

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

9 February 2016

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: Ged Hall, John Lauderdale, Trisha Lawton and Brenda Loynes.

Co-opted members:

Julie Cordiner (C of E Diocesan Representative)  
Mark Tilling (Secondary Head Representative)

Young people's representative: Lauren Howells

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services  
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Catherine Grimwood, Performance and Partnerships Manager  
Helen White, Participation Manager  
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Officer

### **67. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Mary Fleet, Sheila Griffin, Michael Lee (RC Diocesan Representative) and David Turner (Primary Head Representative).

### **68. Declarations of Interest**

None at this point in the meeting. During consideration of the item "Ofsted Inspection Outcomes: September 2015 – December 2015" minute no. 73 refers, Councillor Lauderdale declared a personal interest as a governor at Dyke House School.

### **69. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016**

The minutes were confirmed.

The Chair referred to the Holocaust Memorial event held at Hartlepool College of Further Education on Monday, 25 January, 2016. The Chair commented that it was an outstanding event and the young people that had organised the event and produced the presentation and video

shown at the event should be congratulated on their excellent work. There was excellent national coverage of the event and lots of excellent feedback through social media. Officers were also congratulated for the support provided to the young people through the process of producing this work.

The Chair also referred to the foster carers awards evening being held at the Grand Hotel on Friday 12 February. The Chair encouraged all to attend the event for which they needed to contact Jacqui Dixon or Danielle Swainston for tickets.

## **70. Council Plan 2016/17 – Proposals for Consideration** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide the opportunity for the Children's Services Committee to consider the proposals that fall under the remit of the Committee for inclusion in the 2016/17 Council Plan.

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

The Director of Child and Adult Services reported that, as in previous years, detailed proposals for the Council Plan were being considered by each of the Policy Committees throughout January and February in respect of their areas of responsibility. A further report would be prepared for Finance and Policy Committee on the 14th of March detailing the comments/observations of each of the Committees along with Departmental responses and a full draft of the 2016/17 Council Plan.

The Council Plan would then be presented to Council for agreement on the 17th March. It was proposed that any additional updates or changes agreed by the Finance and Policy Committee on the 14th of March would be noted when the report is presented to Full Council.

The Outcomes that included activities that fell under the remit of the Children's Services Committee were:

- Reduction in the prevalence of family and child poverty.
- To promote opportunities for all children and young people to reach their full potential by accessing good quality teaching and curriculum provision which fully meets their needs and enables them to participate in and enjoy their learning.
- Every child has the best start in life.
- Children and young people are safe and protected from harm

Appendix A to the report provided details on the proposed actions, performance indicators and risks identified to deliver the outcomes.

The Chair and Members of the Committee raised the following comments/issues relating to the plan –

- Children that were missing education and unknown to the authorities were a concern nationally and it was suggested that some reference needed to be included. These were not the children that were being home educated and were known to the department. The Director indicated that this would fit within the safeguarding agenda and would include specific reference to missing children.
- Ensuring children that were eligible for free school meals were registered was included with a target to be confirmed. The Chair understood this was a key action already and questioned if the target was to be 100%. The Assistant Director indicated that the indicator was around ensuring that everything was being done in relation to the take up of free school meals and that there was ongoing monitoring.
- The Chair questioned the new indicators around Progress 8. It was indicated that the Progress 8 measure was a new secondary school accountability system which aimed to encourage schools to teach a broad curriculum and reward schools that teach all pupils well. It would measure pupils' progress across 8 subjects from age 11 to 16. The measures of -0.5 and +0.5 were the measures that showed those achieving below or above the 'floor' average measurement for pupils at each assessment point.
- It was commented that the measures around 5+ A\*-C GCSE's needed to be removed as this would no longer would be a measure for schools. It was suggested that with the large number of changes coming through the common assessment and changes to GCSE, a risk may need to be included to monitor that schools were meeting the new measures through a period of huge change. This would be an extremely difficult time for schools and ensuring that while performance measures were changing performance itself was not slipping could be a risk.
- Risk CAD R062 needed to reflect it was pupils 'attending' schools judged by OFSTED as requiring improvement or inadequate.
- It was suggested that a risk related to schools abilities to recruit good quality teachers should be included.
- A risk related to the potential impact of the new national funding formula for schools was also suggested. The Chair indicated that he had responded to a question at council on this issue recently and had been assured that officers were preparing for the impact of the changes.
- Risk CAD R064 "Widening of gap in achievement of disadvantaged pupils in Hartlepool and that of all pupils nationally in both primary and secondary". The ability to record information to assess this risk was questioned.

- The different officers allocated to the monitoring of the numbers of children receiving schools meals and the risk around the sufficient take up of schools meals was questioned. The Director indicated that managing the provision of school meals and then addressing the risk were the responsibility of different officers. A Member commented on her shock at a recent workplace event involving primary school children at how many were obviously very hungry on the morning as they had had no breakfast. The Chair commented that the responsibility for providing children with an adequate breakfast did lay with parents but there were a number of schools now providing breakfast clubs. The Director added that there was an ongoing pilot involving organisations within the voluntary sector, Kelloggs and a number of supermarkets in free breakfasts at a number of schools in the town. The Chair added that there was also a difference between those that did not get a breakfast and those that chose not to have one.
- The Director commented that the allocation of officers to the various actions and risks would be reviewed before the plan was finalised.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their comments which would be forwarded to the Finance and Policy Committee as part of the development process of the Council Plan.

### **Decision**

1. That the outcome proposals (Appendix A to the report) for inclusion in the 2016/17 Council Plan be noted and;
2. that the comments and observations made by the Committee be included in the presentation of the overall Council Plan 2016/17 to Finance and Policy Committee on 14th March 2016.

## **71. Full Ofsted Inspection of Exmoor Grove Children's Home** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

The report presented to Children's Services Committee the recent full inspection report of Exmoor Grove Children's Home by OFSTED which took place on 24 September 2015.

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

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that full inspection of Exmoor Grove took place on 24 September 2015 and was judged as Good. The report of the inspection was submitted as an appendix to the report. The headlines and reasons why the Children's home provision

was rated as 'good' was because:

- Consultation with children, young people, parents and staff is well organised and purposeful leading to better outcomes;
- Children and young people consistently take part in a very wide range of varied activities and experiences that enrich their lives;
- Staff work flexibly to support individual young people by responding to requests at a moment's notice when additional staff are needed;
- Staff take part in creative activities using reflective practice to further increase understanding about children's experiences;
- Children and young people play a significant and valuable part in staff appraisal and recruitment;
- A child's appreciation day forms part of the admission process; and
- The Registered Manager promotes a culture of continual improvement.

To improve the quality and standards of the care further the following recommendations were made by Ofsted;

- Ensure the home's staff are familiar with the care planning process for looked-after children and must assist children to prepare for meetings in relation to this. Staff should play an important role in these meetings, including supporting the child and enabling a clear understanding to be reached about the child's views, wishes, feelings, and expectations for their future. In particular, prepare a report primarily for the benefit of the child to be shared within looked after reviews. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 23 paragraph 4.14);
- Ensure the registered person has a system in place that allows them to monitor the matters set out in Regulation. Review the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. In particular, to make clear within the report the impact that care has for children and young people. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 64 paragraph 15.2); and
- Ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. In particular, that reports evaluate every aspect of the care provided to children and young people rather than just provide a description. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 65 paragraph 15.5)

The recommendations were currently being addressed by officers. The Director indicated that the home had been judged 'good' consistently over the last six inspections which demonstrated the hard work and commitment of the staff team as a whole and the positive management and leadership of the Registered Manager.

The Chair welcomed the report and requested that the Committee's congratulations on such a positive report be forwarded to the staff at Exmoor Grove.

### **Decision**

That the report be noted and that the Committee's congratulations on such a positive report be forwarded to the staff at Exmoor Grove.

## **72. Full Ofsted Inspection of Stockton Road Children's Home** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information.

### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of the report was to present to Children's Services Committee the recent full inspection report of Stockton Road Children's Home by OFSTED which took place on 21 October 2015.

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

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that the full inspection of Stockton Road Children's home took place on 21 October 2015 and the service was judged as 'Good'. The report of the inspection was attached as an appendix to the report. The headlines and reasons why the Children's home provision was rated good was because:

- Young people receive consistently individualised care and because of this they make progress that feels or is meaningful to them;
- Staff know young people well and have a thorough understanding of their underlying needs and how best to meet them;
- Young people receive high levels of structure and supervision promoting feelings of safety and security;
- There are trusting relationships between young people and staff;
- Young people's admission to the home are carefully planned and sensitively managed;
- Young people's views are listened to particularly within their meetings which are purposefully carried out; and
- The Registered Manager is an inspiring leader who ensures care practice is underpinned by relevant theory.

Ofsted had raised two issues which were statutory requirements and the registered manager must take action within the set timescale. These were;

- That within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint, a record is made which includes the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and
- The registered manager must notify Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered manager considers to be serious. This must include any actions taken by the registered manager as a result of the matter. This must be in writing.

To improve the quality and standards of the care further the following recommendations were made by Ofsted;

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. In particular that someone other than the child's social worker be made available;
- The registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. In particular that the outcome of verification of references are recorded in full;
- The home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. Children and their parents should be supported to understand the nature of records kept by the home and how to access them. Staff should understand their important role in encouraging the child to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding. Staff should keep and encourage children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help them record significant life events. In particular that the home contributes a written report for the child's looked after review that is primarily written for the benefit of the child.

The Chair again welcomed the report and requested that the Committee's congratulations on such a positive report be forwarded to the staff at Stockton Road, particularly as this was only their second full inspection.

Members questioned if the staffing at the two homes was stable. The Assistant Director commented that fortunately the staffing across the two homes was very stable and probably testament to the loyalty staff had to the two managers.

Members questioned the inspection regime now being undertaken by NYAS and the costs involved. The Assistant Director stated that she

did not have the costs to hand but would share them with the Committee Members after the meeting. The independent inspectors shared their report initially with the registered manager and then the Assistant Director for any action that was required.

A Member questioned the how homes could transition from 'good' to 'outstanding'; were much of the issues around record keeping for example. The Assistant Director stated that there was a framework of criteria for inspections but much did depend on the inspector undertaking the visit. Not many would offer an 'outstanding' verdict under the new inspection framework unless the home was doing something over and above anything they had seen before. While a lot did depend on the records kept, Ofsted's focus was moving more towards outcomes. This was particularly difficult when the two homes inspections reported to this meeting were dealing with some very challenging young people, many with complex needs. This made the inspection outcomes of 'good' a very successful result for the authority and all the staff at the two homes.

#### **Decision**

That the report be noted and that the Committee's congratulations on such a positive report be forwarded to the staff at Stockton Road.

### **73. Ofsted Inspection Outcomes: September 2015 – December 2015** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

For information.

#### **Purpose of report**

To provide a summary of the outcomes of Ofsted inspections of Hartlepool schools in the autumn term of the 2015-16 academic year.

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

The Director of Child and Adult Services reported that only one Ofsted inspection report had been issued in the autumn term and this related to Dyke House Sports and Technology College. The inspection was undertaken in October 2015 and the school had been judged to be 'good'. This was the first Ofsted inspection undertaken since the school had transferred to Academy status. Previously the school had been rated as 'outstanding'.

The Chair requested that the Committee's congratulations be extended to the school for achieving a 'good' Ofsted rating as under the new inspections regimes, standards were becoming increasingly challenging.



Councillor Lauderdale, as a governor at the school, declared a personal interest.

**Decision**

That the report be noted and the Committee's congratulations be extended to the school for achieving a 'good' Ofsted rating.

**74. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent**

There were no items of business the Chair considered urgent.

The meeting noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 8 March, 2016 at 4.00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 4.55 pm.

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 16 FEBRUARY 2016**