

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

28 January 2020

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

Present:

Councillor: Leisa Smith (In the Chair)

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

Also Present: Councillors Marjorie James and Ann Marshall

Co-opted Members:

Joanne Wilson, RC Diocesan Representative
Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative
David Turner, Primary Head Representative

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
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance (Corporate and Schools)
Julie Reed, Schools Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager
Craig Blundred, Public Health
Catherine Grimwood, Performance and Partnerships Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

71. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Jo Heaton, Church of England Representative, Zoe Westley, Special Schools Head Representative and Evelyn Leck, Healthwatch Representative.

72. Declarations of Interest

None.

73. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2019

Received.

74. Council Plan 2020/23 (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To consider the proposals that fall under the remit of this Committee for inclusion in the Council Plan 2020/21 – 2022/23 which was currently out to consultation.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director reported on the background to the development of a new Council Plan which had been launched on 13 September 2019 during which a number of key questions had and asked as part of the initial consultation. The Plan had been developed to build on what had already been achieved over the last three years and to respond to what residents, employees and partners had told the Council through the recent consultation exercise.

The consultation draft of the Council Plan had been agreed by Finance and Policy Committee on 13 January. The draft Council Plan, attached at Appendix 1, included a summary of progress made through the last Council Plan, an outline of the current position in Hartlepool in relation to some of the key indicators and the key themes that had emerged from the recent consultation exercise. The report set out the proposed strategic priorities as well as the actions to be taken to deliver the priorities. The Committee was requested to consider the consultation draft plan and provide feedback to inform the final Council Plan which would be open to a five week consultation, details of which were provided.

In the discussion that followed officers responded to issues arising from the report. A number of comments were expressed in terms of how the priority would be met to remove the barriers that prevented schools from accessing the alternative education and cultural offer at CECA, given the difficulties around schools currently not utilising this facility to its full capacity. Members were advised of the ongoing work that was currently being undertaken to address the issues raised. The School Representatives shared with Committee the financial barriers affecting schools and the impact on take-up. A lengthy discussion ensued in relation to the factors which may be affecting take-up. Emphasis was placed on the need to explore the quality and breadth of the curriculum to ensure courses were available to all young people as well as the importance of examining whether the curriculum was meeting the needs and aspirations of young people in Hartlepool. The benefits of the Council and schools working in

partnership to identify any gaps in readiness for the September term were highlighted.

In relation to a suggestion that Members of this Committee be invited to visit CECA, the Chair requested that an invitation be extended to all Members of the Council as well as all schools to enable questions/discussions to take place on a way forward. It was noted that the Church of England Diocesan Representative of this Committee was also a member of the CECA Management Committee and was working with the local authority and schools on tackling the issues raised.

Decision

- (i) That the consultation draft of the Council Plan 2020/21 – 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1, be supported and the comments of Members, as set out above, be utilised to inform the preparation of the final Council Plan.
- (ii) That all Members of the Council as well as schools be invited to attend CECA to enable questions/discussions to take place on a way forward.

75. Youth Justice Strategic Plan *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To approve the draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2019-2021 (Appendix 1) and to agree to the plan being presented to Full Council on 20 February 2020 for adoption. The final draft will also be sent to the National Youth Justice Board.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information to the requirements for all Youth Justice Services to annually prepare a local Youth Justice Plan for submission to the National Youth Justice Board. The plan, attached at Appendix 1, provided an overview of how the Youth Justice Service would ensure that the service had sufficient resources and infrastructure to deliver youth justice services in its area in line with national standards.

Members were advised that the Committee approved the consultation process for the plan on 19 November which had subsequently been considered by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Audit and Governance Committee where it had been accepted with no additional comments or amendments.

Decision

That the draft Youth Justice Plan 2019/2021 be approved for submission to full Council for ratification.

76. Dedicated Schools Grant – Early Years Block 2020/21

(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Ref CJCS 090/19

Purpose of report

To provide an indicative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation in relation to the Early Years Funding for 2020/21 and propose the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) for 2020/21.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee was referred to the 2020/21 funding allocation for the Early Years Block, shown in a table included in the report which had been announced in December 2019. Following consultation with providers and the Schools' Forum in relation to three to four year old provision, it was proposed that the current hourly rate structure be retained for 2020/21 taking into account an increase of 8p per hour, details of which were set out in the report.

In relation to the proposed hourly rate structure 2020/21 for two year old provision, the Government had announced an increase of 8p per hour. This 8p per hour increase could be retained to partially offset the current financial pressure against two year old provision whilst options for mitigation in future years were explored. As there was currently no agreed approach to deal with the known financial pressure, the preferred option from Schools' Forum was to retain the saving and not pass the 8p per hour increase onto providers in 2020/21. Once the work of the Task and Finish Group was concluded the position would be reviewed for 2021/22 and beyond.

Decision

- (i) The contents of this report and the outcomes from the consultation with providers and Schools' Forum were noted.
- (ii) The decision of the Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of 5% was noted.
- (iii) That the hourly rate funding formula for three to four year old provision for 2020/21, as show in the table at paragraph 5.3, be approved.

- (iv) That the hourly rate funding formula for two year old provision, as outlined in section 6 of the report, which included retaining the 8p increase to partly mitigate the projected 2002/21 overspend in this area be approved.

77. Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block 2020/21
(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Ref CJCS 092/19.

Purpose of report

To inform Members of the funding allocation for the High Needs Block in 2020/21 and to seek approval for the 2020/21 budget. The High Needs block forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee's approval was sought to defer this item of business to the February meeting pending the outcome of a decision of the Schools' Forum.

Decision

That the report be deferred to the February meeting pending the outcome of the Schools' Forum decision.

78. School Admission Arrangements for 2021/22
2020/21 (Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Test (ii) applies – Forward Plan Ref CJCS 96/19.

Purpose of report

To consider and agree the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in Hartlepool for 2021-22 academic year. As the local authority, the Council is the admission authority it is therefore responsible for determining the admission arrangements for these schools.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was reported that all admission authorities were required to determine admission arrangements annually, the background and statutory requirements of which were provided, as detailed in the report.

There were no changes proposed to the current admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools that required public consultation. The published admission number for each Community and Voluntary Controlled School was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report which Committee was requested to approve. The admission numbers for Voluntary Aided, Foundation schools and Academies were included for information. The admission arrangements including the over-subscription criteria in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

In relation to confirmation that a secondary school in Hartlepool intended to reduce their published admission number, the impact of such reductions were debated at length. Officers responded to a number of queries raised in terms of the consultation arrangements around changes to admission numbers and the regulations regarding net capacity issues and published admission numbers.

Concerns were also raised regarding the impact on the safety of children as a result of schools increasing their admission numbers given there was space in other schools in the town. Members placed emphasis upon Members' duty of care to children and young people in the town and, whilst noting academies were their own admission authority, with Members having no powers around their decisions, were keen to receive assurances from schools operating above their net capacity in relation to how increases in numbers would be safely accommodated.

Decision

- (i) That in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools admission arrangements for 2021/22, the admission numbers as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
- (ii) That in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools admission arrangements for 2021/22, the current admission arrangements as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.
- (iii) That clarification be sought from schools operating above their net capacity around how increases in numbers would be safely accommodated.

79. Commissioning of Short Break Activities and Specialist Equipment Service *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision – General Exception Notice applies

Purpose of report

To ask Members to approve a procurement process through tender submissions for short break and specialist equipment services for children with SEND (Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities) and their families.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee was advised that short break and specialist equipment for children with SEND were currently operating as two individual contracts. However, it was proposed to join these services together to tender for a joint short breaks extended activities and specialist equipment service to allow providers to be innovative in their approach to how they provided both of these services. Members had previously asked whether the specialist equipment service could be delivered in-house. On review it was considered that this would require a considerable amount of funding. The current provider attracted additional funding which could not be accessed if provision was in-house.

In response to a query raised in relation to the financial considerations, as set out in the report, the Assistant Director of Commissioning clarified the Council's procurement arrangements.

Decision

That the procurement of a joint short breaks extended activities and specialist equipment for children and young people with SEND be approved.

80. Schools Health Related Behaviour Survey *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To share the results of the questionnaire and to identify any areas of interest with the intention of making recommendations on next steps.

Issue(s) for consideration

Following a report submitted to the September Committee, Members were provided with an update on the results of the health related behaviour questionnaire. The health related survey report, attached at Appendix 1, provided primary and secondary data in relation to healthy eating and physical activity, mental health and wellbeing, smoking, alcohol, drugs, violence and relationships.

The information would be used by schools to develop strategies and interventions to support the health and wellbeing of their pupils. It was recommended that the data inform Whole Systems Obesity Programme, the surveillance section of the Public Health Approach to Violence work and Children and Young People's Mental Health Transformation Plan development work.

Decision

That the findings and recommendations arising from the report be noted.

81. Pupil Performance 2019 – Headline Indicator Summary *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To provide a summary of the pupil performance measures for Hartlepool from public examinations in the summer of 2019.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided a two year comparison within Hartlepool and provided a comparator against national outcomes. The published pupil performance measures for 2018 and 2019, along with national averages, were presented at Appendix A. It was highlighted that Hartlepool's quartile placement for each 2019 measure was also presented in the Appendix.

A summary of the performance across early years to key stage 4 were included in the report.

A query was raised in relation to the measures in place to improve performance in key stage 4. The Assistant Director, Education advised that a number of measures were in place to assess a drop in standards including ongoing work with Secondary Heads to explore why poor attendance may affect outcomes as well as targeted intervention, details of which were provided. The links between poor attendance and poor outcomes were

discussed as well as the importance of primary and secondary schools working together in preparation for the transition from primary to secondary education. The Assistant Director, Education added that whilst headline data was a useful source of information, there were complexities around interpretation of such data and there was a need to explore this information in more detail.

The Primary Head representative commented on the challenges facing schools over the last ten years given the impact of continuing austerity measures and the arrangements in place to ensure curriculum needs of young people were met.

The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services referred to Opportunity North East Board whose remit was to raise standards of education particularly around transitions and updated Members on the background to a recent approval from the Department for Education for the Council to deliver a pilot scheme.

Further discussion ensued in relation to the contributing factors attributed to poor education performance which included challenges engaging with hard to reach families, children where English was an additional language, the increasing number of in-year transfers as well as social problems. In response to suggestions around the need to explore the reasons for the high number of school transfers the Assistant Director, Education reported on the recently established Task and Finish Group which was looking at issues of this type and would be examined in more detail under the next agenda item.

Concerns were raised in relation to the increasing number of families requiring intervention and the impact of hardship on education outcomes. The Primary Head representative advised that whilst hardship and social problems remained a challenge in Hartlepool there was still evidence of high achievements within families facing such issues.

Decision

The report was noted.

82. School Admissions (In-Year Transfers) *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To inform Members of work being carried out by a recently established In-Year Transfer Task and Finish Group.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information to the establishment of the In-Year Transfer Task and Finish Group. The aim of the Group was to look into the causes of in-year transfers and look at the wider issues impacting on transfers and try to reduce the number taking place. A breakdown of the most common reasons for in year-transfers were detailed in the report and included moves into the area/housing need as well as parental requests/preference. The impact on schools when there were high numbers of transfers could be significant, details of which were provided.

Members were advised that to date, the In-Year Transfer Task and Finish Group had met twice and a number of actions had been agreed, details of which were provided.

Further to discussions above (Minute 81 refers), a lengthy discussion ensued in relation to the complexities and wider issues around in-year transfers. Officers and school representatives provided clarification in response to issues raised arising from the report in relation to the work of the Task and Finish Group to date, the links between in year-transfers and social care needs as well as hand-over arrangements in terms of transfers from outside of the area. Some concerns were raised regarding the limited records available on young people transferring from outside the area. The potential reasons for transfers from outside of the area were further debated and it was noted that anecdotal evidence suggested that one of the reasons for transfers into this area may be as a result of cheaper housing rents.

Disappointment was expressed regarding the number of in-year transfers in Hartlepool and the impact on education as a result. A Member was of the view that legislation should be reviewed to make it more difficult to transfer. The Secondary Head Representative indicated that a piece of work was currently being undertaken exploring the mid-term transfers in Hartlepool in more detail.

Clarification was sought on the feasibility of introducing an agreement between Hartlepool schools as a means of managing the number of in-year transfers. Members were advised that whilst there were limited powers available to address such matters, given the various statutory requirements, discussions were continuing to be held with Head Teachers around discouraging movement and encouraging consistent standards of behaviour and expectations in relation to pupil conduct. The funding implications of in-year transfers were discussed and Members were of the view that funding should transfer across with the child. It was suggested that this issue be considered by Head Teachers.

Decision

- (i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted and actioned as appropriate.
- (ii) That the feasibility of introducing an agreement between Hartlepool schools be explored with Head Teachers as a means of managing the number of in-year transfers

83. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 25 February 2020 at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre.

84. 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.

85. Any Other Business – Pre-School Health Checks

The RC Diocese Representative referred to discussions at a recent Head Teachers meeting where concerns had been expressed that pre-school children may not be receiving adequate assessments as there was evidence of a number of children arriving at primary school with significant needs. The Assistant Director, Children's and Families provided feedback from a recent peer review in relation to early years which had suggested that information may not be reaching the correct individuals. Assurances were provided that two year old health checks were carried out robustly, the results of which were provided to schools. Disappointment was expressed that this was an inaccurate reflection of the position and the Assistant Director was keen to receive evidence of such practices and highlighted that she would welcome discussions with schools in this regard.

Decision

That the information given be noted and discussions be held with schools in relation to pre-school health checks.

The meeting concluded at 5.50 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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