

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

13 November 2018

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Brenda Harrison (In the Chair)

Councillors: Ann Marshall, Marjorie James, John Lauderdale and Sue Little

Co-opted members:

Mark Tilling, Secondary Schools Head Representative  
David Turner, Primary Schools Head Representative  
Zoe Westley, Special Schools Head Representative

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services  
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning  
Mark Patton, Assistant Director, Education  
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

### **39. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence will be received from Councillor Katie Trueman and Jo Heaton, C of E Diocesan Representative.

### **40. Declarations of Interest**

The Headteachers stated their usual declarations of interest and the Secondary School's Head Representative, Mark Tilling, declared a personal interest as a member of the Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee.

### **41. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2018**

Received.

### **42. Savings Programme 2019/20** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

**Type of decision**

Budget and Policy Framework

### **Purpose of report**

To enable Members to consider proposals to achieve further savings in 2019/20 and to provide feedback on these proposals to the Finance and Policy Committee on 26 November 2018.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services presented the report which included the proposals for delivery of savings in the Children's and Family Services Division as part of the 2018/19 budget process, the risks associated with the proposals and the considerations which had been taken into account in developing them.

The report included a breakdown of expenditure as well as details of outcomes/outputs. The proposed contribution from the Children's and Joint Commissioning Department for 2019/20 was £0.510m. Details of how the savings would be achieved were provided as detailed in the report and included £450,000 from Reshaping Early Help and £60,000 from Children's Social Care family support arrangements. Members were referred to the risk implications, financial as well as staffing considerations, as set out in the report.

In response to a number of queries the Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning confirmed that Stranton School were looking to continue to deliver community based services from within the building. In relation to Leaholme Road, Officers within Regeneration and Neighbourhoods were exploring ways to maximise the future use of the property.

A discussion ensued on the option to offer a 'pop-up' arrangement within Middleton Grange and the Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning indicated that a pop-up shop had been utilised previously by Public Health and had proved very successful being well attended by young families.

There was concern expressed by Members at the proposal to close children's centres. The Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning indicated that some centres had a good footfall, but other centres were being used less and less. In addition, a number of other services, such as midwifery, were also looking to reduce the number of venues services were provided from in line with the financial constraints they were also facing. Whilst it was noted that these were difficult decisions for Members, the situation was not ideal and the aim of the proposals were to try and mitigate the impact on families. It was suggested that the pop-up shop could be used to promote the services available to young families across the town.

In response to a comment from a Member, the Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning confirmed that all children's centres had baby clinics available and she would ensure this information was passed on by health

visitors.

A Member sought clarification on the number of staff that may be affected by the proposals. The Assistant Director, Joint Commission indicated that the number was currently 16 full time equivalents but that work was ongoing to reduce that number through holding vacancies and the option of voluntary redundancy being made available.

The Chair concluded that the Council had been put into an insidious position by Central Government through the reduction in budgets for the provision of children's services but had every confidence in Officers doing their very best to mitigate the risks. It was important that the lobbying of Central Government continue to highlight how badly people were being affected by the continuous reductions in budgets.

### **Decision**

The proposals included within the report were reluctantly supported by the Committee and that this be presented to the Finance and Policy Committee on 17 December 2018.

## **43. Education Improvement Strategy 2018-2021 – Strategic Intent** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision – Key Test (i) and (ii) apply.

### **Purpose of report**

To consult the Committee regarding the strategic intent for Hartlepool Education Improvement Strategy 2018-21 (EIS).

To seek approval from the Committee to develop the EIS into workplans annually, under appropriate stakeholder governance arrangements.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The background to the development of the Education Improvement Strategy was outlined in the report. Discussions had been undertaken during the spring and summer terms of 2018 with stakeholders and at Children's Services Committee which had helped shape a draft strategy overview. It was intended that the new strategy would include an explicit link back to the four themes from the Education Commission's findings in 2015:

- A: Leadership, governance and collaboration;
- B: Culture, aspirations and employment;
- C: Closing the gap; and

D: Getting every school, academy and college to good or outstanding, and maintained educational excellence.

The current draft strategy overview was attached at Appendix A. A consultation exercise had been undertaken and a summary of this was attached at Appendix B. The report highlighted that the Council's Constitution stipulated that education improvement in Hartlepool shall be monitored, supported and scrutinised by a governance arrangement called an Education Improvement Board (EIB).

A discussion ensued on the content of Appendix A and Members were of the view that it was too heavy and suggested a more user friendly document with visuals included. It was also suggested that it be included within the Council's Hartbeat publication that was circulated to every household in the town. The Chair requested that more emphasis be placed on preparation for working life, leisure time and cultural life within the journey.

### **Decision**

- 1) The report and consultation draft overview document attached at Appendix A were noted.
- 2) The broad strategy outlined in this overview document was endorsed with an emphasis to leisure and culture being included within the preparation for working life and the document be more user-friendly with the addition of visuals.
- 3) That the overt links (A, B, C, and D) back to the Commission should be more explicit and included within the Strategy.
- 4) That the implementation of the Education Improvement Strategy 2018-2021 be overseen by governance arrangements led by an Education Improvement Board comprising representatives from all key stakeholder groups and the Chair of Children's Services Committee.

## **44. Education Services – General Duties Rates for Maintained Schools Update** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance and Policy)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Committee of the Schools' Forum meeting, held on 16 October 2018 and their decision in relation to the 2019/20- Education Services General Duties Rates.

To agree that the Local Authority should present a disapplication request to the Secretary of State in order to ensure that the Local Authority can

discharge its statutory responsibilities.

### **Issue(s) for consideration**

The Schools' Forum considered the Local Authority's proposal of a rate of £60 per pupil for statutory duties from the Dedicated Schools Grant in line with the Government's national funding arrangements. The Schools' Forum did not agree to transfer the funding to the Local Authority as they considered that funding statutory duties from schools' budgets was a budget cut and that this should be funded by the Government. This has been a consistent view of Schools' Forum for the past two financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19. In each of these years, the Local Authority has applied to the Secretary of State for disapplication of the Regulations which has resulted in the Local Authority being able to remove the required element of funding to ensure that statutory responsibilities were discharged.

In response to a question from a Member, a Headteacher representative confirmed that the total amount across the maintained sector was estimated in the region of £240k.

Members were disappointed that Schools and the Local Authority were placed in this position yet again and it was suggested that Members continue to lobby Ministers to highlight the dire situation being placed upon local schools and the local authority from the continuous reduction in funding for education. The Chair indicated that she would raise this with Hartlepool's MP directly. In addition, it was suggested that the support of Full Council be sought at a future meeting to develop a single common position statement.

### **Decision**

- 1) The 2019/20 funding rate at £60 per pupil/place be agreed.
- 2) That a dis-application request to the Secretary of State to set the Education Services General Duties rate at £60 per pupil/place for 2019/20 be submitted.
- 3) It was noted that this will be the third year the Local Authority had applied for disapplication.
- 4) That the Chair highlight the affect the continuous reduction in funding for education within Hartlepool was having on schools and the local authority with the Hartlepool MP, Mike Hill.
- 5) That the support of Full Council be sought at a future meeting to develop a single common position statement on the continuous reduction in the funding of education within Hartlepool.

**45. “Period Poverty” (Affordability of Sanitary Products) -** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance and Policy)*

**Type of decision**

For information.

**Purpose of report**

To update the Committee on progress of the Council resolution of 2 February 2018 in support of the Tees Valley Free Period Campaign.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

It was noted that Officers from Children's and Joint Commissioning Services had explored options to ensure that young women were not experiencing period poverty. The young person's sexual health and wellbeing charity, Brook, were piloting a national “P-card” scheme across Teesside. This would provide free products and education to girls in financial need and was funded directly from Brook central resources at no cost to the Council. The P-card scheme is based on the successful C-card initiative which provides young people with confidential access to contraceptive advice and services. In addition to this, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Tampax Tax Fund was supporting the “Lets Talk. Period” project which was hoped would be operational from January 2019.

In Hartlepool, both primary and secondary schools were aware of the impact of period poverty and were proactive in providing young women with free sanitary wear as and when required. In addition to this, the Joseph Rowntree Trust had made sanitary products available at fuel and poverty events across the Town and the Food Bank provided sanitary products along with other toiletries as this was previously identified as a gap.

A discussion ensued on the fact that VAT was still paid on all sanitary products and it was suggested the Hartlepool's MP be lobbied to have VAT removed from sanitary products as this was an unfair tax.

**Decision**

- 1) The resources available to support young women who experience period poverty in order to mitigate the impact of this on their education were noted.
- 2) The Chair to lobby Hartlepool's MP, Mike Hill to remove the unfair tax placed on the purchase of sanitary products.

**46. Any Other Items which the Chair Considers are Urgent**

The Chair 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.

**Minutes 47 – Transfer of Schools' Budget 2019/20**

**47. Transfer of Schools' Budget 2019/20** (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

The Assistant Director, Education provided the Committee with an update on the current situation which was very complex regarding the future funding of the High Needs Block along with school funding pressures for 2019/20 financial year. The Schools' Forum had expressed concerns that the funding available no longer matched the needs of the young people funded from the High Needs Block. It was predicted that there would be a £1m deficit at the end of 2019/20 and the following options were proposed to address this deficit:

Option 1 – Do nothing and formally register the deficit in the statutory return which would result in the Council's accounts not being balanced.

Option 3 – Repeat the disapplication exercise that was undertaken in previous years and take the estimated £1m overspend from the School Block part of the Dedicated Schools' Grant.

Option 2 – To transfer £0.5m from the Schools Block part of the Dedicated Schools' Grant (as had happened for 2018/19) and explore other options to fund the remaining £0.5m. This was likely to involve further reductions in top-up and other funding used to support children with high needs. The Assistant Director, Education stated that this would place additional funding pressures on the most vulnerable young people and would not be inclusive educationally.

The Assistant Director, Education indicated that whilst this was not an ideal situation, Option 3 should be considered while developing a longer term solution in partnership with Headteachers.

It was noted that a decision would be required by this Committee once Schools' Forum met for a final time on 21 November to make its recommendations.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the options available and it was suggested that a briefing be held to which all Members would be invited to ensure all Members were aware of the issues that affect all schools within the town. It was also suggested that Headteacher representatives

from the Schools' Forum should be invited to attend the briefing for discussion of the issues from their perspective, after Members had been fully briefed.

### **Decision**

That a briefing be scheduled with all Members invited to outline the issues around the transfer of schools' budget for 2019/20 with Headteacher representatives from the Schools' Forum invited to attend after Members had been fully briefed.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 4 December 2018 at 4.00pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

The meeting concluded at 5.25pm

**H MARTIN**

**INTERIM CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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