

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

9 July 2019

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

**Present:**

Councillor: Leisa Smith (In the Chair)

Councillors: Lesley Hamilton, Brenda Harrison, Sue Little, Shane Moore, and Barbara Ward

Also Present: Councillors Marjorie James and Ann Marshall

**Co-opted Members:**

Jo Heaton, C of E Diocesan Representative

Zoe Westley, Special Schools Head Representative

Healthwatch Representative: Evelyn Leck

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children's and Families

Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning

Amanda Whitehead, Assistant Director, Education

Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair welcomed the recently appointed Assistant Director of Education, Amanda Whitehead.

### **15. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Lauderdale, David Turner, Primary Schools Head Representative, Joanne Wilson, RC Diocesan Representative and Ruby Marshall, Healthwatch Representative.

### **16. Declarations of Interest**

None

### **17. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2019**

Received.

**18. Carer's Strategy** (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

**Type of decision**

Non-key – for consultation – for Members to make recommendations to the Health and Wellbeing Board for final approval

**Purpose of report**

To share the draft Carer's Strategy with Members for consultation, discussion and to make recommendations to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The background to the development of the draft Carer's Strategy was outlined in the report. Recent consultation had taken place with young carers and carers which had formed the basis of the draft Strategy, attached at Appendix 1. The Strategy included a number of priorities as set out in the report. Following approval of the Strategy an implementation plan would be developed by the reinvigorated Carer's Strategy Group. The views of the Committee in relation to the Strategy would be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 23 September for final approval.

A lengthy discussion ensued during which Members debated issues arising from the report and officers responded to queries raised. Clarification was provided in relation to the support mechanisms available to young carers as well as the work of Hartlepool Carers. A Member raised whether there could be a young carer's register. The Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning explained that there were a number of carers that did not define themselves as carers and a register would therefore not be appropriate. However, young carers had asked for a young carers card to be developed. Emphasis was placed upon the importance of supporting young carers during the transition from primary to secondary education in terms of sharing information going forward to ensure there was an awareness of individual needs. Some concerns were raised regarding the type of information young carers may be exposed to, examples of which were provided and the need to manage this was highlighted.

Concerns were also raised that health agencies such as GP's were not adequately aware of the needs of young carers and how they should be treated when attending appointments with parents etc. The benefits of health partners working with schools and other agencies to identify any health related problems carers may be experiencing was highlighted as well as the importance of developing young carer cards.

The Leader suggested that concerns about health not always understanding the needs of young carers be raised at a future meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Whilst Members emphasised the importance of supporting young carers, the Committee was pleased to note that a number of young carers managed their caring responsibilities admirably, were doing very well at school and were assured that support was available should they need it.

### **Decision**

That the comments of Members, as detailed above, be noted and be utilised to formulate recommendations to feed into the Carer's Strategy to be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 23 September 2019 for final approval.

## **19. To Nominate a Local Authority Representative to Serve on the Governing Body of St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided (VA) Secondary School** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key

### **Purpose of report**

To consider a nomination for the role of Local Authority Governor at St Hild's CE VA Secondary School.

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

A schedule was submitted with the report setting out details of a vacancy which existed, together with an application received. The individual application was set out in a confidential appendix to the report which 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**

The Committee approved the local authority nomination of the applicant as set out in confidential Appendix B in respect of St Hild's CE VA Secondary School.

## **20. SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) Special Free School** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information – (Former Forward Plan entry CJCS081/18)

### **Purpose of report**

For Members of the Children's Services Committee to note the success of the Special Free School Bid and the progress to date for the development of a Special Free School in Hartlepool.

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

The Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning presented the report which provided background information to the development of a Special Free School in Hartlepool and the Secretary of State's approval that the Council's bid move to the next stage of the process. The Hartlepool SEMH Group had been reviewing the Council's approach to supporting children and young people with SEMH, details of which were provided.

The original specification, submitted as part of the bid, proposed a small school of 25 places with 5 assessment places. A discussion had taken place with the DfE who had indicated that in order to obtain final approval the school needed to increase the number of places. Following discussions with other Tees Valley authorities, the proposal to the DfE was to increase the pupil number to 50. An engagement event had taken place on 20 May with a number of prospective bidder trusts in attendance and a further engagement event had taken place on 1 July 2019.

In the discussion that followed presentation of the report, concerns were expressed regarding the potential noise impact as a result of the two wind turbines which had been erected close to the proposed school site.

The Committee welcomed the proposals to support children in the town with social, emotional and mental health needs. The Assistant Director responded to queries raised in relation to the proposals. Clarification was provided regarding the anticipated timescales for completion of the school, the proposals to work with neighbouring authorities in terms of provision outside of Hartlepool given the requirement to increase pupil numbers. Emphasis was placed upon the importance of provision for Hartlepool children where possible.

It was noted that whilst funding for the build of the new school would be provided by the DfE, funding for special school places was within the High Needs Block, the impact of which was debated. The Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning explained that they were having conversations with North East authorities to develop a partnership for others to buy places.

Given concerns raised regarding the financial impact on schools, a Member asked that officers take this up with the Department of Education.

### **Decision**

- (i) The Committee noted the process and the progress for the development of a Special Free School in Hartlepool.
- (ii) That the potential to work with other neighbouring authorities be explored to develop partnership agreements.

## **21. Annual Performance Report – Children's Social Care** (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

### **Type of decision**

For information

### **Purpose of report**

To present to Children's Services Committee the annual performance report for children's social care in Hartlepool.

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

The report provided background information around the production of the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT), attached at Appendix 1, which detailed demand and activity in children's social care for the year 2018/19 against key performance indicators and measures. The data contained within the report was a provisional outturn but was unlikely to change significantly when the statutory return was submitted. The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services provided a detailed summary and analysis of key headline performance data in relation to contact, referral and assessment, children in need including those in need of protection, children looked after, children's social care workforce as well as details of complaints and compliments as set out in the report.

Members were advised of the substantial capacity pressures in children's services despite the increases in the number of children's social workers employed by the Council as teams have had to absorb additional demand

Members welcomed the continuous positive activity and good level of performance provided to children and young people given the ongoing and increasing high levels of need and vulnerability for children in Hartlepool. Reference was made to various letters which had been sent to Government Ministers in relation to budget and capacity pressures and it was suggested that a further letter be distributed to Government and that this be raised at full Council. It was noted that these concerns had been discussed at the Combined Authority with other local authority leaders who would also be writing to Government Ministers in this regard.

A lengthy discussion ensued in relation to the various options available in terms of addressing the funding deficit, the specific drivers behind the increasing numbers of looked after children, the impact of the changes to the benefit system and Universal Credit and the difficulties meeting increased levels of demand. The need to publicise the costs associated with keeping children safe as well as the impact on other Council services was emphasised.

The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Co-opted Members responded to a number of further issues/queries in relation to the type of referrals received and the challenges facing social workers.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the concerns of Members in relation to Children's social care budget pressures, as detailed above, be considered at a future meeting of full Council.

## **22. Fostering Annual Report 2018-2019 and Statement of Purpose March 2019** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information

### **Purpose of report**

To provide Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the year 2018/19. The provision of foster care is a regulated activity and as such there is a requirement to provide the executive side of the Council with performance information on a regular basis and also annually.

This report is also to present to Children's Services Committee the Statement of Purpose for this service.

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

The report provided the background around the production of the annual report of the Fostering Service, attached at Appendix 1, which outlined details of the service's full activity including governance arrangements, how placements were made, recruitment arrangements, how carer's were rewarded and trained together with priorities for 2019-20. The requirement to produce a Statement of Service was outlined, a copy of which was appended to the report.

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.

Compliments and thanks were conveyed to Fostering Service staff, foster carers and everyone who had been involved in the recent Corporate Parent annual barbeque event.

**Decision**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**23. Statement of Purpose for Exmoor Grove Children's Home** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

**Type of decision**

For information only

**Purpose of report**

To present to the Committee the Statement of Purpose for Exmoor Grove Children's Home.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the requirement to produce a Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose provided families, carers, children and young people as well as other agencies with information relating to the service provided for children and young people within the Children's Home and detailed how the home can meet young people's needs. The Statement of Purpose for Exmoor Grove Children's Home was attached at Appendix A.

**Decision**

That the updated Statement of Purpose for Exmoor Grove Children's Home be noted.

**24. Statement of Purpose for Stockton Road Children's Home** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

**Type of decision**

For information only

**Purpose of report**

To present to the Committee the Statement of Purpose for Stockton Grove Children's Home.

**Issue(s) for consideration**

The report provided the background to the requirement to produce a Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose provided families, carers, children and young people as well as other agencies with information relating to the service provided for children and young people within the Children's Home and detailed how the home can meet the young people's needs. The Statement of Purpose for Stockton Road Children's Home was attached at Appendix A.

**Decision**

That the updated Statement of Purpose for Stockton Road Children's Home be noted.

**25. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Monday 2 September at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 5.35 pm.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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