

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

12 June 2018

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

Present:

Councillor: Brenda Harrison (In the Chair)

Councillors: Paul Beck, Marjorie James, John Lauderdale, Sue Little and Katie Trueman

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

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Tom Cassidy was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Shane Moore

Co-opted members:

Jo Heaton, C of E Diocesan Representative
Mark Tilling, Secondary Schools Head Representative
David Turner, Primary Schools Head Representative
Alan Chapman, Special Schools Head Representative

Young people's representatives:

Callum Reed, Youth Council representative

Also in attendance:

Councillor John Tennant
Evelyn Leck, Healthwatch representative
Minna West and John Littlefair, Hart Parish Council
Bob Ord, Hart Events Group
Colin Reid, Chair of Governors, Elwick and Hart Primary Schools

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Children's and Families' Services
Mark Patton, Assistant Director, Education
Julie Reed, Schools Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Shane Moore.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Paul Beck declared a personal interest in minute 4 as a Ward Councillor. The Headteachers declared their usual personal interests.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2018

Received.

4. Hart Primary School – Wall Collapse *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To request that Children's Services Committee review the options and recommend an option to remedy a collapsed wall at Hart Primary School.

Issue(s) for consideration

In March 2018, part of the western elevation wall at Hart Primary School collapsed. Subsequently, a structural condition survey was commissioned as attached at Appendix 1. The survey recommended that the remaining wall section of the west boundary wall should be carefully taken down in its entirety. Details of the consultation with the Planning One-Stop Shop were outlined in the report and the various options for consideration were included within the report with the associated estimated costs being detailed in confidential Appendix 3a. **This item contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) para 3.** The School had undertaken a risk assessment and further details were included in the report around the estates perspective.

It was highlighted that Hart Primary School was in the process of converting to academy status. However, the incident occurred before the academy order was received by the Local Authority. The guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) advises that local authorities should look favourably on those schools converting where works have been previously identified (before conversion).

The Assistant Director, Education informed Members that correspondence had been received from the residents of Manor Cottage which adjoined the boundary wall, the Headteacher and Governors of

Hart Primary School and Hart Parish Council and went on to relay this to the Committee. It was noted that some further information had been received from the School which indicated that a condition survey of the boundary wall had been undertaken. The advice given was that the height of the wall, 1.9m, was particularly unusual (large), and that the condition of the wall posed a significant risk to life.

In response to a question from a Member, the Headteacher of Hart Primary School confirmed that as a result of consultation undertaken, it was suggested that the area between the proposed internal fencing and the wall could be maintained as a wildlife area or maintained as part of the school's field maintenance routine. Members were supportive of the remedial works to the wall being undertaken as the health and safety of individuals using that area was of paramount importance. It was suggested that the potential of involving horticulture students in the repair of the wall be explored.

The Chair invited members of the public who were in attendance to address the Committee. It was recognised that the wall needed to be repaired but the importance of maintaining the heritage and historical interest of the village, as well as ensuring the area remains available for the use of residents for events was reiterated. The Headteacher from Hart Primary School confirmed that the School worked closely with residents of the village to ensure the continued use of the field for the whole community. It was noted that fund raising was ongoing to replace Chare Wall as this in need of repair and was built from similar materials.

A discussion ensued on the options proposed within the report and the Chair proposed that Option 2 be approved to rebuild the western boundary (stone wall) and provide railings offset from western, northern and eastern boundaries using fencing that was innovative in design. In addition to this, it was suggested that the height of the wall be re-examined in view of the health and safety risks and comments received from the structural surveyor. A Member proposed that any stone not utilised in the repair of the wall be retained and utilised as part of the replacement works being undertaken for Chare Wall. It was noted that the Local Authority would support any future bids for funding undertaken for the maintenance of the boundary wall.

A Member suggested that the decision be deferred to enable a consultation exercise to be undertaken with the residents of Hart Village. However, it was noted that there were representatives from Hart Parish Council, elected representatives, Hart Primary School and the Hart Events Group in attendance who had all made representations to the Committee. The importance of ensuring the health and safety of this area as soon as possible and before the children return to school in September was paramount which would not allow any time for any further consultation.

Decision

- (1) The contents of the report and associated appendices, including the proposed options were noted.
- (2) That the western boundary (stone wall) be rebuilt with the provision of railings offset from western, northern and eastern boundaries using an innovative fencing design.
- (3) That the potential of involving horticulture students in the repair of the wall be explored.
- (4) That upon the completion of the repair of the boundary wall, any surplus stones be retained for use as part of the replacement of Chare Wall in Hart Village.
- (5) That the Local Authority offer support with any future bids for funding in relation to the repair and/or maintenance of the boundary wall.

5. 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.

Minute 6 – Former Chair of Children's Services Committee

6. Former Chair of Children's Services Committee

The Chair referred to former Councillor Alan Clark who had chaired the Children's Services Committee for the previous two years. On behalf of the Committee, thanks were conveyed to him for undertaking his role as Chair in such a professional and effective manner and he was wished every success in the future.

Decision

That a letter be forwarded to former Councillor Alan Clark with the gratitude of the Committee for undertaking his role as Chair in such a professional and effective manner, and wishing him every success in the future.

7. Appointments to School Admissions Forum *(Legal and Democratic Services Team Manager)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To seek Elected Nominations from within the membership of the Children's Services Committee to the School Admissions Forum.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Schools Admissions Forum forms part of the Council's Outside Bodies and considers existing and proposed admission arrangements and how they serve the interests of local children and parents; aim to reach local agreement on any new or controversial issues; consider the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the local authority's admissions literature and information for parents; consider and approve local co-ordinated arrangements; promote modern and parent-friendly admissions processes.

Three nominations were sought for this organisation from within the membership of this Committee, which must be Elected Members and include the Chair. Several Members put their names forward for these nominations and a vote was undertaken.

Decision

That the following appointments to the Schools Admissions Forum be reported to Council:

Councillor Brenda Harrison, Chair of the Children's Services Committee
Councillors Paul Beck and Marjorie James.

8. Healthy Pupils Capital Fund *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To inform the Children's Services Committee about the new Healthy Pupils Capital fund and outline the distribution model and accountability process.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the provision and allocation of the funding. The Schools' Capital Sub-Group and Schools' Forum met to discuss how the grant funding should be used or allocated. During these discussions, the recommendation of the Sub-Group, which was endorsed by the Schools' Forum, was that the funding should be dispersed pro rata to the relevant maintained schools, noting the provisions in the Department for Education (DfE) guidance document which was attached

at Appendix A.

It was highlighted that the Local Authority must formally report on the allocation and the impact of the funding for its maintained schools. Should schools not use the funding for projects detailed within the guidance, the DfE could potentially claw back the funding.

In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director, Education commented that the funding was allocated on a pro-rata pupil basis but was not currently part of the 'funding following child model'.

Decision

The report was noted.

9. Fostering Annual Report 2017/18 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

For the Children's Services Committee to note the Annual Report of the Fostering Agency 2017/18 attached at Appendix A.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background behind the production of the annual report of the Fostering Service which was subject to National Minimum Standards to the provision of foster care for children looked after. The report provided 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.

The Assistant Director, Children's and Families Services highlighted that there was significant demand in relation to looked after children resulting in continued pressure on placements. A lot of work had been undertaken and would continue with recruitment and retention of foster carers, to ensure that as many children as possible were cared for within the local community. It was noted that Local Authority foster carers were provided with high quality support and flexibility with foster carers from independent fostering agencies sometimes transferring to be foster carers for the Local Authority.

A discussion ensued on the details of the report and the Assistant Director, Children's and Families' Services provided responses to a number of questions.

Officers were congratulated on the report and the recruitment and retention of foster carers and the Chair commented that if the Committee

can assist in the recruitment campaign for foster carers in any way to let her know. The Assistant Director asked members to be champions in the community for foster carers and also asked them to raise this within their communities to try and attract more in house foster carers.

Decision

The report was noted.

10. Adoption Annual Report 2017/18 (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

For Children's Services Committee to note the Annual Report of the Adoption Agency 2017/18 which was attached at Appendix A.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background behind the production of the annual report of the Adoption Agency which was subject to National Minimum Standards to the provision of the adoption service. The report provided details of the staffing arrangements in the service, training received by both staff, and adopters, the constitution of the Fostering and Adoption Panel, activity in relation to the recruitment, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters, the achievements of the service during the year and the priorities for further service development in 2018/19.

The Assistant Director, Children's and Families' Services confirmed that the in-house adoption service had recently moved to a Regional Adoption Agency, however the duty to report performance information to the local authorities involved remained in place.

Decision

The report was noted.

11. 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.

Minute 12 – Young People's Representatives on Children's Services Committee

12. Young People's Representatives on Children's Services Committee

A discussion ensued on the young people's representation on the Children's Services Committee. The representative from the Youth Council informed the Committee that the recruitment and retention of young people on the Youth Council was an ongoing issue. In addition to this, it was highlighted that it was difficult to generate interest in young people to attend Council Committees. The Assistant Director, Children's and Families' Services confirmed that work was ongoing with the Participation Team to look at ways of increasing the involvement of young people. It was suggested that discussions be held with the Youth Parliament to try and identify a way forward in increasing youth participation.

Decision

That the ongoing work of the Participation Team be noted and that the Youth Parliament be involved in exploring ways of increasing youth participation.

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

The meeting concluded at 5.35pm

H MARTIN

INTERIM CHIEF SOLICITOR

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