

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

15 September 2020

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and was an online remote meeting in compliance with the Council Procedure Rules Relating to the holding of Remote Meetings and the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor: Leisa Smith (In the Chair)

Councillors: Lesley Hamilton, Brenda Harrison, John Lauderdale, Jim Lindridge and Sue Little

Co-opted Members:

Jo Heaton, Church of England Diocesan Representative
Joanne Wilson, Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative
Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative
Zoe Westley, Special School's Head Representative

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children's and Families
Amanda Whitehead, Assistant Director, Education
Ann Turner, School Governor Support Manager
Lisa Cushlow, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Vicky Davidson-Boyd, Adoption Tees Valley

9. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of David Turner, Primary Head Representative.

10. Declarations of Interest

None.

11. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2020

Received.

12. Approval of Term and Holiday Dates 2021-22 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Purpose of report

To seek agreement of the Committee to the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2021-22 for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.

To seek agreement of the Committee in recommending these dates to governing bodies of Aided and Foundation Schools and academies in Hartlepool.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were advised that local authorities for a number of years had tried with some success to agree a unified calendar of term dates across the northern region from Yorkshire to Northumberland, based on guiding principles agreed by the regional group in 2012-13.

In the late autumn 2019 representatives from the Tees Valley region and other north east representatives consulted on a pattern for 2021-22 based on the guiding principles, details of which were set out in Appendix 1. The proposed pattern enabled schools to begin the academic year on Wednesday 1 September 2021 and end the year on Thursday 21 July 2022.

Following consultation with Head Teachers in Hartlepool, arrangements were made to consult on a further pattern proposed by a Hartlepool Secondary Head Teacher, as set out in Appendix 2. The alternative proposal would enable schools to begin the academic year on Friday 3 September 2021 and end the academic year on Monday 25 July 2022 with the expectation that schools would take the first and last day of the academic year as professional development days. Members were provided with feedback received from schools and academies in relation to the two options, as set out in the additional information circulated in advance of the meeting.

In the lengthy discussion that followed, the School Governor Support Manager responded to queries raised in relation to the report. Clarification was provided in terms of the detail of feedback received from schools and academies regarding the two options and the timescales for response to the consultation was also provided. In response to a Member's request for the

views of school representatives in attendance at the meeting on the proposed term dates, representatives in attendance spoke in support of Appendix 2, the reasons for which were shared with the Committee.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

Decision

1. That the scheduled term dates and holiday dates for 2021-22 for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools (to commence on 3 September and end on 25 July), as shown in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.
2. That the scheduled term and holiday dates for 2021-22, as set out in Appendix 2, be recommended to governing bodies of all Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools, as well as academies, in Hartlepool.

13. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2020

Received.

14. Change of Name of Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit and Review of Management Committee, Constitution and Roles and Responsibilities *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key decision

Purpose of report

To seek approval of the Committee to a change of name of the Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit to The Horizon School Hartlepool in accordance with The Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Management Committees etc) (England) Regulations 2007 and in accordance with The Pupil Referral Units (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2012.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee was advised on the background to the proposal to change the name of the Pupil Referral Unit and to undertake a review of the current constitution to look at the current Management Committee's member roles and responsibilities and current skills and knowledge held within the Management Committee. The purpose of the review was provided, as set out in the report. A revised Instrument of Government, attached at Appendix 1, reflected the change of name of the Pupil Referral Unit to the Horizon

School, Hartlepool and set out the full constitution of the current Management Committee.

Members welcomed the change of name and logo and commented on the potential benefits as a result.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

Decision

1. The Committee approved the revised Instrument of Government to reflect the change of name of the Hartlepool Pupil Referral Unit to the Horizon School Hartlepool, as attached at Appendix 1.
2. That a review of the current constitution of the Management Committee and responsibilities of the Management Committee, as set out in Appendix 1, be noted.

15. To Nominate A Local Authority Representative to Serve on the Governing Body of Kingsley Primary 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 Kingsley Community Primary School.

Issue(s) for consideration

A schedule was submitted with the report setting out details of a vacancy that existed at Kingsley Community Primary School together with details of the application received. One application had been received for the position, as set out in a confidential appendix to the report. **This item 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).** Discussions had taken place between the applicant, Chair of Governors and Head Teacher regarding the skills the applicant could contribute to the Governing Body. The application was from a serving Governor.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

Decision

The Committee approved the local authority nomination of the applicant as set out in confidential appendix B in respect of Kingsley Community Primary School.

16. Special Guardianship Policy (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

Following a review of the Special Guardianship Policy & Procedures, this report provided Committee with an overview of the Policy and Procedure and the actions undertaken to ensure the assessed needs of children/young people subject to a Special Guardianship Order were met and there was compliance with the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005.

In addition, the report also highlighted the importance of providing a consistent and timely method of reviewing support and ensuring Special Guardians and children/young people, subject to a Special Guardianship Order, have the appropriate access to a wide range of services.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information in relation to the purpose and benefits of special guardianship arrangements. All prospective Special Guardian's received an assessment of their support needs and a support plan of how the local authority proposed to meet those needs was produced. Support could range from access to universal services to the provision of specialist support as well as financial support, as set out in the Special Guardianship Policy, appended to the report. Where financial support was provided, it was crucial that full details of the purpose, amount and duration of support was recorded and shared with the Special Guardian.

The Policy had been reviewed and amended in line with changes in legislation, case law and Ombudsman recommendations and ensured the authority was compliant in this area.

Members were referred to the risk, financial and legal considerations as set out in the report.

Some concerns were raised that there may be situations where grandparents were undertaking caring responsibilities and were unaware of the support arrangements available. Clarification was provided regarding

the special guardianship regulations and referral process and it was noted that appropriate signposting and referral arrangements were in place.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

Decision

That the Special Guardianship Policy and Procedures 2020 be approved.

17. Fostering Service Interim Report 1st April 2020 – 30 June 2020 *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the first quarter of 2020/21 financial year. The Fostering Service is a regulated service and, as such, there is a requirement to provide the Council with performance information.

Issue(s) for consideration

Members were advised of the performance of the Fostering Service for the first quarter (1 April to 30 June 2020) which provided an update on recruitment and retention, the work of the Fostering Panel, staffing arrangements as well as service developments. Reference was made to the regular communications and support arrangements for Foster Carers during the lock down period in terms of coping mechanisms and to identify any needs arising from the lock down situation, a summary of which was appended to the report.

Whilst Members were pleased to note that the Fostering Panel had continued to meet as planned albeit virtually throughout the pandemic, the challenges relating to skype meetings were highlighted. The need to consider holding future virtual meetings utilising Microsoft Teams software was suggested.

Decision

That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.

18. 2019/20 Annual Report of Adoption Tees Valley (Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Adoption Service for the April 2019-March 2020 (**Appendix 1**). The Adoption Service is ran by Adoption Tees Valley Regional Agency (ATV) and this is for Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland Councils. Stockton Borough Council is the host local authority.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report included details of the work of Adoption Tees Valley which included the annual position of Adoption Tees Valley against key performance and Adoption Leadership Board scorecard indicators, staffing arrangements, recruitment and matching activity, the work of the Adoption Panel as well as training and adoption support.

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 included information on recruitment activity, staffing arrangements, preparation and assessment, achievements, impact of Covid 19, key challenges, benchmarking information, work of the Adoption Panel, referrals of children disruptions and post adoption support.

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 to all contributors for their hard work and support.

Decision

That the contents of the report be noted.

19. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 19 November 2020 at 4.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.35 pm

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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