

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

16 January 2018

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Alan Clark (In the Chair)

Councillors: Brenda Harrison, Marjorie James, John Lauderdale, Shane Moore and George Morris.

Co-opted members:

Mark Tilling, Secondary Schools Head Representative
David Turner, Primary Schools Head Representative
Alan Chapman, Special Schools Head Representative

Young people's representatives:

Callum Reed, Hartlepool Youth Parliament Representative

Officers: Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Children's and Families' Services

Mark Patton, Assistant Director, Education

Sandra Shears, Head of Finance, Corporate and Schools

Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

72. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kaylee Sirs and Stephen Thomas, Jo Heaton, Evelyn Leck and Ruby Marshall.

73. Declarations of Interest

The Head Teachers reiterated their previously stated personal declarations.

74. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2017

Received.

75. Dedicated Schools Grant – Schools Formula 2018/19 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan reference CAS 71/17.

Purpose of report

To provide an indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation in relation to the Schools Block Funding for 2018/19 and propose the local school formula for 2018/19.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education presented a detailed and comprehensive report which provided the background in relation to the Schools Block Funding for 2018/19 along with the consultation undertaken on the National Funding Formula (NFF). It was noted that at a meeting of the Schools Forum on 17 November 2017, it was agreed to fund £0.600m in the Central Schools Services block and the balance of £0.315m to be transferred to the Schools block for 2018/19.

The transition to the NFF sees a number of changes to the formula characteristics and values and the key changes were outlined in the report. It was noted that following consultation, Schools Forum recommended the adoption of the NFF from 2018/19. The 2018/19 formula will include minimum funding of +0.5% for all schools, compared to the 2017/18 baseline. Funding is subject to variations in pupil numbers and the transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block and adjustments relating to NNDR.

The Chair reiterated the unanimous support of Council at its meeting on 14 December 2017 for the motion in relation to the transitional arrangements for implementing the national Schools Funding Formula.

In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director, Education indicated that the changes to the funding to schools through the proposed arrangements would vary from school to school. The Assistant Director, Education added that schools would be facing tremendous financial difficulty in 2020/21 should the proposed NFF arrangements be implemented as the proposed financial protection from the Government will cease at the end of March 2020.

Members were concerned with the proposed NFF arrangements and the financial difficulties that would be imposed on schools in Hartlepool. It was proposed that a letter be forwarded to the Secretary of State for Education expressing the concerns of the Committee. The Chair suggested that it would be helpful to have a view of the Schools' Forum

on the actual impact of the proposed budget reductions on schools in Hartlepool from 2020 to include within this letter. It was also noted that Hartlepool's MP, Mike Hill had also indicated he was willing to put questions forward to the Government on behalf of the Committee.

Decision

- (1) The contents of the report and the recommendations from the Schools' Forum were noted.
- (2) The agreement of the Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.600m, as detailed in paragraph 3.8 of the report was noted.
- (3) The funding formula for 2018/19 as detailed in section 5 of the report was approved.
- (4) That the Schools' Forum report back to Committee on the financial implications on Hartlepool schools of the budget reductions proposed by the Government from 2020 as a result of the proposed arrangements in relation to the National Funding Formula.

76. Dedicated Schools Grant – Early Years Formula 2018/19 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan reference CAS 71/17.

Purpose of report

To provide an indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation in relation to the Early Years Funding for 2018/19 and propose the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) for 2018/19.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education presented a detailed and comprehensive report which provided the background in relation to the Early Years National Funding formula for 2018/19. The outcome of the changes relating to the three- and four-year old funding was reflected in the report and updated funding allocation information was tabled in relation to paragraphs 4.1 and 4.3 in the report. It was proposed to allocate 2.9% £0.127m in the formula for 2018/19 and retain the same supplements and weightings as the 2017/18 formula, the supplemental per hour funding was detailed in the report.

It was noted that in accordance with ESFA guidance, the Schools' Forum was required to agree the central funding in respect of the Early Years Block. The guidance also required centrally retained funding not to exceed 5% of the total funding for three- and four-year olds, £0.220m (£0.309m in 2017/18). Further detail was provided on what this funding would be utilised for. It was highlighted that at a meeting of the Schools'

Forum on 8 December 2017, the recommendation that the local authority retains central funding of £0.220m (5%) in 2018/19 was approved. Consultation had been undertaken and ended on 30 November 2017 with the majority of respondents agreeing to the proposed formula for 2018/19.

The Assistant Director, Education commented that the above proposals were a very positive move in supporting the very youngest of children into education to ensure they were as well prepared for school as possible. It was highlighted that throughout the consultation exercise undertaken, the response provided was overwhelmingly positive.

The Chair added that the additional funding for Early Years was very much welcomed, however, it was difficult to lose sight of the bigger picture of budget cuts across education as a whole.

Decision

- (1) The contents of the report and the outcomes from the consultation response were noted.
- (2) The agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of 5%, £0.220m as detailed in paragraphs 4.9 and 4.10 were noted.
- (3) The funding formula for 2018/19 as detailed in the updated paragraph 4.1 and in paragraph 4.3 were approved.

77. School Attendance Code of Conduct Update *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To request approval to update the current Code of Conduct to reflect legal precedent.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education presented a report which provided the background to the introduction of the local Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices along with details of the number of Notices issued over the previous three years. The data provided showed the clear positive impact of the Code and the policies adopted by schools which promote the educational achievement of children and young people.

It was proposed to further amend the Code following the Isle of Wight case in July 2016 which defined what constitutes regular attendance, ie an attendance rate of 90%. Given that Hartlepool's benchmark was 90%, it was suggested that Penalty Notices for holidays in term time should

only be considered if a child's attendance was below 90% in the 39 school weeks prior to the holiday period. The suggested amended text was highlighted in Appendix A.

The Assistant Director, Education provided clarification on a number of issues around school attendances and highlighted that any requested absence would be considered on the basis of the previous 39 school weeks' attendance of that pupil, including across the previous academic year where appropriate. Members were supportive of the proposed amendments and considered it a fair way to approach dealing with requests for holidays in term time.

Decision

- (1) The background to these proposals provided at Appendix A was noted.
- (2) The proposed amendments as described in section 4 of the report and highlighted in Appendix A were approved.

78. Adoption Service Six Month Update April 2017 – September 2017 (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with information relating to the activity of the Adoption Service for the first six months of 2017/18. The Adoption 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 and Families' Services presented a comprehensive report on performance of the Adoption Team, the membership and meetings of the Family Placement Panel, recruitment and approvals of prospective adopters, the staffing of the Adoption Team and the successful development of a Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency.

The Chair added that he had met with other regional Lead Members for Children's Services who were all encouraged by the progress with the development of the Tees Valley Regional Adoption Agency which should be up operational in April this year.

Everyone involved in the provision of the adoption service were thanked

for all their hard work and achievements, especially around the recruitment of prospective adopters.

Decision

The six month report in relation to the work of the Adoption Service from April 2017 to September 2017 was noted.

79. Fostering Service Interim Report 1 July 2017 – 30 September 2017 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the second quarter of 2017. 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 and Families' Services presented a comprehensive report on the Fostering Services performance for the quarter 1 July to 30 September 2017 updating the Committee on Recruitment and Retention, the work of the Family Placement Panel, Staffing and developments within the service. It was highlighted that the recruitment of prospective foster carers was ongoing with Hartlepool doing really well in this area compared to other Tees Valley authorities.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for such a comprehensive report but expressed some concern at the number of children being fostered by non-local authority foster carers. It was noted that discussions were ongoing with the Chief Executive to explore ways of increasing the number of local authority foster carers.

In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director indicated that the cross-over between adopters and foster carers was not extensive. There had been occasions when foster carers had built up such a strong family relationship with the child they were fostering that this had progressed onto adoption. However, the ultimate goal of any placement was the stability in place to support that child into adulthood.

Decision

That the report in relation to the work of the Fostering Service in the second quarter of 2017 was noted.

80. Centre for Excellence in Creative Arts (formerly Northern Lights Academy) Update *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with an update on the developments relating to the Centre for Excellence in Creative Arts (CECA).

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Education presented a report highlighted a number of projects that were being delivered from the CECA by Cleveland College of Arts and Design and the staff within the Space to Learn. New branding had been agreed and would be applied to the exterior of the building early in 2018 and work was continuing to secure education partners to deliver a curriculum offer from CECA. It was noted that a recent application for funding to the Tees Valley Combined Authority for the first 3 years of the operation of the CECA had been successful and had progressed to the final stages of release.

It was highlighted by the Assistant Director that a Working Party involving Ward Members and Officers had been set up to plan and deliver a public event from CECA early in 2018 to promote the new Centre and, in view of historic issues around the Northern Lights Academy, overcome any anxieties of the local community. In addition to this, a Strategic Co-ordination Group had been formed to have a strategic oversight of the Centre and will comprise stakeholder representatives. The membership of this Group included the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children's Services Committee, representatives from local schools, the Cleveland College of Art and Design who was a key partner in the operation of the Centre and it was expected that this Group would increase as more partners came on board. It was noted that the Strategic Coordination Group had met for the first time in January.

The Assistant Director added that further bids additional funding were being drawn up for specific areas of the operation of the Centre.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Tees Valley Combined Authority for the funding and indicated that he looked forward to seeing the Centre develop along with the creation of new jobs. In

addition to this, the Chair thanked the Schools' Forum for the equipment provided from the Space to Learn which will be utilised going forward.

Decision

- (1) The contents of the report were noted.
- (2) The decision by schools to begin an early transfer for elements of the Space to Learn offer from February 2018 was noted.

81. Safeguarding Committee Report Six Monthly Update *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

There is an expectation that Members receive regular reports on the arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. This report is one of a suite of reports that Members receive to review and scrutinise work with Children's Services. This includes SEND performance, fostering and adoption updates.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information relating to safeguarding performance in Hartlepool during the first six months of 2017/18 to enable Members to scrutinise and challenge practice.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's and Families' Services indicated that the report highlighted the volume of safeguarding work undertaken, compliance with the child protection procedures, the effectiveness of work being carried out to promote the safety and wellbeing of children within the Borough and volume in relation to Children Looked After.

The Assistant Director outlined the key statistics and points from the detailed and comprehensive report relating to:

- Early Help;
- Children's Hub;
- Children and Family Assessments;
- Children in Need Under Section 17;
- Children with Disabilities;
- Children in Need of Protection;
- Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT);
- Looked After Children; and
- Workforce.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Assistant Director outlined the process involved for re-referrals. It was noted that the number of assessments had decreased in July and August 2017 and a large proportion of this was linked to sickness absence within the Team. In view of this, the Chair requested that future reports include national comparison data to enable Members to have a clearer picture.

A discussion ensued on the continuing increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans over the last few years and the Assistant Director indicated that this was being reviewed and the outcome of this review would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chair sought clarification on the 'other' factors behind why children cease to be a looked after child. The Assistant Director indicated that she would explore this further and feed back to Members of the Committee. The Chair was pleased to note the changes that had been implemented in Bevan House to support the whole social work workforce.

A Member requested a further breakdown of the figures included within paragraph 11.2 in relation to children aged 10-15 and 16+ by gender as this would assist in identify the reason behind becoming looked ie, was it linked to teenage pregnancy.

A discussion ensued on the percentage of children who were subject to a Child Protection Plan who were without a history of assessment under Early Help assessment. The Assistant Director indicated that there may have been some form of low level assessment undertaken but not enough to trigger further investigation. The importance of all agencies being on board with early help assessments was discussed including midwives, health visitors and other agencies. The Assistant Director indicated that work was ongoing to identify barriers to the involvement of other organisations in the early help assessment process. In view of this, the Chair requested a report back to Committee on the ongoing work around early help assessments once this had been undertaken.

Members were encouraged by the amount of work being undertaken to retain, recruit and support social workers. A Member highlighted that feedback received from some families had indicated that in general, organisations and officers were generally better at identifying issues and signposting families to the most appropriate type of support.

Decision

- (1) The report was noted.
- (2) That a further update be provided on the ongoing work to identify barriers to the involvement of other organisations around the early help assessment process.
- (3) That future updates on Safeguarding include a breakdown by

gender, as well as age, of when children become looked after and the national average of the number of assessments undertaken on a monthly basis.

- (4) That a further report be submitted to Committee which explores the reasons behind children being subject to a child protection plan for longer than two years.
- (5) That further detail on the 'other' factors behind why children cease to be a looked after child be provided to the Committee.
- (6) That a further breakdown of the figures included within paragraph 11.2 in relation to children aged 10-15 and 16+ be included in future reports by gender, as this would assist in identifying the reason behind becoming looked ie, was it linked to teenage pregnancy.

82. 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.

83. Any Other Business – Visit to Catcote Academy

The Chair indicated that the Vice Chair of the Committee would be visiting Catcote Academy and if any other Committee Members wished to attend to contact the Vice Chair as soon as possible.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 20 February 2018 at 4.30pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 5.55 pm.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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