

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

26 January 2021

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, Sue Little and Shane Moore

### **Co-opted Members:**

Jo Heaton, Church of England Diocesan Representative  
David Turner, Primary Head Representative

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services  
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning  
Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children's and Families  
Amanda Whitehead, Assistant Director, Education  
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance (Corporate and Schools)  
Julie Reed, Schools Place Planning, Admissions and Capital Manager  
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## **28. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Joanne Wilson, Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative, Mark Tilling, Secondary Head Representative and Zoe Westley, Special School's Head Representative.

## **29. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **30. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020**

Received.

### **31. Dedicated Schools Grant (High Need Block 2021/22)**

*(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Key – tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan reference CJCS107/20

#### **Purpose of report**

To inform Members of the funding allocation for the High Needs Block in 2021/22 and to seek approval for the 2021/22 budget. The High Needs Block forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

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

The background to the High Needs Block funding allocations together with a breakdown of the planned High Needs Block budget for 2021/22 of £12.689m was provided as set out in the report. The Council would receive an increase of 12% (£1.563m) for High Needs Block funding in 2021/22, following on from a 16% increase in 2020/21. Schools Forum were recommending two growth proposals for 2021/22 only as outlined in section 5 of the report. The proposals amounted to a combined estimated cost of £0.313m.

In response to queries raised arising from the report, clarification was provided in relation to the underspend/reserve arrangements and the background to the increase in funding for a second successive year.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

#### **Decision**

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) The Committee approved the recommendation from Schools' Forum to increase the SEND top-up ranges in 2021/22 at an estimated cost of £0.135m as described in paragraph 5.5 of this report.
- (iii) The Committee approved the recommendation from Schools' Forum to apply an additional 3% protection to special schools MFG budget in 2021/22 at an estimated cost of £0.178m as described in paragraph 5.8 of this report.
- (iv) That the 2021/22 budget as shown at the table in paragraph 5.1 of this report be approved.

## **32. Dedicated Schools Grant – School Budget Shares 2021/22 and Central School Services Block 2021/22**

*(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision – Tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Ref CJCS 104/20. A key decision in relation to forward plan reference No CJCS 106/20 was also included in the report.

### **Purpose of report**

To provide details of the 2021/22 schools block funding allocation and to propose school budget shares for 2021/22. 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 2021/22 which totalled £70.779m. 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 £0.769m for 2021/22 had been confirmed based on October 2020 census numbers.

Schools' Forum were required to agree each element of spending against the CSSB on an annual basis. On 24 September 2020, the Schools' Forum had agreed to fund the elements amounting to £0.570m with the balance of CSSB funding (£0.199m) to be transferred to the school's block for 2021/22.

In relation to individual school budgets, at their meeting on 22 October 2020, Schools' Forum voted unanimously to apply an MFG of 2.0% with no school being capped. The report included a table which provided a summary of individual school budgets for 2021/22 which would mirror the NFF, plus the transfer of funding from CSSB proposed block transfers.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

### **Decision**

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (ii) The agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.570m, with the residual £0.199m being transferred to the schools block, as detailed in paragraph 5.4 was noted.

- (iii) The Committee agreed the MFG to be used for 2021/22 as outlined in paragraph 6.1 of the report and noted the recommendation from Schools' Forum of applying an MFG of 2%.
- (iv) That the individual school budget share for 2021/22 as summarised in the table at paragraph 6.2 of the report be approved.

**33. School Admission Arrangements for 2022/23** *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

**Type of decision**

Key Decision – Test (ii) applies – Forward Plan Ref CJCS 108/20

**Purpose of report**

To consider and agree the proposed admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in Hartlepool for 2022-23 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.

It had been seven years since consultation took place for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools and during that time no changes had been proposed. However, for the 2022-23 academic year, minor changes to admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools were proposed, details of which were set out in the report. Consultation on these proposals had taken place during the autumn term of 2020. One response had been received who did not object to the proposed changes. However comments were raised in relation to the current over-subscription criteria, details of which were set out in the report.

The published admission numbers for each Community and Voluntary Controlled School was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report which Committee was requested to approve. 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.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

### **Decision**

- (i) That in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools admission arrangements for 2022/23, the admission numbers (which had not changed) as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
- (ii) That in respect of Community and Voluntary Controlled schools admission arrangements for 2022/23, the current admission arrangements as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

## **34. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020** (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Non key

### **Purpose of report**

To provide Members with the latest findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, attached at Appendix 1.

To approve the publication of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020 attached at Appendix 1.

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

The report provided the background to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. A summary of early education and childcare national offer was detailed in the report of which parents were supported to secure and pay for childcare themselves and use the national offer to supplement their needs. Detailed information in relation to provision was provided in the assessment, appended to the report.

It was reported that the early years and childcare team had identified a number of key actions to take forward in the next year, details of which were set out in the report.

In the discussion that followed, emphasis was placed upon the importance of specific learning needs being identified at an early stage in the 18 months to 2 year age groups. The challenges in terms of early years provision particularly around early identification of need and learning support for this age group were outlined and the need for more work with partner agencies to review such provision was acknowledged. The school representatives in attendance outlined the early intervention arrangements in place and the importance of early engagement in terms of developing relationships with families, the benefits of which were shared with Members. The Primary Head Representative commented on the work that schools had undertaken around needs assessments and, as a result had gained a better understanding of the needs of Hartlepool children. In response to concerns

raised regarding the impact on learning and development as a result of the current pandemic and home schooling, assurances were provided that schools were currently assessing this issue to ensure any learning gaps were identified and pupils would be given opportunities to catch up.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

#### **Decision**

- (i) The Committee approved the publication of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020, attached at Appendix 1.
- (ii) That the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020 be noted.

### **35. To Nominate A Local Authority Representative to Serve on the Governing Body of Throston Community 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 Throston Community Primary School.

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

A schedule was submitted with the report setting out details of a vacancy that existed at Throston 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 whose term of office would expire in January 2021.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

#### **Decision**

The Committee approved the local authority nomination of the applicant as set out in Appendix B in respect of Throston Community Primary School.

**36. Fostering Service Interim Report – 1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020** *(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 2020. 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 second quarter (1 July to 30 September 2020) which provided an update on recruitment and retention, the work of the Fostering Panel, staffing arrangements as well as service developments.

In the discussion that followed, Members commented on the dedication of foster carers and paid tribute to the work of the Fostering Service and Fostering Panel. Members requested that a letter of appreciation be written to all Members of the Panel on behalf of this Committee in recognition of their hard work and commitment to the role. Reference was made to the impact of the current pandemic on staff within the Fostering Team working remotely and the importance of ensuring the relevant emotional wellbeing and support mechanisms for staff were in place.

**Decision**

- (i) That the contents of the report and comments of Members be noted.
- (ii) That a letter of appreciation be sent to the Fostering Panel on behalf of this Committee in recognition of their hard work and commitment to the role.

**37. 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.

### **38. Any Other Business – Outcome of Disapplication Request**

The Committee was referred to a recent decision of this Committee in November that a disapplication request be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education regarding funding for statutory duties in relation to maintained schools. The Secretary of State had confirmed on 20 January 2021 that the disapplication request was successful. This was the fifth successive year that the Council's request had been successful, securing just under £300k for the Council.

#### **Decision**

That the information given be noted.

### **39. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 2 March 2021 at 4.00 pm.

### **40. Concluding Remarks**

Prior to closing the meeting, thanks and congratulations were conveyed to Jo Heaton, a Member of the Committee, who had recently been awarded an OBE in recognition of her work and services to education in the North East.

The meeting concluded at 5.00 pm.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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