

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

6 May 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 Alison Lilley was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Kelly Atkinson.

Co-opted members:  
Michael Lee

Young people's representatives:  
Shay Miah

Officers: Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education  
Damien Wilson, Assistant Director, Regeneration Services  
Mark Smith, Head of Youth Support Services  
Jane Young, Head of Business Unit, Specialist Services  
Patrick Wilson, Employment Development Officer  
Helen White, Participation Manager  
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## **133. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kelly Atkinson.

## **134. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Mary Fleet declared a personal interest in minute 137 and Councillor Marjorie James declared a personal interest in minute 141.

## **135. Minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2014**

Received.

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

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

To present the final draft of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2014/15 attached at Appendix 1 prior to the Plan being considered by Council in June 2014.

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

The report provided the background to the national Youth Justice Performance Framework which was the Youth Justice Board's primary tool for monitoring and securing improvement across Youth Offending Services in England and Wales. The planning framework to support the development of the 2014/15 Youth Justice Strategic Plan for Hartlepool had drawn upon the appraisal of the Youth Justice Board's Regional Partnership Manager, the local Youth Offending Service Strategic Management Board and the views and opinions of service users, staff and key partners. In addition, the Plan has incorporated recommendations from the Children's Services Committee, views of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership Executive Group and the current scrutiny investigation into re-offending in Hartlepool.

It was proposed that the Youth Offending Service and broader Youth Justice Partnership focus on a number of key strategic objectives during 2014/15 and these were outlined in the report. It was highlighted that the local Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2014/15 would establish responsibility across the Youth Offending Service and the Youth Offending Strategic Board for taking each improvement activity forward within agreed timescales.

The Chair commented that the Local Authority should be justly proud of the progress made with plans for young people and young offenders as highlighted in the short quality screening inspection. However, Members concerns were reiterated at the transfer of the youth court to Teesside and the fact that this transfer was making it more difficult for young people to attend court. It was suggested that the impact of the transfer of the youth court to Teesside should be monitored and reported back to the Committee in approximately 6 months time for Members' consideration. Members highlighted a number of potential problems with the transfer of this service, including the time pressures placed on youth workers who support the young people through travelling to and from Teesside as this may lead to additional pressures through the lack of support available to other families

in need.

Whilst acknowledging the financial pressures currently being faced by Cleveland Police, Members were disappointed to note that the 'in kind staffing contribution' of £36,000 for one Police Officer was the only financial contribution offered at this time. The Chair hoped that this contribution would be reviewed and reassessed.

A discussion ensued on the financial implications for the Local Authority of the transfer of the youth court to Teesside and it was recognised that whilst the Youth Court Service were achieving financial savings through the transfer, additional costs were falling to the Local Authority such as the cost of transport for the young people. A Member suggested that the Youth Court Service could provide a 'bus pass/ticket' for the young person who had to attend court at Teesside.

A young persons' representative sought clarification on the consultation undertaken. The Head of Youth Support Services indicated that around 40 young people and their families who had historically had an involvement with the youth justice system were approached to take part in the consultation with approximately 45% of responses received. The responses received had helped inform the objectives of the Plan and highlighted that the respondents clearly valued the current services in place.

### **Decision**

That the Youth Justice Plan for 2014/15 be ratified prior to being considered by Council in June 2014.

## **137. Adoption Annual Report 2013/14 and Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2014/15** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To present the Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2013/14 and the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose for 2014/15.

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

The report provided the background to the work of the Adoption Services

which was subject to National Minimum Standards together with regulations for adoption and the placement of children looked after. The Standards require the service to produce a Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide for adoption services and to review these at least annually. The Annual Report and Statement of Purpose were attached by way of Appendix.

The Head of Business Unit, Specialist Services presented the priorities for 2014/15 as outlined in the Annual Report which noted how the service would strive to deliver continuous improvement through the implementation of those priorities. It was highlighted that the BAAF two stage assessment process, post adoption support and Child Appreciation Days had been particularly successful in continuing to recruit potential adopters and meet demand.

In relation to the Statement of Purposes, the Head of Business Unit highlighted that there had been some changes to the staffing structure that had made an impact on the service but that these changes had been managed well.

The Chair wished to pass on the thanks of the Committee to the Team for being ahead of the game and being prepared for the implementation of the new Regulations in relation to the adoption service. The Chair highlighted the testimonies included at the end of the Annual Report from adoptive parents which showed the professional yet sensitive way that the process to adopt was undertaken. In addition, the Chair noted that the booklet that was provided for children and young people about the adoption process was excellent and very child friendly.

### **Decision**

- (i) The Adoption Agency Annual Report was noted.
- (ii) The Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide were approved in line with the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.

## **138. 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**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval to the action plan to address the areas for improvement

identified in the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

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

The report provided the background to the Inspection which commenced on 20 November and concluded on 11 December 2013. The specific areas of practice that were included within the scope of the Inspection were listed in the report. It was highlighted that the overall judgement of the Inspection was 'good'. There were some areas highlighted for development during the Inspection and these areas were already being looked at and the timescales for this were included in the report. The Inspection required an action plan to be submitted to Ofsted within 70 days of the publication of the report and this was attached at Appendix 1.

The Chair thanked all Officers involved in the Inspection and the services that were part of the inspection for all their hard work and commitment to ensure this service was operating effectively and efficiently.

### **Decision**

That the action plan be approved for submission to Ofsted.

## **139. Update on Hartlepool Youth Investment Project** *(Assistant Director, Regeneration)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

To update Members on the progress of the Hartlepool Youth Investment Project.

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

The report provided the background, the aim and objectives of the Hartlepool Youth Investment Project. There were eight key actions and targets required for full implementation of the Project and these were noted in the report.

Since the implementation of the Project there had been significant progress made and the Employment Development Officer highlighted a number of areas including the creation of a Hartlepool Youth Guarantee Working

Group which included the Chair of the Children's Services Committee within its membership. It was noted that the Youth Unemployment rate had reduced from 17% in September 2012 to 11.5% at the current time which was a reduction of 455 young people. Members were informed that the Council, supported by Stockton Borough Council, had secured £2.1m of European Social Fund (ESF)/Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding to support 1,022 14-19 year olds across Tees Valley who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. In addition a further £3.5m of ESF/ESA funding had been secured to deliver the Tees Valley Workforce Skills project which will upskill over 3000 employed adults aged of 19 plus.

The Employee Development Officer informed Members of the 'Employer Core Officer' project which brought together JCP, NAS and the National Careers Service to promote business support services with a target of supporting 200 people into employment from April 2014 to March 2015.

The Chair noted the significant challenges faced by the Local Authority as outlined in the report and the fact that additional business and industry needed to be attracted secure further investment in the Town. A Member commented that as people were leaving the Town to seek employment, elderly relatives were left alone and in need of support from the Local Authority which impacted society in the longer term.

A Member highlighted that as young people were required to remain in full time education until they were almost 19 years old the NEET figure would reduce although this would not be a true reflection of the actual figures. The importance of the Children's Strategic Partnership working together with all agencies making a full contribution was reiterated.

### **Decision**

The report was noted.

## **140. 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.

## **141. Any Other Business – Priority Schools Building Programme** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To request authorisation for the Chief Executive to sign the Back to Back Agreements on behalf of the Council as part of the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP).

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

The report provided the background to the North East 2 (NE2) Capital batch of schools benefitting from the PSBP, namely Barnard Grove Primary School, Holy Trinity CE Primary School and Manor College of Technology. On 22 April the Council received a request from the EFA to approve and sign a Back to Back agreement for each of the PSBP Hartlepool schemes. The agreements need to be signed by the Council, each school Headteacher and the Chair of Governors prior to the contract close. The agreements form part of the contract between the Secretary of State and the chosen developer, Kier Construction.

### **Decision**

That the Chief Executive be authorised to sign the Back to Back agreements on behalf of the Council for each Hartlepool scheme.

The meeting concluded at 4.47 pm

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 12 May 2014**