

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

12 August 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, Ged Hall and John Lauderdale

Young people's representatives:

Shay Miah, Hollie Lowery, Josh Scott and Ryan Jewson

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Jonathan Brash was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Geoff Lilley.

Also present:

Councillors Alan Clark, Keith Dawkins and Geoff Lilley.

Officers:

Gill Alexander, Director of Child and Adult Services

Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education

Wendy Rudd, Head of Business Unit

Christine Croft, Family Placement, Team Manager

Beth Storey, Youth Work Manager

Helen Hadfield, Participation Worker

Laura Stones, Scrutiny Support Officer

Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

21. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geoff Lilley and Brenda Loynes.

22. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jonathan Brash declared a personal interest in minute 24.

23. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2014

Received.

24. Savings Programme *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To identify proposals for the delivery of savings across Children and Education Services as part of the 2015/16 budget process.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the budget process agreed for 2015/16. The savings target for the Child and Adult Services Department Savings Programme for 2015/16 was currently forecast at £2.86m. In addition, the Department was facing ongoing pressure for demand-led services as a result of increasing and high levels of need within families.

Further detail on the proposals within the Children's Services Division and the Education Services Division were included in the report proposals across the following areas:

- Integration of Early Help and Intervention Services across social care, education and public health 0-19
- Looked After Children Costs
- Review of 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Assessment Arrangements and Complex Needs Services
- Pre-Retirement Costs
- Strategic Planning and Asset Management

Members expressed significant concerns at the proposal to 'outsource' the core youth provision to the voluntary and community sector. A discussion ensued on the recorded outcomes of the Local Authority provided youth service which had significantly higher recorded outcomes and was more cost effective than the community and voluntary sector provision. In response to a question about consultation with young people, the Chair confirmed that the Children's Strategic Partnership had created a Task and Finish Group to work alongside the community and voluntary sector as well as the Council's Youth Service to create a questionnaire that would be distributed to children and young people at the beginning of the September 2014 school term. This was in addition to consultation that had already taken place with the primary sector in July. The results of the consultation would be reported to the Children's Strategic Partnership and this Committee later in the year.

The Director of Child and Adult Services indicated that this was the early

stages of the consideration of the savings proposals with further reports to be submitted to the Committee with more detail including suggested alternatives to bridge the budget gap within Child and Adult Services. Both the Chair and the Director of Child and Adult Services confirmed that there were no current plans to close any Council run youth centres and that the savings proposals were to be considered with a view to protecting front line services and achieving best value. However, it was noted that there would be some difficult decisions to be made as there had to be £1m removed from the Early Intervention Services within the current framework.

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

The Chair clarified the difference in youth work provision between the community and voluntary sector and Council run youth service who both undertake exceptional work which needed to be preserved. However, it was hoped that further consideration of this provision would sharpen the focus on the direction young people would like to go in. It was noted that Members reluctantly supported the savings proposals, however, it was requested that further detailed information on the proposal to 'outsource' the core youth provision along with alternative proposals be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration before the final savings proposals were submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee.

The Chair invited several members of the public to address the Committee and they expressed a number of concerns at the potential outsourcing of the core youth provision. The value of the current youth service provision was highlighted as this supported vulnerable young people who may be experiencing poverty or be from disadvantaged backgrounds with low confidence and self-esteem. The current provision supported these young people to develop lifestyle skills to prepare for adult life through building based work, mobile provision, extended services within schools, youth forums, residential work and peer group education projects. It was highlighted that the youth service provision had received recognition from Ofsted as being one of the best performing youth services within the north east.

The Director of Child and Adult Services commented that she firmly believed that the Local Authority had a key role to play as a direct provider of the youth service and that this was an opportunity to explore the potential of working effectively in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. It was noted that whilst the Local Authority had to implement nearly 30% of efficiencies in service provision which will result in additional pressure being placed on all valued services, it was committed to continuing with the youth service that had been recognised as one of the best in the region.

The Chair concluded that as a result of the discussions noted above and the very valuable contributions from members of public in attendance, the Committee were left with no doubt that there was a great need for a youth

service provision in Hartlepool and invited everyone to attend the meeting of the Committee where alternative savings proposals would be considered.

There was a brief adjournment to enable the members of the public in attendance for the consideration of the core youth service provision to leave the meeting.

The Chair sought clarification, on behalf of a Member who was unable to attend, on the payment of transport costs for young people who were attending school out of town. The Director of Child and Adult Services confirmed that this issue would be covered by the Home to School Transport Policy which was set by legislation whereby the cost of a child's transport to an appropriate school would be met by the Local Authority should the distance from home to school exceed three miles. A further detailed response would be circulated to that Member direct.

There was some concern expressed by Members that the target to reduce the number of children in care during 2015/16 was ambitious. The Director of Child and Adult Services confirmed that the focus on early intervention services in a more targeted way for children on the edge of care would bring positive benefits and was already underway through the recent remodelling of services. The Director commented that if early intervention was more targeted, the number of children in care would reduce. The Chair questioned whether the impact of the recent welfare reform changes had been factored into this target. The Director of Child and Adult Services indicated that an analysis on the pressures had been undertaken and it was noted that welfare reform was not the only factor with the number of children within the family being a significant pressure on the welfare of the family.

Members were asked to note that the Child and Adult Services Departmental budget was a demand-led budget and alternative ways of dealing with the demand was needed through performance management to ensure families' needs were recognised earlier. The Director confirmed that a recent first round bid for funding of £750k from the Government's 'Transformation Challenge' fund had been successful and had progressed to the second stage. There were concerns expressed by a Member that more early intervention would result in more children being taken into care and placing additional pressure on what was a top performing service. The Fostering Services Manager commented that care planning and early intervention can result in positive outcomes by ensuring the right people were involved with the right families at the right time. However, whilst it would be very challenging and ambitious, the importance of working with the parents to find a solution was reiterated.

Decision

- (i) That Members comments above be noted and used to formulate a response to the Finance and Policy Committee.
- (ii) As part of the budget considerations, the Committee requested further detailed information, including alternative proposals on the outsourcing of the core youth provision, be submitted to a future meeting of the Children's Services Committee.
- (iii) That the Director of Child and Adult Services provide a detailed response to be forwarded to Councillor Brenda Loynes on the question relating to Home to School Transport.

25. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Transitional Arrangements *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) applies – Forward Plan Reference CAS 33/14.

Purpose of report

To set out the arrangements to support the transition to the new system of support for children and young people with SEND.

Issue(s) for consideration

The new arrangements for children and young people with SEND include:

- An integrated streamlined assessment process which better involved children, young people and their families and is completed more quickly;
- Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans which bring services together and are focussed on improving outcomes;
- The offer of a personal budget for families with an EHC plan who want one.

It was noted that as a Pathfinder authority, Hartlepool had undertaken all new assessments under the new arrangements since September 2013 and was referred to on the Department for Education's website as an example of good practice. The report highlighted that children and young people with statements and young people in further education or training who were receiving additional provision to meet their special education needs as the result of a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) would be gradually transferred to the new arrangements and this process had already begun.

In relation to financial arrangements, Members were asked to note that the Government had recognised the new burdens placed on local authorities as a result of the SEND reforms and had allocated additional funding to help meet these burdens.

Decision

The transitional arrangements as outlined in the report were approved.

26. Children Looked After Strategy 2014-2017 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek ratification to the final draft of the Children Looked After Strategy 2014-2017 and approve its implementation.

Issue(s) for consideration

The final draft of the Children Looked After Strategy 2014-2017 was attached to the report by way of appendix. The Strategy had been considered by the Corporate Parent Forum and Children's Strategic Partnership as well as Local Authority staff and foster carers. In addition, the Children in Care Council had participated in the development of the Strategy and had approved the final document.

The Chair acknowledged the shift within the Strategy from being reactive to a proactive approach for looked after and edge of care children through early intervention service provision as well as closer working with Think Families, Think Communities programme.

Decision

- (i) The Children Looked After Strategy 2014-2017 was approved for implementation.
- (ii) That the Children's Services Committee receive an annual report on the implementation of the Strategy to enable Members to exercise scrutiny and oversight of delivery.

27. To Approve the Reconstitution of the Governing Body of Rossmere Primary School and Instrument of Government *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek approval to the reconstitution of the Governing Body of Rossmere Primary School and the Instrument of Government in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended by the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was noted that the Governing Body of Rossmere Primary School proposed to reduce the size of the present Governing Body from 17 to 11 Governors due to the longstanding vacancies. The process of appointing Governors introduced under the Constitution Regulation was outlined in the report. The revised constitution would include:

- 5 co-opted Governors
- 1 Local Authority Governor
- 3 Parent Governors
- 1 Staff Governor
- 1 Head Teacher

The term of office for all Governors would be four years with the exception of Parent Governors who would serve for a period of two years.

The Chair highlighted that all schools had to reconstitute their governing bodies and it had been suggested that a termly report be submitted for approval to the Committee detailing which schools had implemented the new arrangements.

Decision

- (i) The reconstitution of the Governing Body for Rossmere Primary School under the School Governance (Constitution and Federation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations and revised Instrument of Government with effect from 1 September 2014 be approved.
- (ii) That a termly report be submitted to the Committee including details of

which schools had implemented the new arrangements for their Governing Bodies for approval.

28. Fostering Services Annual Report 2013/2014 and Statement of Purpose 2014/2015 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

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

Issue(s) for consideration

The Annual Report provided details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff and foster carers, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective foster carers, and the priorities for further service development in 2014/15.

The Chair congratulated the staff within the Fostering Service for an excellent report.

Decision

The Fostering Annual Report was approved for publication and the Statement of Purposes was approved in line with the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.

29. School Term and Holiday Dates 2015-2016 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek agreement to the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2015/16.

To seek agreement to recommend these dates to governing bodies of Aided and Foundation Schools and Academies in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

The pattern proposed for 2015/16 provided an 'envelope' of 195 days with five days designated by the school as Professional Development (PD) which were provided for within the Conditions of Service. Consultation had been undertaken with north east representatives, all the Head Teachers in Hartlepool and relevant professional associations and unions. The general consensus from the Local Authorities was to adopt the model attached at Appendix 1 for 2015/16.

The Chair confirmed that Community and Controlled Schools could set and publish their own term dates subject to the approval of the local authority. The Chair stressed the importance of making it clear in any publication and, in particular, the Council's website, that these were indicative term dates for schools and that parents should check with their individual Schools for confirmation of holiday dates.

Decision

- (i) The schedule of term dates and holiday dates for 2015/16 for Community and Controlled Schools were approved as shown in Appendix 1.
- (ii) That the schedule of term and holiday dates for 2015/16 be recommended to governing bodies of all Voluntary Aided, Foundation Schools and Academies in Hartlepool.

30. Holocaust Memorial Project *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the on-going work being carried out in relation to Holocaust Memorial activities in preparation for Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January 2015 which is themed 'Keep the Memory Alive'.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were informed that the Youth Support Service had been approached by the Holocaust Memorial Trust alongside the Council's Education Division to support the development of a series of Holocaust events in Hartlepool in late 2013. As such, a number of events were held with local young people. In preparation for the forthcoming Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2015, the young people had indicated that they would like to undertake an international visit to Auschwitz – Birkenau to build upon this year's events and develop a book for all schools for young people in preparation for the forthcoming memorial events.

The young people had undertaken a number of fund raising activities and the Youth Support Services, Education and ITV Fixers had provided funding to enable the visit and events to go ahead as planned. The visit was due to take place on 25-29 August 2014. Officers would be working with the young people and other providers to ensure the work was promoted to enable as many young people benefit from the project as possible. In addition, it was suggested that the young people attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide an update on the project.

The Chair urged elected Members to support the young people by attending as many of the organised events as possible as corporate parents and interested Members.

It was suggested that further exploration of ways to raise awareness of this event should be undertaken potentially through civic events. It was also suggested that the young people may wish to approach elected Members to secure a funding contribution through the Ward Member budgets.

Members wished the young people well on their international visit and hoped that they would feel enriched by the experience of it.

Decision

- (i) The importance of maintaining young people's cultural awareness through this project was acknowledged including through the provision of support by attending future events.
- (ii) That the young people present an update on the project to a future meeting of the Committee.

31. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 5.46 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 19 AUGUST 2014