

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

2 March 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
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
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
Jane Wilson, Fostering Team Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Vicky Davidson-Boyd, Adoption Tees Valley

41. Apologies for Absence

None.

42. Declarations of Interest

None.

43. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021

Received.

44. Dedicated Schools Grant Early Years Block 2021/22 (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 CJCS105/20

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 2021/22.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee was referred to the 2021/22 funding allocation for the Early Years Block, shown in a table included in the report which had been announced in December 2020. 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 2021/22 taking into account an increase of 6p per hour, details of which were set out in the report.

In relation to the proposed hourly rate structure 2021/22 for two year old provision, the Government had announced a further hourly rate increase of 8p. Schools' Forum had considered three options, details of which were provided. The local authority presented option 1 (keep original 8p and new 8p increase) as their preferred option as this would mean reserves lasted for longer and would delay the need to significantly cut the hourly rate. Schools' Forum had expressed concern in relation to the implications of an 8p increase not being passed to providers. The preferred option from Schools Forum was option 2 (local authority to keep the original 8p but pass the new 8p to providers in April 2021).

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

Decision

- (i) The contents of this report and the outcomes from the consultation with providers and Schools' Forum were noted.
- (ii) The recommendation 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 2021/22, as show in the table at paragraph 5.3,
- (iv) That the Schools' Forum request to adopt option 2 be noted.
- (v) That the local authority preferred option 1 be approved as this provided the most financially sustainable option.

45. Schools Capital Works Programme (*Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

Key Decision – Tests (i) and (ii) apply – Forward Plan Ref CJCS 109/20. General Exception applies, however, this agenda item was within the Forward Plan for December 2020.

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the 2021/22 Schools' Capital Works Programme, as detailed in confidential **APPENDIX A**, in order to progress the design and detailed costing exercise in time for the majority of projects to be carried out during the summer holiday period. **This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information in relation to capital funding allocations. At the time of writing the report, capital funding allocations for 2021/22 had not been communicated to the Local Authority. Approval was sought for the schemes proposed in confidential Appendix A. **This item (Appendix A) contained exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006), namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

The Committee was referred to Table 1 which outlined the total funding available of £1,082,237 for condition works and Table 2 which detailed the total cost of schemes and contingency proposed of £1,043,450 of which Members' approval was sought.

The Assistant Director referred to previous approval of the Committee for funding in relation to additional places at Catcote, the background of which was provided. Since this approval it had come to light that there were a

number of children who would need specialist provision from September 2021. In order to meet these needs a number of changes needed to be made to buildings at Springwell School and Catcote Academy to accommodate these children, details of which were provided.

In relation to queries raised arising from the report, clarification was provided in relation to the need to prioritise works at Springwell, capacity issues, contingency funding arrangements, future longer term ambitions for Springwell and Catcote Academy, 6th form provision as well as post 19 and 21 provision.

Members spoke in support of investing in specialist education provision in the town, the reasons for which were debated. Reference was made to the number of new schools in the town and highlighted the importance of future investment in Catcote Academy given this had previously been identified as a priority for a rebuild and had not yet materialised.

The following decision was agreed with no dissent.

Decision

- a) The Committee approved the schedule of 2021/22 capital works programme as summarised in confidential APPENDIX A, subject to the LA agreeing contributions from schools towards individual schemes in line with the shared funding principles established by the Schools Forum;

These items contain exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

- b) That the Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, be given dispensation and discretion to authorise works where an emergency (eg risk of school closure) or a significant health and safety risk is exposed;
- c) That the Director of Children's & Joint Commissioning Services, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, be given dispensation and discretion to add or remove a project(s) as a result of an increase or decrease in the 2021/22 SCA funding allocation;
- d) The Committee approved the works at Springwell Primary School in order to meet needs of children for September 2021, as summarised in confidential APPENDIX A

- e) The Committee approved the funding, as summarised in confidential APPENDIX A, for the development of an ASD 6th Form to free up space on the Catcote Academy main site;
- f) That authority be delegated to the Director of Children and Joint Commissioning in consultation with the Director of Resources and Development to explore ways to meet the funding shortfall which will enable a new build at Catcote Academy – this will include a business case to support prudential borrowing and looking for capital bid opportunities;
- g) It was noted that a report will come back to Committee in June 2021 with options to fund the shortfall.

46. 2020 Bi-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 April 2020-September 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 current 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 in relation to the work of the ATV Service and what it had achieved in 2020. The presentation 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.

In the discussion that followed the representative responded to issues raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to support arrangements to prevent adoption breakdowns, the benefits of Covid funding and how this had been utilised, how capacity issues had been managed given the additional pressures on staff during the pandemic as well as details of staffing support arrangements.

The Committee welcomed the report and noted the benefits and positive outcomes of the regional adoption agency arrangements to date. Members were pleased to note that the Adoption Service had placed more children with adoptive families in this reporting period than in the same period last year and there had been more children adopted than in the comparable period last year. Compliments and thanks were conveyed to all contributors for their hard work and support in this regard.

Decision

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

47. Fostering Service Interim Report – 1 October 2020 – 31 December 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 third 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 third quarter (1 October to 31 December 2020) which included an update on recruitment and retention, the work of the Fostering Panel, staffing arrangements as well as service developments and consultation.

Tributes were paid in relation to the excellent service provided by the Fostering Service and Fostering Panel in Hartlepool and Members commented on their hard work and dedication to the role.

Decision

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

48. Holiday Activities and Food Programme *(Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

The inform members of Children's Services Committee of the Department for Education Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) announced in November 2020 and the proposals for delivery in Hartlepool over the coming school holidays.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services presented the report which provided background information in relation to the expansion of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme across England in 2021. The HAF Programme was an initiative to tackle holiday activities provision, nutrition and physical health and reduce social isolation aimed at children who received benefit related school meals although other children can also benefit from the offer.

A Working Group had met to discuss how the programme could be delivered for the forthcoming Easter holiday as a priority and it was intended to use this as an opportunity to consult on what they would like to participate in over the summer and Christmas scheme. Given the current lockdown arrangements planning for the delivery of the programme at Easter included both face to face and virtual provision. The Department of Education had allocated an indicative grant of £626,500 for the delivery of the programme in Hartlepool.

In the discussion that followed, the Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services responded to issues raised arising from the report. Members spoke in support of the initiative and commented on the challenges facing low income families who may not be meet the eligibility criteria. The need to identify and include families of this type where possible was suggested as well as the need to consider provision during half term. Emphasis was also placed upon the importance of supporting families with advice around cooking on a budget, the benefits of which were outlined.

Decision

The Committee noted the work being undertaken to deliver the HAF programme in Hartlepool for the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays and that a further report will be brought to Committee following delivery of the programme at Easter.

49. 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.

50. Any Other Business – Letter from Department of Education – Outcome of SEND Accelerated Progress Plan Review

The Committee was updated on the outcome of a recent Accelerated Progress Plan Review which took place by the Department of Education on 3 February 2021. The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services was pleased to report that clear and sustained progress in the Accelerated Progress Plan had been achieved and the work was having a positive impact on SEND service delivery in Hartlepool. In view of the positive review and progress made, formal monitoring via six monthly progress reviews was no longer necessary. The Director took the opportunity to thank all staff for their hard work in terms of delivering improvements identified in the inspection.

The Committee was pleased to note the outcome of the review and thanked all contributors for their hard work and efforts in achieving this positive outcome.

Decision

That the information given be noted.

51. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that this was the last meeting of the current municipal year.

The meeting concluded at 5.50 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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