

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

21 FEBRUARY 2017

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.

Co-opted members: Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative

Young people's representative: Callum Reed.

Also present: Ruby Marshall and Evelyn Leck, Hartlepool Healthwatch.

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
Penny Thompson, Head of Service, Children's Hub and Partnerships
Catherine Grimwood, Performance and Partnerships Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

67. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Shane Moore.
Councillor Stephen Thomas, Chair of Adult Services Committee.
David Turner, Primary Head Representative.
Jo Heaton, C of E Diocesan Representative
Stephen Hammond, RC Diocesan Representative.

While they had been unable to attend the meeting, the Chair noted and welcomed the appointment of the two new Church of England and Catholic diocesan representatives to the Committee.

68. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brenda Harrison declared a personal interest as a school governor.

69. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017

Confirmed.

70. Council Plan 2017/18 – 2019/20 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to set out the Council's ambitions for the Borough and the strategic plan for achieving this. Specifically, the Committee was asked to consider the draft proposals that had been identified for inclusion in the Council Plan 2017/18 – 2019/20 which were of relevance to the remit of the Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Child and Adult Services reported that a comprehensive report - "Council Plan and Overall Medium Term Financial Strategy" was considered by the Finance and Policy Committee on 2nd December 2016. That report stated that despite the impact of continuing austerity and cuts in Government funding the Council needed to remain ambitious for the town. Appendices submitted with the report set out an extract from the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19 reported to Finance and Policy Committee on 2 December 2016, final draft Key Deliverables along with the proposed milestones, the changes between the Key Deliverables previously reported to Finance and Policy Committee and those proposed for inclusion in the final plan, and the proposed performance measures by which progress on delivering the ambition of the Council Plan would be measured.

The Director indicated that the report provided the detailed proposals for the Council Plan and sought the Committee's views on the proposed key deliverables, milestones and performance measures it included which were of relevance to the remit of the Committee. The Director outlined the strategic priorities and key deliverables relevant to the Committee and sought members' views to be fed back to the Finance and Policy at its meeting on 6 March.

The Chair commented that in line with the assurances given to the Schools Forum, there needed to be inclusion in the Council Plan recognising Hartlepool as being a Learning Town.

Members welcomed the ambitions set out in the plan which would build a strong foundation for the young people of Hartlepool to achieve and prosper while remaining in their home town. There was a question raised

in relation to the target set for GCSE 5+A*-C grades (or new equivalent) at 50% which could be quite challenging in light of the new exam structure which was anticipated to lead to an overall national reduction in achievement. The Secondary Head Representative indicated that it was a concern amongst headteachers that needed to be flagged. The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 commented that the targets had been set taking into account the level of attainment for the current KS2 cohort of pupils so there was an evidence base underpinning the target. The Chair noted that the indicators may need to be re-visited at a future date.

The Performance and Partnerships Manager commented that at the recent meeting of the Regeneration Services Committee, Members had discussed the indicator on "Overall Attainment 8 score in Hartlepool secondary schools" and had sought further clarification on this. The Assistant Director, Education, Learning and Skills 0-19 added that a series of member briefings on new performance measures and changes to assessment regimes nationally were being arranged.

The following decisions were agreed unanimously.

Decision

1. That the key deliverables, milestones and performance measures that had been identified for inclusion in the Council Plan as set out in Appendix 2 and Appendix 4 which were of relevance to the remit of the Committee be approved, subject to the addition of specific reference in the plan of Hartlepool being a Learning Town.
2. That the Committee notes that the final draft of the Council Plan, incorporating the comments made today and by the other Policy Committees, would be taken to Finance and Policy Committee on 6th March for consideration and approval. The Plan will then be taken to full Council on 23rd March 2017 for final approval.

71. Schools Funding Formula 2017/18 (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

Key Decision (test (i)/(ii)) Forward Plan Reference No. CAS 056/16.

Purpose of report

To advise Members of the Department for Education's (DfE) new National Early Years Funding Formula.

To update Members on the results of Hartlepool's National Early Years Funding Formula consultation.

For Members to note the results of the consultation and to agree Hartlepool's National Early Years Formula for April 2017/18.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Service, Children's Hub and Partnerships, reported that the DfE recently concluded their funding consultation and published their response alongside operational guidance for the new early years national funding formula for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. The local authority (LA) released a national early years funding formula consultation document on the 10th January 2017 which closed on the 20th January 2017. This was sent to all early years' providers including schools, registered childminders and day-care providers. The outcomes of the consultation were included within the report.

The report detailed the indicative funding allocations from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for 2017/18. The final allocations would be confirmed following the January census counts in 2017 and 2018.

Early years and childcare for 3 / 4 year olds is currently funded using a Single Funding Formula which includes a base rate and a number of supplements. This means that depending on a range of factors providers were paid varying amounts per hour for their early year's entitlement. The new requirements were intended to ensure that funding provided by the EFA is transparent and fairly distributed to providers. The LA would be required to implement the new formula from April 2017. DfE planned to have a local universal base rate by 2019/20.

The local consultation on the early years funding offer showed providers (responses were received from 29 providers: 19 schools (out of 31), 6 childminders (out of 20) and 4 day-care (out of 16)) were largely in favour of the proposals. The responses had also been reported to the Schools Forum.

The report also included reference to the supplements, SEN Inclusion Funding and the centrally retained fund. In summary, the new funding allocation included –

- the base rate had been set at a rate of £4.00 per hour (an increase from £2.75 per hour);
- supplements equated to 2.7% of the overall funding (compared to 26% under the previous formula);
- although the LA had received an increase of £0.83p per hour to £4.46 this was below the national average of £4.88;
- as part of the national formula the EFA had protected those authorities that were losing funding using a floor and capping system. This meant that no LA would lose funding of more than 5% in 2017/18. Hartlepool should be in receipt of £4.49 per hour but the gains have been capped by 3p per hour.

In relation to funding for 2 year olds, funding for the most disadvantaged 2 year olds was already allocated on a formula basis. The Government had

committed to uplift the average 2 year old funding rate from £5.09 to £5.39. DfE had confirmed that 100% of the funding must be passed to providers. Therefore, the LA proposed to pay providers £5.20 per hour, an increase of £0.30p per hour.

The Chair welcomed the new funding allocations as positive for Hartlepool. It was welcoming to hear positive news from the government on funding which would be welcomed by providers in the town.

The Vice-Chair expressed some concern for those schools that may already be struggling with capacity issues in reception when trying to accommodate the numbers of 3 and 4 year olds that may be in an attached nursery. She asked if there would there be any additional funding to meet the extra pressure that having to accommodate the changes. The Vice-Chair indicated that her concern was around the potential for neighbourhood schools to lose whole families when they were unable to accommodate a 2 year old in a nursery and then any subsequent children from that family attended the school the first child had to go to through a sibling link.

The Head of Service commented that the local authority's responsibility was to ensure that there were sufficient early years places but not to be able to accede to every parental preference. There would always be an element of parental preferences that the local authority could not meet but there would always be sufficient school places. In terms of the capacity for 2 year olds the Head of Service indicated that there was little appetite among schools to provide additional nursery places for 2 year olds. This may change with the improved funding and any school that wished to talk to the local authority on capacity issues would receive assistance but realistically there was unlikely to be any additional funding for capacity building.

The Chair questioned if there had been any anticipated impact on school place planning. The Head of Service indicated that the doubling of nursery hours provision from central government was not going to bring increased demand, it affected the same children that were receiving the lower provision. For many working families all year round provision was essential, not just the 38 weeks schools were open, and private nursery provision was, therefore, the only real option. The Vice-Chair commented that not all school nurseries would be able to provide the extended provision as they may have been catering for two different cohorts of children on a morning and afternoon.

The Secondary School Heads representative stated that following the debate at Schools Forum, it was clear that schools simply did not know yet what the demand was yet and the situation would need to be monitored.

A Member questioned if any of the local nursery providers had indicated how the changes in the business rates regime would affect them as in other areas some had commented that it could close their businesses.

The Head of Service stated that none had raised any issues; all appropriate Hartlepool nurseries were rate exempt as they were registered as education establishments.

The following decisions were agreed unanimously.

Decision

1. That the outcome of Hartlepool's consultation on the national early years funding formula be noted.
2. That Hartlepool's National Early Years Funding Formula for April 2017/18 be approved as reported.

72. 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 decisions were agreed unanimously.

Decision

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

Grange Primary School – Mr Allan Fletcher
Greatham CE Primary School – Councillor Brenda Loynes
St Cuthbert's RC Primary School – Ms Louise A Robson
St Joseph's RC Primary School – Mr James F Ainslie.

73. Development of Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform Children's Services Committee of the national policy agenda in relation to adoption and the local response to develop a Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency with the assistance of a grant from the Department for Education.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Child and Adult Services updated the Committee on the development work for the Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency including the production of a Outline Business case, a copy of which was submitted with the report. Details of the governance structure headed by the Management Board made up of the Directors of Children's Services and senior managers from the local voluntary agencies and key partner agencies was also reported. The Director indicated that, at this time, it was hoped that the new agency may be up and running late this year.

The following decisions were agreed unanimously.

Decision

1. That the work being undertaken to develop a regional adoption agency be noted and that the Council's commitment to the ongoing development of a Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency be confirmed
2. That the Committee receive a further report on this development when a key decision would be required to move to the creation of the Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency.

74. The Children's Hub – Six Monthly Progress Report (Director of Child and Adult Services)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide Members with a six-month progress report on The Children's Hub. To note the performance management data for quarters 1 and 2.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Service, Children's Hub and Partnerships, reported the key statistical information and demand on the Children's Hub for the period 1 June to 31 December 2016. In the period the staff within the Hub had –

- Answered on average 750 phone calls a month
- Dealt with on average 1154 referrals per month
- Sent approximately 31% of referrals for social care assessment
- Chaired at least 32 strategy meetings a month.

The split of work across the two local authorities was 60% Stockton and 40% Hartlepool as had been predicted.

A performance management framework was agreed by partners and Appendix A to the report set out the quarter 1 and 2 results. Due to the early nature of the service and the complexities of aligning two different sets of performance management information for two LAs this area of work is constantly under review.

Key highlights for Hartlepool included (referenced to statistical indicators in Appendix A to the report) -

- 20% of all referrals received progress through the full Children's Hub process (i.e. multi agency information sharing to aid decision making) (5d)
- More than 45% of referrals that are dealt with via the Children's Hub process proceed to social care assessment (2f)
- More than 21% of referrals lead to a Strategy discussion (2g)
- 90%% of referrals into the Hub are new referrals in past 12 months (2i)
- 100% of referrals resulted in partners reaching a consensus (2j)
- More than 70% of referrals receive an outcome or decision within one working day
- 98% of Strategy meetings are held within one working day of contact
- Police and health attendance at Strategy meetings has increased since the Children's Hub started (4b)
- CAMHS has seen an increase in children and young people receiving treatment as a result of their involvement in the Children's Hub (2a).

The Children's Hub had been subject to rigorous audits in order for partners to be confident that thresholds were appropriate and that children are kept safe from harm.

Stockton on Tees Borough Council's Ofsted 'inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers' took place between 23rd May and 16th June 2016. This resulted in the Children's Hub being inspected in week three of its opening. Ofsted described the Children's Hub as 'already leading to earlier and more effective identification of risk, improved information sharing and joint decision making' and decided that 'information sharing and decision making are effective'. They recommended that evidence of recording management decisions was improved and this was put in place with immediate effect. Subsequent audits by Stockton colleagues confirmed that 100% of dip sampled cases had appropriate management oversight.

The Head of Service also reported that a full review of demand and resource requirements was underway including budget implications for all partners. This would be reported to Members in due course as part of the 12 month review of the Hub.

The Chair welcomed the report and commented on the large workload being dealt with by the Hub. Members noted the split in the workload and the Head of Service's comments in relation to the increasing demand from Stockton. There was also to be an improvement to the IT link with Stockton.

The Chair questioned if there were any resource issues from partner organisations that were restricting the development of services. The Head of Service commented that the most recent Board meeting had set a clear indication of expected service input and it was anticipated that resources from the Police and Health partners would be increasing to meet demand.

The Chair questioned what level of scrutiny/reporting was being undertaken at Stockton BC in relation to the operation of the Hub. The Head of Service reported that a report was being submitted to Stockton's Cabinet in March.

The Vice-Chair commented that the reported workload split between Stockton and Hartlepool was 60/40, though on a population level this should be nearer 70/30; were there any specific reasons behind this. The Head of Service reported that no specific issues had been noted and while there were peaks and troughs in demand the situation was being closely monitored.

Members noted the number of strategy meetings and questioned if this was high. The Head of Service indicated that the numbers had been reducing due to the greater availability of real time information which was reducing the need for strategy meetings.

Members noted the referrals to CAMHS and the improved pathways for young people and families to gain quicker access to services. It was questioned if statistical information was recorded on a ward basis to fully assess demand. The Assistant Director, Children's Services indicated that information around children was recorded down to a very detailed level and shared with Police and partners to monitor if any trends were occurring.

The Vice-Chair commented that it was often noticeable during periods when the economy had been in decline and families finances were tight that issues around domestic violence and family breakdown increased. In the current economic situation this may have reached or past its peak but it would be wrong not to acknowledge this trend. It was commented that this trend had been noted in other North East authority areas and not only in relation to children but also elderly people. The Director indicated that the forthcoming Tees Adults Safeguarding Board's annual conference would have the theme of domestic violence and the Director indicated that details of the conference would be circulated to Members.

Decision

That the progress of the Children's Hub and associated performance management information be noted.

75. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

There were no items the Chair considered urgent.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 21 March, 2017. The Chair advised Members that there was to be a joint meeting with the Finance and Policy Committee at 4.00 pm on that date to consider the Northern Lights Academy. The meeting of the Children's Services Committee would follow the joint meeting. Both meetings would be held in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 5.05 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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