

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

17 December 2019

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

Present:

Councillor: John Lauderdale (In the Chair)

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

Co-opted Members:

Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative
Zoe Westley, Special Schools Head Representative

Officers: Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children's and Families
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning
Amanda Whitehead, Assistant Director, Education
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance (Corporate and Schools)
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

61. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lesley Hamilton, Leisa Smith, Jo Heaton, Church of England Diocesan Representative, Joanne Wilson, RC Diocesan Representative, David Turner, Primary Schools Head Representative and Evelyn Leck, Healthwatch Representative.

62. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Shane Moore declared a personal interest in Minute 65.

63. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019

Received.

64. Dedicated Schools Grant – School Budget Shares 2020/21 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – Tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Ref CJCS 089/19.

Purpose of report

To provide details of the 2020/21 schools block funding allocation and to propose school budget shares for 2020/21. The Schools Block funding forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Finance (Corporate and Schools) referred to the table included in the report which outlined Hartlepool's Schools Block Indicative Allocation for 2020/21 which totalled £65.287m compared to equivalent funding of £63.597m in 2019/20. The Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) of the DSG funds local authorities for the statutory duties and other commitments they hold for maintained and academy schools. CSSB funding of £0.828m for 2020/21 had been confirmed based on October 2018 census numbers.

Schools' Forum were required to agree each element of spending against the CSSB on an annual basis. On 13 September 2019, the Schools' Forum had agreed to fund the elements amounting to £0.551m with the balance of CSSB funding (£0.277m) to be transferred to the school's block for 2020/21. At its meeting on 19 November 2019, Children's Services Committee approved a disapplication request for a transfer of £0.550m from the school's block to the high needs block.

In relation to individual school budgets for 2020/21, the Schools' Forum was consulted on two budget options based on the proposed block transfers and agreed that their preferred budget model was Option 2, to apply a minimum funding guarantee of 1.84% (the maximum allowed) increase per pupil compared to 2019/20 budgets, along with a cap of 3.72%. The report included a table which provided a summary of individual school budgets for 2020/21 which would mirror the NFF, less proposed block transfers.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) The agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.551m, with the residual £0.277m being transferred to the schools block, as detailed in paragraph 5.4 was noted.
- (iii) The decision taken by this Committee on 19 November 2019 to apply for Secretary of State approval to the transfer of £0.550m from the school's block to the high needs block was noted.

- (iv) The Committee agreed budget option 2 to apply an MFG of 1.84% and cap of 3.72% in 2020/21, as outlined in paragraph 6.1 of the report and noted this was the preferred budget option of the Schools' Forum.
- (v) That the individual school budget share for 2020/21 as summarised in the table at paragraph 6.3 of the report be approved.

65. Short Breaks Services Statement (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To approve the Short Breaks Services Statement and to inform Members of the short break services that had been delivered over the last year.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director of Joint Commissioning reported on the background to the requirement to provide a short breaks service designed to assist individuals who provided care for disabled children. The revised Short Breaks Services Statement was submitted as an appendix to the report.

The Assistant Director highlighted the short breaks provision in Hartlepool for children with disabilities and their families which included working in partnership to engage more people with additional needs to participate in physical activity and sports, details of which were set out in the report. An evaluation of the services that had been delivered in this regard were attached as appendices to the report.

In the discussion that followed, Members commended the support of Families First North East, who provided extended activities and short breaks to those children and families with children with additional needs referring to personal experiences and the benefits as a result. Members commented on the value of the services provided and paid tribute to all staff involved for their contributions and hard work in delivery of such an invaluable service.

A Member welcomed reference to the term short breaks as opposed to respite programme and felt this was a more accurate reflection of service provision.

Decision

- (i) That the Short Breaks Services Statement, attached at Appendix 1, be approved.

- (ii) That the short break services that had been delivered over the last year, as outlined in appendices attached to the report be noted.

66. Fostering Service Interim Report 1st July 2019 – 30 September 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 second quarter of 2019/20 financial year. 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.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were advised of the performance of the Fostering Service for the second quarter (1 July to 30 September 2019) which provided an update on recruitment and retention, the work of the Fostering Panel, staffing arrangements as well as service developments. It was noted there had been from mid September a full establishment of staff which had enabled the service to achieve its aim of dedicating specific named workers to lead on the Connected Care process and assessments. Reference was made to Hartlepool's recent annual Foster Care Celebration Event which had been well received by Foster Carers, feedback from which was provided.

The Committee complimented the work of the Fostering Service and were pleased to note Hartlepool's aim to care for its own children. Reference was made to Hartlepool's recruitment campaign and the benefits of displaying roadside banners promoting the service were highlighted. Emphasis was placed upon the need to display such materials outside schools.

The Assistant Director provided clarification in response to queries raised in relation to the report. In response to a query raised in relation to the number of looked after children who had been placed via an Independent Fostering Agency, the Assistant Director agreed to provide this information following the meeting.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.
- (ii) That figures in relation to the number of looked after children who had been placed via an Independent Fostering Agency be provided following the meeting.

67. Full Ofsted Inspection of Exmoor Grove Children's Home *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

For Children's Services Committee to note the outcome of a recent full inspection report of Exmoor Grove Children's Home by OFSTED which took place on 30 and 31 July 2019.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was reported that the inspection of Exmoor Grove which took place on 30 and 31 July 2019 against the judgments and descriptors outlined in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the report and the service was judged as outstanding overall. The inspection report was attached at Appendix 1. Whilst the inspection made no statutory requirement recommendations they made three good practice recommendations as outlined in the report. The team were currently working hard to implement these actions in accordance with the timescales stipulated.

In relation to the health related recommendation, that staff should encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day to day health and wellbeing and, in particular, if there was a delay in relation to test results the manager should escalate their concerns to the placing authority, the Special Schools Head Representative commented on the reliance of health partners to support recommendations of this type.

Admiration was expressed to the staff for their hard work and contributions to the positive outcomes that continued to be achieved.

Decision

- (i) The positive inspection report was noted and had been judged to be outstanding which was the highest judgment. The home had been judged outstanding consistently over the last four years which demonstrated the hard work and commitment of the staff team as a whole and positive management and leadership of the Registered Manager.
- (ii) That the change in the role of responsible individual from Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director to Jane Young, Assistant Director be noted.

68. Full Ofsted Inspection of St David's Walk Children's Home *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

For Children's Services Committee to note the outcome of a recent full inspection report of St David's Walk Children's Home by OFSTED which took place on 17 and 18 September 2019.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was reported that the inspection of St David's Walk Children's Home which took place on 17 and 18 September 2019 against the judgments and descriptors outlined in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the report and the service was judged as good overall. The inspection report was attached at Appendix 1. The inspection resulted in a number of statutory requirements and recommendations as outlined in the report. The actions had been implemented in accordance with the timescales stipulated.

Members acknowledged the hard work and contributions of the staff to the positive outcomes that had been achieved.

Decision

The positive inspection report was noted and had been judged to be good which, for a first full inspection, was an excellent achievement. This demonstrated the manager and the new teams hard work and care for the children living there.

69. Full Ofsted Inspection of Stockton Road Children's Home August 2019 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

For Children's Services Committee to note the outcome of a recent full inspection report of Stockton Road Children's Home by OFSTED which took place on 13 and 14 August 2019.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was reported that the inspection of Stockton Road Children's Home which took place on 13 and 14 August 2019 against the judgments and descriptors outlined in the report and the service was judged as good overall. The inspection report was attached at Appendix 1. The inspection resulted in one statutory requirement and one recommendation as outlined in the report. The statutory requirement and recommendation had been followed up, an update of which was provided.

A Member commented on previous visits to this home and the excellent standards of care that had been observed and queried what needed to be done to achieve an outstanding inspection. The Assistant Director outlined the Ofsted inspection process and the difficulties around achieving an excellent result. Members acknowledged the hard work and contributions of the staff to the positive outcomes that had been achieved.

Decision

The Committee noted:-

- (i) The positive inspection report and provision had been judged to be good. An action plan of improvements had been implemented on how the staff would achieve these improvements.
- (ii) The result demonstrated overall good quality leadership and dedication of the team which supported the children to achieve positive outcomes. Stockton Road had an ethos of experiential learning to ensure the children had fulfilled lives, had fun, felt safe and cared for and where possible, promoted family and friends contact.
- (iii) The team would continue to strive for excellence and ensure they evidence how children and carers influence the care at Stockton Road. The Team Manager continued to develop the staff and adopt new ways of working to support the children and young people. By the next inspection all staff would be trained within the Dyadic Development Psychotherapy approach.
- (iv) The change in the role of responsible individual from Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director to Jane Young, Assistant Director.

70. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 28 January 2020 at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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