

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

1 October 2019

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

Present:

Councillor: Leisa Smith (In the Chair)

Councillors: Brenda Harrison, John Lauderdale, Sue Little and Shane Moore

Also Present: Councillors Marjorie James and Ann Marshall
Louise Addison, Adoption Tees Valley

Co-opted Members:

Jo Heaton, C of E Diocesan Representative
David Turner, Primary Schools Head Representative
Umer Khan, Young Person's Representative

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children's and Families
David Ward, Head of Finance, Child and Adults
Jack Cummings, Youth Council
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

38. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Barbara Ward, Joanne Wilson, RC Diocesan Representative, Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative, Zoe Westley, Special Schools Representative and Evelyn Leck, Healthwatch Representative.

39. Declarations of Interest

None

40. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2019

Received.

41. Strategic Financial Management Report (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance and Policy*)

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the 2019/20 forecast General Fund Outturn, the 2019/20 Capital Programme Monitoring and to provide details for the specific budget areas that the Committee is responsible for.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Finance, Child and Adult Services referred to the reports submitted to the Finance and Policy Committee highlighting the potential overspend for the financial year, the reasons behind that and the measures being implemented to manage and reduce the overspend.

The detailed appendices to the report showed a forecast net overspend of £0.850m at the end of the year within Children's and Joint Commissioning. The main reasons behind this were as a result of an underlying budget pressure within Looked after Children related costs of £1.241m. A strategy for funding the pressures had been developed and reported to Finance and Policy Committee on 30 September and avoided the need for in-year budget cuts in 2019/20.

In response to clarification sought regarding the timescales for the Committee to consider the budget proposals/savings, the Director advised that given there were no budget reductions proposed for Children's Services, it was not intended to submit a specific savings report to Committee. However, a report was being prepared for the next meeting around an initiative to manage demand in Children's Services. A Member raised concerns that Committee Members were not being given the opportunity to contribute to the budget proposals and highlighted that there may be areas where savings could be identified. The Director advised that these concerns would be raised with the Director of Finance and Policy and Corporate Management Team and clarification sought.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the concerns raised in relation to the Committee's contribution to the budget proposals be shared the Director of Finance and Policy and Corporate Management Team and clarification sought.

42. Adoption Tees Valley – Bi-Annual Report 2018/19 (Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To present the 2018/19 second bi-annual report from Adoption Tees Valley which provided adoption services on behalf of Hartlepool Borough Council.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Children's and Families introduced the report which provided background information to creation of Adoption Tees Valley who had delegated responsibility to carry out a number of statutory adoption functions on behalf of the Council.

The report provided details of the work of Adoption Tees Valley which included the half year position of the Adoption Tees Valley against key performance and Adoption Leadership Board scorecard indicators, staffing arrangements, recruitment and matching activity, the work of the Adoption Panel, training adoption support, quality assurance and governance.

In support of the report, a representative from Adoption Tees Valley, who was in attendance at the meeting, provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation which focussed on recruitment, preparation and assessment, permanence champion role and family finding as well as post adoption support.

In the discussion that followed, officers responded to queries raised arising from the report and presentation. Clarification was provided in relation to the links and signposting arrangements between the Fostering Service and Adoption Tees Valley as well as details of post adoption support.

In response to a query raised regarding the reasons for a significant drop in numbers from the initial enquiry to adopt to progression to stage one of the adoption process, the Committee was advised that there were a number of factors which may influence prospective adopters from progressing to the final adoption stage, details of which were provided.

The Committee welcomed the report and noted the benefits and positive outcomes of the regional adoption agency arrangements to date. Compliments and thanks were conveyed by the school representative in terms of the quality of post adoption support in Hartlepool.

Decision

That the bi-annual report of Adoption Tees Valley and comments of Members be noted.

43. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following item 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.

44. Any Other Business – Update from Youth Parliament

The Young Person's Representative in attendance from the Youth Parliament reported on the importance of participation in climate change activities and the benefits as a result. The Leader of the Council advised that a cross party meeting was due to be held on Thursday 10 October at 5.30 pm where various projects of this type would be discussed.

The Young Person's representative also commented on the benefits of recycling and the need for additional recycling bins in the town categorised for plastic, paper etc. The Chair advised that this issue fell within the remit of Neighbourhood Services Committee and should be raised with the Chair of that Committee. The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services agreed to liaise with the relevant Chief Officer on behalf of the Youth Parliament.

Decision

- (i) That the information given be noted.
- (ii) That the suggestions, as outlined above, in relation to the need for additional recycling bins, be reported to the Chair of Neighbourhood Services Committee.

45. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 19 November 2019 at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 4.45 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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