

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

4 February 2025

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Rachel Creevy (In the Chair)

Councillors: Brenda Harrison, Phil Holbrook, Michael Jorgeson and Sue Little

Co-opted members:

Joanne Wilson, RC Diocesan Representative
Zoe Westley, Special Schools Head Representative
Martin Pout, Parent Governor Representative

Young people's representatives:

Oliver Heurman, Member of Youth Parliament

Officers:

Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Laura Gough, Assistant Director, Children's and Families
Rebecca Stephenson, Assistant Director, Early Intervention, Performance and Commissioning
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance, Corporate and Schools
Julie Reed, Pupil Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager
Julian Heward, Senior Communications and Marketing Officer
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services and Legal Support Officer

39. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Martin Dunbar and Cameron Sharp.

40. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Rachel Creevy declared an interest as a school governor for St Hild's Church of England School, Councillor Brenda Harrison declared an interest as a school governor for West View Primary School and Martin Pout declared an interest as a school governor for Throston Primary School.

41. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024

Received.

42. Dedicated Schools Grant – School Budget Shares 2025/26 and Central School Services Block 2025/26

(Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT and Digital)

Type of decision

Key decision – Tests (i) and (ii) apply - CJCS 160/25

Purpose of report

To provide details of the 2025/26 schools block funding allocation and to propose school budget shares for 2025/26. The schools block funding forms part of the Dedicated Schools' Grant (DSG).

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Finance, Corporate and Schools presented the report that highlighted the Hartlepool Schools' Block allocation of £87.471m based on October 2024 census numbers. This showed an increase of £0.508m for 2024/25 or 0.6%. It was noted that Central Schools Services Block Funding totalled £0.688m which includes historic items relating to the schools' contributions to licences and pension costs associated with the former Brierton school closure. These had been considered and agreed by the Schools' on 24 September 2024 totalling £0.595m, and amended at Forum on the 10 December 2024 to £0.608m, to reflect increased copyright licence costs. After meeting the revised budget requirement of £0.608m there was residual funding of £0.080m. Members were informed that at their meeting on 24 September 2024, Schools' Forum had recommended that the residual balance be transferred to the high needs block to support the financial pressure on supporting pupils with SEND.

In addition to this, it was noted that the Schools' Forum had also agreed to transfer 0.5% of schools block funding to the high needs block in recognition of the growing DSG deficit to support pupils with SEND.

It was highlighted that the Schools' Forum had voted in favour of applying the maximum possible Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) along with an appropriate cap which had been calculated at 0.38%. This agreement was confirmed unanimously at the meeting of the Schools' Forum on 10 December 2024.

A table outlining the School Budget Share 2025/26 including a comparison with 2024/25 individual school budgets was outlined in the report.

Decision

- a) The contents of this report were noted.
- b) The agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.595m, updated to £0.608m to reflect the increased copyright licence cost as outlined in paragraph 5.5 was noted.
- c) The agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer 0.5% of schools block funding (£0.436m) to the High Needs Block as outlined in paragraph 4.6 was noted.
- d) The use of the MFG for 2025/26 with a cap at 0.38% as outlined in paragraph 4.5 of this report was approved and the recommendation from Schools' Forum of applying an MFG of 0.0% was noted.
- e) The School Budget Share for 2025/26 as summarised in the table at paragraph 4.10 of this report was approved.
- f) The agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer the residual funding from the Central School Services Block to the High Needs Block (£0.080m) as outlined in paragraph 5.8 was noted.

43. School Admission Arrangements for 2026-27
(Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)

Type of decision

Key decision – Test (ii) applies – CJCS 161/25

Purpose of report

To consider and agree the proposed admission arrangements for community schools in Hartlepool for 2026-27 academic year. As the local authority, the Council was the admission authority and was therefore responsible for determining the admission arrangements for these schools.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were informed that it was a statutory requirement of all admission authorities to determine admission arrangements every year and the arrangements for entry in September 2026 must be determined by 28 February 2025, see Appendix 2. The published admission number for each community school was detailed in Appendix 1.

In response to a number of questions, the Pupil Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager confirmed that in Hartlepool there had been a slight fall in the number of primary pupils and that there was sufficient places across the schools for primary children in the town, although some schools are more popular than others. It was highlighted that there had been a high number of admission appeals for certain secondary schools and several for some primary schools. The Pupil Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager confirmed that there was legislation in place for infant class size where classes in Key Stage 1 were not permitted to exceed 30 pupils per qualified teacher. However, if appeals in this key stage were upheld by an independent panel, the child must be admitted, even if the class was at capacity.

Decision

In order to determine the admission arrangements for 2026-27:

- (i) the admission numbers as detailed in Appendix 1 were approved; and
- (ii) the current admission arrangements detailed in Appendix 2 were approved.

44. To re-appoint a Local Authority Representative to serve on the Governing Body of Throston Primary School *(Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Non key

Purpose of report

To consider a nomination for the re-appointment of a Local Authority Governor position on the governing body of Throston Primary School.

Issue(s) for consideration

Under the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 the process for appointing Local Authority Governors to school governing bodies requires the local authority to consider nominations to vacancies before they were presented to the relevant governing body for formal approval. A nomination had been received for the re-appointment of local authority governor at Throston Primary school. The current term of office expired on 19 January 2025. Details of this nomination were attached by way of confidential Appendix. **This item 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).**

Decision

The nomination received for the local authority governor vacancy at Throston Primary School was approved.

45. Pupil Performance 2024 – Headline Indicator Summary (*Executive Director, Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide a summary of the pupil performance measures for Hartlepool from the public examinations and teacher assessments in the summer of 2024.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Director of Children's Services presented the report which provided the headline data from 2019 to 2024 across each Key Stage including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The report included comparison data from 2019-2024 (pre COVID and the latest three years) within Hartlepool and provided a comparator against national outcomes where available. It was noted that there had been no testing in 2020 and 2021.

The published pupil performance measures for 2024 along with national averages were presented at Appendix A along with Hartlepool's quartile placement for each 2024 measure. A summary of pupil performance across all key stages was outlined in the report. It was noted that the Department for Education were continuing to work with the education sector across Hartlepool as part of the Priority Investment Area programme to help address areas where there were weaker attainment and progress outcomes and this will continue throughout the academic year.

In response to a number of questions from Members, the Executive Director of Children's Services confirmed work had been ongoing for the previous two years examining transitions, reading in primary and secondary and specific school improvement activities. It was noted that there were a number of vocational and technical pathways available to pupils but these did not form part of the formal reporting arrangements.

The Executive Director of Children's Services confirmed that in comparison to the rest of the country, performance at Key Stage 2 was

strong, demonstrating that children make good progress from their starting point in primary education.

Decision

The contents of the report were noted.

46. 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.

47. Disapplication Request

Members will recall that this Committee agreed in November to submit a disapplication request to the Secretary of State for Education regarding funding for statutory duties in relation to maintained schools. The Secretary of State confirmed on the 23 December 2024 that the disapplication request was successful. This was the ninth successive year that our request had been successful, securing £174k for the Council.

Decision

The successful outcome of the disapplication request was noted.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 5.00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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