

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

25 July 2017

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

Present:

Councillor: Alan Clark (In the Chair)

Councillors: Brenda Harrison, John Lauderdale, George Morris and Kaylee Sirs

Healthwatch representatives: Ruby Marshall

Young people's representatives:

Callum Reed

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
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

14. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Shane Moore, Mark Tilling (Secondary Schools Head Representative), David Turner (Primary Schools Head Representative), Jo Heaton (C of E Diocesan Representative), Evelyn Leck (Healthwatch).

15. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brenda Harrison declared a non-prejudicial interest in the business on the agenda.

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2017

Confirmed.

17. Adoption Annual Report 2016/17 and Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2017/18 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To note the Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2016/17.

To approve the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose for 2017/18.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was noted that it was a requirement of the National Minimum Standards that the service produced a Statement of Purpose for Adoption Services and reviews these at least annually. It was also a requirement that the executive side of the Local Authority received six monthly reports detailing the management, outcomes and functioning of the Adoption Services. This information was provided within the Annual Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Statement of Purpose for 2017/18 was set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

The Assistant Director, Children's Services provided an update on the recruitment and assessment of prospective adopters, the two stage assessment process, the family finder process and the ongoing development of a Regional Adoption Agency. The priorities for 2017/18 were highlighted and included continuing to improve recruitment timescales for adoptions, improving child permanency reports and the long term records to help children understand their journey into adoption and continuing to advertise and recruit prospective adopters. Further details on the statement of purpose, aims of the service and staffing information was included in Appendix 2.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Children's Services indicated that there were approximately 15 Hartlepool children adopted within a 12 month period, this included sibling groups. The Assistant Director, Children's Services commented that work was ongoing to examine the numbers to ensure that permanency plans for children were ambitious.

Decision

- (1) The Adoption Agency Annual Report was noted.
- (2) The Statement of Purpose was approved in line with the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011.

18. To nominate Local Authority representatives to serve on School Governing Bodies *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide an update 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

Reports had previously been presented to the Children's Services Committee in February and July 2015 alerting members to the requirement that 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 meets 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).**

Decision

That the following Local Authority nominations be forwarded for consideration by the relevant Governing Bodies where vacancies currently exist: -

St Helen's Primary School – Gillian Danby; and

Golden Flatts Primary School – Janet Henderson.

19. Fostering Service Interim Report – Quarter 4 (Dec 2016-Mar 2017) *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the final 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 report including an update on the Fostering Services performance for the quarter 4 (December 2016 - March 2017) updating the Committee on recruitment and retention of prospective foster carers to minimise the dependency and need to source costly external placements for children. It was noted that there were currently 114 foster carers who provide placements for 184 children and young people, including 7 young people in Staying Put placements and 28 children/young people in Connected Care foster placements.

The Family Placement Panel continued to be held on a twice only basis and include items relating to both fostering and adoption matters. The Panel has a full cohort of members and yearly appraisals of panel members were also undertaken. Details of the staffing arrangements across the Fostering and Adoption Service were provide in the report.

It was noted that the number of children becoming looked after in this final quarter has again increased and continues to be in line with an increase in referrals for connected carer assessments.

The Assistant Director, Children's Services highlighted that there continued to be staffing pressures across the Fostering Service in view or the demand on the service. Officers were continuing to examine the model in place and options available to ensure the most effective service provision. In addition, training and support for foster carers was continuing and the recently held Foster Carer Conference had been very well attended and would continue on an annual basis.

A Member sought clarification on the level of Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers Portfolios completed. The Assistant Director, Children's Services commented that work was ongoing to improve the number of foster carers achieving this qualification but that occasionally connected persons placements questioned whether required training as they were looking after a child from within the family.

The Chair conveyed the Committee's gratitude to everyone involved for their continued support of foster carers and the provision of this excellent service.

Decision

The report in relation to the work of the Fostering Service in the final quarter of 2016/17 was noted.

20. 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.

21. Young Person's Representatives on Children's Services Committee

Members were pleased to note the attendance of a young persons' representative at the Committee as their contribution had proven extremely valuable in the past. The young persons' representative commented that due to the recent examinations it had proved difficult for young people to attend and the Youth Council was undergoing a number of changes and focussing on recruitment. It was hoped that this would assist more young people to attend and continue to provide input from a young person's perspective at future meetings of the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 4.25 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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