local authorities to provide a short break service designed to assist individuals who provided care for disabled children. The regulations required each local authority to produce a Short Breaks Services Statement so that families were aware what services were available, the eligibility criteria for those services and how the range of short breaks were designed to meet the needs of local families with disabled children. A copy of the revised Short Breaks Services Statement was submitted with the report and had been prepared in collaboration with parents, carers, specialist providers and groups, as set out in the report.

The Chair referred to the recent 1 Future, 1 Hart, 1 Mind Conference and welcomed the level of involvement and engagement with parents. A Member commented on the benefits of building relationships at events of

this type and suggested that all Members of the Children's Services Committee be given the opportunity to attend future conferences.

Decision

That the reviewed Short Breaks Services Statement be approved.

128. Adoption Reforms *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with an update on the Department for Education Adoption Reform agenda and to seek agreement for the proposed expenditure of the 2014-2015 Adoption Reform Grant and increase the adoption fee charged by Hartlepool Borough Council.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was reported that in 2013-14 the Government had allocated £150 million to local authorities to implement system improvement in line with the initiatives announced in the Action Plan for Adoption. The Adoption Reform Grant came in two parts, Part A was an allocation of £100m of which Hartlepool received £169,978 and Part B which was £50m (ring fenced), of which Hartlepool received £166,420.

The proposals for expenditure of the grant funding had been presented to this Committee on 2 July 2013, a summary of which was included in the report. Since the implementation of the proposals, the service had made strong progress in terms of strengthening local practice in relation to adoption and this had been recognised by Ofsted during their inspection. Two additional one year fixed term posts were filled. However, due to the long term sickness of a permanent member of staff this did not significantly increase the capacity within the team. Despite this, the service had successfully implemented the two stage adoption process and was meeting the six month timescale for approval.

The Committee was advised that Hartlepool's Reform Grant for 2014-15 was £100,000 and it was proposed that this be used to fund a number of activities as detailed in the report. Activities included maintaining the dedicated Family Finder role, creating a part time development worker post with consideration being given to creating an internship and providing additional funding to the placement budget which would enable the service

to purchase external placements where necessary.

As part of the wide ranging proposals to reform adoption a review of the interagency fee for purchasing adoptive placements had been undertaken and the Government had proposed that adoption fees with the local authority be increased from £13,138 to £27,000 to the same rate for the purchase of placement from Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Some concerns were expressed that the full benefits of additional resources had been lost as a result of long term sickness absence. The Chair welcomed the recognition of the service in a recent Ofsted report and was keen to see the high levels of performance continue without the additional pressures of long term sickness absence.

Decision

- (i) The Committee noted receipt of the Adoption Reform Grant.
- (ii) That the proposals for expenditure of the Adoption Reform Grant, as set out in the report, be approved.
- (iii) That the adoption placement fee charged by the local authority be increased to £27,000.

129. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Update 2013-2014 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on local authorities to publish a childcare sufficiency assessment on a three yearly cycle. The Childcare Act 2006 also sets out a requirement for local authorities to publish an update of the childcare sufficiency assessment annually. The attached document (Appendix A) was an update of the childcare sufficiency assessment. A full assessment will need to be published in April 2015 if legislation continued to require this.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report outlined the background to the requirement to publish a childcare sufficiency assessment on a three yearly cycle and to publish an update annually, a copy of which was attached as an appendix to the report. Members were referred to the definition of 'sufficient' childcare within a local context, together with the key findings from the Childcare

Sufficiency Assessment Update 2013-14 as detailed in the report.

A number of actions for 2014/15 had been identified through the assessment, details of which were provided.

In the discussion that followed presentation of the report, a Member commented on the need for the Council to be actively recruiting child minders. In response, it was reported that there were currently 12 child minders in post and whilst it was acknowledged that more child minders in disadvantaged areas were needed, work was currently ongoing with the Job Centre to pursue this with parents of young children and arrangements would be made to further explore this issue. The Chair was pleased to note that work was ongoing with schools, private providers and childminders to ensure adequate childcare provision and achievable targets

Decision

That the publication of the childcare sufficiency update 2013-14 be approved.

130. Priority Schools Building Programme - Update (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the Department for Education (DfE) proposals for the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP).

Issue(s) for consideration

The report included the background to the programme including details of the three Hartlepool schools that were part of the North East 2 (NE2) Capital batch of schools benefiting from the (PSBP), namely:-

Manor College of Technology;
Barnard Grove Primary School; and
Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School.

A detailed progress update by school was included in the report. In relation to Barnard Grove Primary School, the current plan showed a decant into the new build as April/May 2015 with the project fully completed by October 2015. With regard to Manor College, the current plan showed the decant in

to the new build as March/April 2016 with the project fully completed by September 2016. The first Client Engagement Meeting at Holy Trinity CE Primary School was scheduled for 25 February. However, this had been postponed due to the complexities and constraints of the site. Further discussions were held with Council Officers and the Education Funding Agency to discuss the options available to progress to the next phase of the programme and it was anticipated that the Client Engagement Meetings would commence shortly.

A Member sought assurances that there would be no further slippage on progress at Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School. The Director of Child and Adult Services advised that a meeting had taken place with the EFA and it was envisaged that as a result of a change in the position of the new building Sport England were happy with the proposals and there would be no change to the original timescales for completion. Officers responded to further queries raised by Members in relation to the programme.

Decision

- (i) The report was noted.
- (ii) That further reports be submitted as the Priority Schools Building Programme progressed.

131. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Schools *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform the Committee of the developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)/Computing in schools in preparation for the revised National Curriculum, September 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided information regarding the Government funded schemes to support ICT in schools since the Education Reform Act 1988. Whilst remaining a compulsory subject, the national curriculum programmes of study for ICT were applied with effect from 1 September 2012 in preparation for the revised programmes of study for ICT, renamed computing, which would come into force in September 2014.

With regard to proposals, the Education Department would provide

additional support to both primary and secondary schools in order to ensure they successfully met all the requirements of the new Computing Curriculum. It was proposed that the Education Department would re-establish a working group of head teachers and/or ICT co-ordinators from schools to consider how best to establish a digital learning environment for all young people in Hartlepool that utilised the newest technologies. The Education Department would establish the robustness of current wireless networks in schools and particularly in primary schools to determine whether or not a Council tendering process needed to be undertaken in order to upgrade/procure wireless networks on behalf of schools. The Hartlepool Education Commission would consider the digital curriculum as part of its deliberations.

A lengthy discussion ensued during which the Committee debated the issue of current wireless network problems in schools and the value of re-establishing a Working Group was questioned. It was suggested that a Task and Finish Group as opposed to a Working Group would be a more appropriate approach.

A view was expressed that there was a potential opportunity for the Council to market their ICT/wireless services to schools and requested that this issue be further explored.

It was noted that the changes to the curriculum provided an opportunity for joint working and the benefits of sharing ideas were outlined. The Chair referred to the demise of Subject Groups in secondary schools whereupon schools met to discuss subjects across the curriculum to which the advantages of this approach were shared with the Committee. Whilst the benefits of this approach were acknowledged, the Director of Child and Adult Services stated that nominated advisors for each subject was no longer an option. However, support for Subject Leaders was currently being explored by officers as a priority of the programme going forward.

Decision

That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted and further explored as appropriate.

132. Services to Schools/Academies (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non key-decision.

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Committee with information on:
 - The implementation of the Services to Academies/Schools' website;
 - The Council's Service Level Agreements to schools and academies;
 - The support service available to schools considering Academy conversion.
2. To consider the proposal to require converting schools to meet the Council's transitional costs for their conversion to Academy status and to consider the level of charge to be made.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education presented the report, an amended copy of which was tabled at the meeting. The main changes/additions to the report together with the reasons for the changes were provided.

The report provided the Committee with information on the services available to academies and all education establishments including website access arrangements, the Council's modernised approach to Service Level Agreements and service delivery together with the support available to those schools considering conversion to Academy status.

The views of the Education Representative were sought in relation to the proposal that all converting schools be charged between £2,500 and £3,000 to recover any costs associated with conversion. The Education Representative expressed some concern regarding proposed charging arrangements and commented on the importance of financial clarity for schools and the need to inform schools in advance of costs to facilitate the budget planning process. Disappointment was raised that the proposed costs to schools were being incurred for HR and Legal Services for which a Service Level Agreement was in place. Whilst acknowledging such concerns, the Chair outlined the changes to the financial arrangements and the Council's loss of income as a result of conversion to Academy status and emphasised the importance of the Council recovering any costs incurred.

Following comments in relation to the option for academies to buy-back Council services, the Chair advised that there would be an opportunity to

discuss this issue in more detail at a future meeting of this Committee.

In relation to the request for approval of converting schools meeting the Council's transitional costs for the conversion to Academy status at a charge of between £2,500 and £3,000, a Member questioned the lack of clarity in terms of the charge and was of the view that consultation should take place with schools as to how the costs had been calculated. The Director of Child and Adult Services explained at length the complexity of funding allocations, financial arrangements and the reasons for recovery of conversion costs as well as how the figures had been identified. The importance of ensuring greater clarity in terms of the charging framework was also acknowledged.

Decision

- (i) That progress made in modernising the Council's approach to Service Level Agreements and service delivery be noted.
- (ii) That the proposal to require converting schools to meet the Council's transitional costs for the conversion to Academy status be approved.
- (iii) That recovery of actual costs relating to the conversion process to Academy status, which may be in the region of £2,500 and £3,000, be approved and details of how those costs had been incurred be provided to schools.
- (iv) It was noted that a report detailing the charging framework for academies would be taken to the next meeting of the Children's Services Committee setting out the Council's proposed policy in relation to Academy charges in order to bring greater financial clarity for schools that are, or are considering becoming academies.

134. Curriculum 5-14 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with an update of how schools were preparing to carry out their statutory duties around implementing the content of the new National Curriculum from September 2014 in Key Stages 1 to 3, ie for children aged 5-14 years old.

To provide the Committee with an update of how schools were preparing to access children's progress against the attainment targets in the new National Curriculum from September 2014 in Key Stages 1 to 3.

To provide the Committee with an update on how Local Authority Officers had supported schools through these two processes so far.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report updated the Committee on the background to the statutory duties upon local authorities, how schools were preparing to carry out their statutory duties around implementing the content of the new National Curriculum from September 2014 in Key Stages 1 to 3, how schools were preparing to assess children's progress against attainment targets in the new National Curriculum as well as how officers had supported schools through these processes so far.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted.

132. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 6 May at 4.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.35 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 7 APRIL 2014