

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

6 DECEMBER 2016

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

Present:

Councillor: Alan Clark (In the Chair)

Councillors: Paul Beck, Lesley Hamilton, Brenda Harrison, Marjorie James (vice-chair) and John Lauderdale.

Councillor Stephen Thomas, Chair of Adult Services Committee (Observer)

Co-opted members: Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative

Young people's representatives: Callum Reed and Abby Wallace.

Also present: E. Leck, Healthwatch
D.Wise, V. Evens and A Sedgewick, members of the public.

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Child and Adult Services
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Mark Patton, Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19
David Ward, Head of Finance,
Helen White, Participation Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

42. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Shane Moore.
David Turner, Primary Head Representative

43. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beck and Clark declared personal interests.
During the discussion under Minute No. 54, Councillor Lauderdale declared a personal interest.

44. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2016

Confirmed.

45. Savings Programme 2017/18 – Children's Services (Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to enable Members to consider the initial 2017/18 savings proposals relating to the Committee's remit to contribute towards achieving the overall savings requirement.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Child and Adult Services provided a presentation in support of a savings programme report. The presentation included the issues that had been considered by the Finance and Policy Committee on 2 December in a comprehensive report which brought together the previous separate Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy for revenue and capital to better integrate the Council's priorities and financial plans.

The presentation also included details of the Council's key priorities and 44 deliverables, the five year capital plan together with how this plan would be funded. Members were reminded of Government grant cuts over the last six years which had had a disproportionate impact on more deprived areas including Hartlepool. Given that the Council had already made significant budget reductions over the last six years, it was becoming more and more difficult to balance the budget. Government grants would be cut by a further £9.8m over the next three years which represented a cut of 38%. The Council faced a gross deficit of £20.8m and a three year strategy was being developed to address this deficit which aimed to minimise the impact on front line services. However, these measures would not address the whole budget deficit and the remaining deficit would be addressed through a Service Transformation Plan, details of which were provided.

The Chair expressed his grave concern at the continued levels of cuts the service was facing. The Council had made substantial savings so far without significantly affecting front line services. However, the proposed savings now reported would see cuts in front line services and there seemed to be no let up in the government's continued strategy to 2020 and possibly beyond. The picture was not, however, all bleak and there had been significant improvements such as the reduction in youth unemployment and the increasing standards in exam results and school Ofsted reports.

A member commented that the message to the public needed to be that

this was not the Council cutting budgets and services but central government. Another Member commented that many people were not aware of the savings that had had to be made over the past five years as the Council had managed to maintain much of the front line service delivery that people saw on a day to day basis.

The Chair of the Adult Services Committee commented that the budget situation in Adult Services was very similar and the message did need to be conveyed to the public that officers had done a remarkable job in ensuring front line services had not been cut significantly to date. The Adult Services Committee had registered its disgust at the situation that services to vulnerable people could be reduced and the pressure that was placing on those individuals and the staff that worked with them. The sad point to this was there seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel and unless the current government changed course, or there was a new government, there would be no let up in the pursuance of the austerity cuts.

Representatives of the Voluntary Community Sector were present and addressed the meeting. They expressed their concern at the budget cuts while understanding the situation the Council was facing. The voluntary sector was extremely appreciative of the support that the Council had given over the years. Many groups were delivering services requested by the Council. Over years these groups had built relationships with young people and their families and become a resource for much more than the original reason for the contact. These groups could provide much more but were extremely concerned that through the redesign or realignment of services contracts could be lost.

The VCS representatives also expressed concern at the proposal in the report to re-focus the services to children and young people 5-19 years only for children and young people 11-19 years. There was concern expressed that effectively abandoning the 5-11 age group could have a significant knock-on effect on the services that would need to be provided for those aged 11+. The VCS groups had indicated their support for the move towards a Young People's Foundation but this would take time to develop. Groups were submitting bids for funding already to external organisations to provide services through the Foundation but these could not be up and running by April next year.

The Chair reassured the VCS representatives that there was both political and officer commitment to making the Young People's Foundation work. The Chair supported the view in relation to the contract for services to young people, as proposed and seconded, and indicated that the service should be remain for the 5-19 years age range for the first year though with the revised budget reported.

The Assistant Director, Children's Services outlined the savings and budget pressures detailed within the report. The total amount of savings required for Children's Services was £1.635 million. Due to the current

environment of increasing demand associated with care proceedings and an increase in the number of looked after children, Children's Services currently had a budget pressure of £1.6million. Therefore, the total savings, including pressures, equated to £3.235 million.

The proposals for year one savings of the three year programme were as follows (fuller detail was provided within the report) –

£150,000 from a review of historically under-spent budgets;
£169,000 from the redesign of the Youth Service to ensure a better fit with the Better Childhood in Hartlepool model;
£185,000 from the redesign of services to children and young people 5-19 to services more closely aligned with the Better Childhood model and to be focussed on children and young people 11-19.

Further work would also be undertaken to reduce demand led costs and these included –

A review of all residential packages;
A review of all Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements;
A review of all commissioned contracts delivering placements for looked after children;
A continued focus on recruiting internal foster carers;
A review of Direct Payment processes; and
Maximising Grant Income.

The Assistant Director stated that A Better Childhood in Hartlepool would continue to be implemented as part of the service transformation that would aim to manage demand through 2018/19 and 2019/20. A full review of all services will be undertaken in 2018/19 and 2019/20 to ensure that all services are in line with the strategic vision of A Better Childhood in Hartlepool. This will include:

- Review of Children's Centres;
- Review of Children's Social Care teams;
- Review of all commissioned services;
- Review of Short Break Services;
- Understanding of the impact of A Better Childhood in Hartlepool to inform a decision in relation to what the early help offer looks like and whether it is sustainable.

Evaluation of these services would be used for ongoing savings decisions for 2018/19 and 2019/2020.

The Assistant Director commented that there were inherent risks with all the reviews and these were set out in detail within the report and included the potential compulsory redundancies and the cessation of contracts with some organisations.

In terms of the savings within the Education division, the Assistant

Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 reported that the Council's general fund contributed £1.6m annually to education services in Hartlepool. Of this, £645,000 was spent on items that the Council has no discretion over, such as pension contributions for former employees. The remaining £955,000 was to enable the Council to carry out its statutory and some non-statutory duties. This £1.6m did not include government funding such as contributions from the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) and the Education Services Grant (ESG). It was highlighted that the DSG had been cash-frozen at 2012-13 prices, and the future of the ESG was uncertain. The Education Division had been asked to make a recurrent saving of £50,000 in 2018-19 and a further recurrent saving of £100,000 in 2019-20. These recurrent savings would be achieved through –

- Income generation rising from £25,000 in 2017/18 to £65,000 in 2019/20, from traded education services such as Education Psychology, Governor Support Services and the use of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL);
- Service reconfiguration and data management to save £41,000
- An inflation freeze to save £44,000.

The Chair commented that subject to the amendment proposed by members that the services to children and young people continue for the 5-19 age group through the Young People's Foundation, the recommendations proposed should be, however reluctantly, supported by the Committee.

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

That the report be noted and that the Finance and Policy Committee be informed that subject to the services to children and young people continuing for the 5-19 age group (rather than the 11-19 age group proposed, though with the same revised budget), the savings proposed within the report were, reluctantly, supported by the Committee.

46. School Admission Arrangements for 2018/19

(Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision test (ii) applies. Forward Plan Reference Number: CAS 055/16.

Purpose of report

To consider and agree the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Hartlepool for 2018/19 academic year.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 reported that all admission authorities were required to set admission arrangements annually. Where changes were proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority must first consult on those arrangements. If there were no changes proposed they only need to be consulted on at least every 7 years. There were no changes proposed to the current admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools that required public consultation.

The published admission number for each Community and Voluntary Controlled School was detailed in appendix 1 to the report which Committee was requested to approve. The admission numbers for Voluntary Aided, Foundation Schools and Academies were included for information.

The admission arrangements including the over-subscription criteria in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, for which no changes were proposed, were set out in appendix 2 to the report.

The coordinated Admission Schemes for primary schools and secondary schools for 2018/19 would be formulated and published on the Authority's website by 1 January 2017, in accordance with the Schools Admissions Code.

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

1. That in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools admission arrangements for 2018/19 the admission numbers as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
2. That in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools admission arrangements for 2018/19 the current admission arrangements as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

47. Strategic Financial Management Report – as at 30 September 2016 *(Director of Child and Adult Services and Chief Finance Officer)*

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the 2016/17 Forecast General Fund Outturn, 2016/17 Capital Programme Monitoring

and provide details for the specific budget areas that this Committee was responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Finance reported that the latest report submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee on 2nd December 2016 anticipated that the overall forecast position for departmental and corporate budgets is a best case potential under-spend of £0.121m, or a worst case overspend of £0.499m. The range reflects seasonal and demand led factors.

Specifically in relation to Children's Services, the Head of Finance reported that the worst / best case budget outturns for the year were overspends of £1.6m and £1.5m respectively. There had previously been a forecast overspend reflecting the higher level of Looked After Children and this trend continued including a number of high cost complex needs children being placed in Independent Fostering Agencies and Residential Placements and an increase in Care Proceedings budgets. The department was focussed on transforming services to reduce demand for these packages of care, although these changes would take time to implement.

Details of the Capital Budget expenditure were also reported that showed an anticipated total expenditure of £5.692m for the year. Within the Capital Budget it was highlighted that following feasibility and further design it had become apparent that the replacement of the external door-set scheme at the Pupil Referral Unit required a more robust system with electronic access control. Building regulation approval was also needed. Consequently this scheme has now increased in costs to £29,000 from an original budget of £12,000. The Capital Sub-Group had endorsed the increase in costs.

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the £17,000 increase in budget for the Pupil Referral Unit Replacement Door-set capital scheme be approved.

48. Regional Joint Commissioning Arrangements – Residential Children's Homes and Short Break Care (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To inform members of proposals regarding joint commissioning arrangements across the North East Local Authorities in relation to placements in Residential Children's Homes and short breaks and respite care for children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) and to seek approval to the recommendations outlined in the report.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that in March 2015 the Committee gave approval for the collaborative commissioning approach with the North East (NE) local authorities for Independent Residential Schools. Following the approval, Hartlepool had worked with the other NE authorities in developing a regional framework with shared procurement and contract responsibilities.

The procurement process was completed at the beginning of the year, with the Framework going live in February 2016. The NE authorities meet on a regular basis as part of the performance management arrangements, to share information around costs and ensure a joint approach to compliance.

Since the establishment of the Framework, Hartlepool has made three placements and transferred two placements, potentially saving in the region of £10,000 to £40,000. This, together with the shared responsibility for contractual arrangements and quality assurance, had brought added value to the Council and benefitted the Children's Commissioning Team by providing access to additional expertise.

The success of the Independent Residential Schools Framework has led to the opportunity for further collaborative ventures across the NE authorities and the potential for joint commissioning on Residential Children's Homes and Short Breaks and Respite Care for Children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities was being examined by the NE authorities. Newcastle City Council was leading on this work.

The Chair welcomed the proposal as a good example of how working together in partnership, local authorities could achieve significant benefits.

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

1. That the proposal to participate in joint commissioning arrangements as part of the North East region for the commissioning of placements in Residential Children's Homes be approved;

2. That the proposal to participate in joint commissioning arrangements as part of the North East region for the commissioning of short breaks and respite care for children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities be approved.

49. To Nominate Local Authority Representatives to Serve on School Governing Bodies (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key decision.

Purpose of report

To update members of the Children's Services Committee in respect of vacancies that currently exist for local authority representative governors, and to request that members recommend nominees to the governing bodies where vacancies currently exist.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 reported that, as Members were aware, local authority governors were now nominated by the local authority but appointed by the governing body on the basis that the nominee has the skills to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school, and met any other eligibility criteria they may have set.

A schedule was submitted with the report setting out details of vacancies which currently exist, together with applications received. The individual applications were set out in a confidential appendix to the report. That appendix contained exempt information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government), (Access to Information), (Variations Order 2006) namely, information relating to any individual (Para 1).

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

That the following local authority nominations be forwarded for consideration by the relevant governing bodies where vacancies currently exist: -

High Tunstall College of Science – Mrs J Butterworth
Barnard Grove Primary School – Councillor R Cook
Rift House Primary School – Councillor P Beck
Throston Primary School – Mr K Shears
Sacred Heart RC Primary School – Councillor G Hall

50. Fostering Service Interim Report – 1 June – 30 September 2016 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the second quarter of 2016/17. The Fostering Service is a regulated service and as such there is a requirement to provide the executive side of the Council with performance information on a quarterly basis.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported on the 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 progress in relation to the priorities set out in the Fostering Annual Report.

In relation to foster carer recruitment, the Assistant Director reported that the Tees Valley agencies had done some recent joint advertising for foster carers. The Assistant Director also commented that when enquiries were received from people interested in becoming foster carers, there was a noticeably better response rate when a social worker visited to deliver an information pack, rather than it just going out in the post.

The Chair questioned if the foster carers registered with Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs) came before the Adoption and Fostering Panel for approval. The Director indicated that IFA foster carers' Form F would only come before the HBC panel if it was proposed to make a long-term foster placement match however, IFA's were required to establish their own Panel arrangements. The Chair questioned further what level of checks and balances were in place to ensure foster carers registered with IFAs were as well monitored and trained as Hartlepool carers. The Director stated that IFAs were inspected by Ofsted in exactly the same way as a local authority agency.

The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

That the report in relation to the work of the Fostering Service in the second quarter of 2016/17 be noted.

51. Full OFSTED Inspection of Exmoor Grove Children's Home *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report was to present to Children's Services Committee the recent full inspection report of Exmoor Grove Children's Home by Ofsted which took place on 24 August 2016 and for members to note the Ofsted report attached as an appendix to the report.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that Ofsted inspections of children's homes were unannounced and undertaken twice a year. The most recent inspection of Exmoor Grove resulted in an Ofsted rating of 'Outstanding' staff and management team of the home who showed great commitment to the children and young people in their care. The provision has been judged to be Outstanding, which is the highest judgement. This is an improvement from the home's good judgment which has been consistent over the last 6 inspections which demonstrated the Assistant Director considered reflected very well upon the of the staff team as a whole and positive management and leadership of the Registered Manager.

Members welcomed the report and hoped that the press would be as quick to report this and Stockton Road's success as they would were the reports showing the provision was inadequate or required improvement.

It was proposed and seconded that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, write to all the staff associated with Exmoor Grove thanking them for their hard work and commitment that was so well reflected in the Ofsted report.

Decision

1. That note the positive inspection report of Exmoor Grove Children's Home be noted and welcomed.
2. That the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, writes to all the staff associated with Exmoor Grove Children's Home thanking them for their hard work and commitment that was so well reflected in the Ofsted report.

52. 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 this 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 17 August 2016 and for members to note the Ofsted report attached as an appendix to the report.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that Ofsted inspections of children's homes were unannounced and undertaken twice a year. The most recent inspection of Stockton Road resulted in an Ofsted rating of 'Outstanding' which reflected the work of the staff and management team of the home who showed great commitment to the children and young people in their care. The provision has been judged to be Outstanding, which is the highest judgement. This is an improvement from the home's good judgment which has been consistent over the last 6 inspections which demonstrated the Assistant Director considered reflected very well upon the of the staff team as a whole and positive management and leadership of the Registered Manager.

Again, it was proposed and seconded that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, write to all the staff associated with Stockton Road thanking them for their hard work and commitment that was so well reflected in the Ofsted report.

Decision

1. That note the positive inspection report of Stockton Road Children's Home be noted and welcomed.
2. That the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, writes to all the staff associated with Stockton Road Children's Home thanking them for their hard work and commitment that was so well reflected in the Ofsted report.

53. School Capital Funding Information *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform Children's Services Committee of the various school capital funding streams.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 reported that at the September meeting it was agreed that a further report be submitted to clarify the position in relation to school capital funding streams, which type of schools can access funding and how schemes are approved. The Assistant Director set out for Members information the details of the following funding regimes –

School Condition Allocation
Locally Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme
Basic Need allocations
Condition Improvement Fund
Suitability Schemes
Priority Schools Building Programme – Phase 2
Devolved Formula Capital
Early Years Capital.

Decision

That the report be noted.

54. 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.

55. Dyke House Sports and Technology College

The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 reported that it had come to the Department's attention that Dyke House was proposing to extend its sixth form offer to pupils other than those that had studied for their GCSEs at the school. There was concern that such a move may destabilise the sixth form and further education offer to young people in the town. There was also a recent Tees Wide Post-16 Area Review which highlighted that small sixth forms were not cost effective and were unlikely to be able to offer the wide range of courses that should be made available to post-16 students.

The Assistant Director apologised for bringing the issue to Members attention in this manner but the window of opportunity to respond to the

consultation was not particularly wide and did not extend to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Vice-Chair proposed that in order to formulate an appropriate response to the consultation, the Director of Child and Adult Services be authorised to prepare an appropriate response in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair so that this Authority's views could be registered.

A Member questioned whether the proposed expanded sixth form provision at Dyke House would be seen as destabilising when the aim was to see as many young people as possible undertake continued studies. The Assistant Director commented that in his experience, small sixth form provision attached to a school tended to draw funding away from the main school; this was not always the case but it was a significant concern. Officers were undertaking some modelling work to assess how the expanded provision may affect the post-16 study landscape in Hartlepool. Once this work was completed, early in the New Year, a meeting to prepare a response to the consultation would be fruitful.

The Secondary Head Teacher representative commented that he was fundamentally opposed to such a provision and commented that it would be extremely difficult to advise young people on their further studies and career path when one of the choices of continued study available to them did not publish its exam results. The representative undertook to discuss the issue with the other secondary heads and feed those comments back to the Assistant Director.

The young people's representatives also commented that it would be difficult to choose a sixth form without knowing how successful it was.

After a short debate on the matter, the Committee agreed to support the submission of a response as proposed by the Vice-Chair.

Decision

That in order to formulate an appropriate response to the consultation, the Director of Child and Adult Services be authorised to a response in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair so that this Authority's views could be registered.

During the debate on the above issue, Councillor Lauderdale declared a personal interest as a governor of Dyke House Sports and Technology College.

56. Engagement and Participation Team

One of the young people's representatives raised concerns expressed by the Youth Parliament in relation to the service cuts that would affect the Standards, Engagement and Development Team. The proposed service re-design was not part of the proposals submitted to this Committee but

had been included within the report to the Adult Services Committee. The Youth Parliament were concerned that their meeting with the Assistant Director, Adult Services didn't outline the proposed changes to the engagement and participation services. The work of the Youth Parliament in Hartlepool had received wide praise yet it felt excluded from this process and the young people's representative expressed concern as to the message that this sent to future voters.

The Chair stated that there should be no doubting this Committee's commitment to the Youth Council and involving young people in decision making. The budget for the engagement and participation teams did, however anomalous, sit with the Adult Services Committee and this Committee could not overturn another policy committee's decision. The Director of Child and Adult Services stated that the report to Adult Services outlined the proposals in relation to changes to the Standards Engagement and Development Team which worked across the whole department, however the budget line sat within the Adult Services Committee remit. The report did not propose to cut youth participation or the work of the Youth Council but outlined proposals to re-design the team to achieve the required savings. . The Director noted that at the meeting the Assistant Director, Adult Services attended with the Youth Parliament, officers did not have the specific budget efficiencies prepared so that information could not be shared. The Director also re-stated her commitment to the Youth Council and involving young people in decision making.

The Director added that officers were being faced with some very difficult decisions. There were reducing resources yet increased demand on frontline services and many, such as social work services to vulnerable children, could not be cut. As a consequence, officers had to consider and propose cuts to services that they did not want to make; the proposals outlined in the budget report were the best that could be made without ceasing services entirely.

The young people's representative thanked the Director for her comments though added that the report to the Finance and Policy Committee did not include any risks or implications for the potential changes to the Participation Team.

Both the Chair and the Chair of the Adult Services Committee voiced their commitment to including the Youth Parliament in the discussions that would shape the future of the work of the Standards, Engagement and Development Team. The Secondary Head Teachers representative supported the comments and indicated that the secondary heads would look to what support they could provide in sustaining the work of the Youth Council.

The Director of Child and Adult Services noted that the reports considered by policy committees were for the purpose of discussing proposals and providing comments to Finance and Policy Committee

when the MTFS is considered. She therefore suggested that the comments at Children's Services Committee be fed into the feedback from the Committee to the Finance and Policy Committee. The following decision was agreed unanimously.

Decision

That the comments and debate be noted and reflected in the information to be submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 17 January, 2017 at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The Chair extended season's greetings to all present.

The meeting concluded at 5.35 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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