

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

15 November 2022

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

**Present:**

Councillor Lindridge (In the Chair)

Councillors Cowie, Groves, Harrison and Sharp.

Co-opted members:

Jo Heaton, C of E Diocesan Representative

Mark Tilling, Secondary Schools Head Representative

Observer: Councillor Buchan, Chair of Adult and Community Based Services Committee

Also in attendance Councillor Little

Officers: Sally Robinson, Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services

Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning

Sandra Shears, Head of Finance - Corporate and Schools

Amanda Whitaker, Democratic Services Team

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chair welcomed Councillor Sharp following his recent appointment to the Committee.

### **27. Apologies for Absence**

Joanne Wilson, RC Diocesan Representative

David Turner, Primary Schools Head Representative

### **28. Declarations of Interest**

Jo Heaton - CEO of Northern Lights Learning Trust, reference to St Helen's Primary School in agenda item 5.2

Councillor Little – declared a personal interest - not a member of this Committee

## **29. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 were received.

## **30. Dedicated Schools Grant (Former Education Services Grant rate per pupil) – Disapplication Request** – *Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Resources*

### **Type of decision**

Key decision - tests (i) and (ii) applies. General Exception Provisions apply

### **Purpose of report**

To report the outcome of Schools' Forum held on the 19 October 2022 and their decision in relation to the 2023/24 Education Services General Duties Rates. The Committee was asked to agree that the Local Authority should present a disapplication request to the Secretary of State in order to ensure that the Local Authority can discharge its statutory responsibilities.

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

The Committee was advised that new national funding arrangements introduced in 2017/18 shifted responsibility for funding statutory duties from a specific grant to the Dedicated Schools Grant. The government provided no additional funding to schools to cover this cost shift. Members were reminded that since 2017/18 the Council has had to apply for disapplication, in order to secure this funding. For the financial year 2023/24, the local authority proposed a rate of £60 per pupil. The rate was unchanged from 2017/18, which meant the rate would have remained unchanged for seven years.

It was reported that the Schools' Forum considered this proposal and did not agree to transfer the funding to this Local Authority. Schools were clear that it was not because of concerns about the quality of services provided by the Local Authority, but they considered that funding statutory duties from school budgets is a budget cut and this funding should be provided by the Government. Regulations state that if agreement cannot be reached with maintained schools the matter would need referring to the Secretary of State for a decision. This had been the consistent view of Schools' Forum for the past six financial years. In each of these financial years, the Local Authority had successfully applied to the Secretary of State for disapplication of the Regulations. This meant that the Local Authority was able to remove the required element of funding to ensure that statutory responsibilities were discharged.

The Committee debated issues arising from the report. Referring to the Government not providing any additional funding to schools to cover the cost shift highlighted in the report, it was proposed and seconded that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee, to the Secretary of State, to convey funding concerns expressed by the Committee and to highlight that the Local Authority had successfully applied for disapplication of the Regulations for the previous six financial years.

### **Decision**

The Committee:

- a) Agreed the 2023/24 funding rate at £60 per pupil/place.
- b) Agreed to submit the disapplication request to the Secretary of State to set the Education Services General Duties rate at £60 per pupil/place for 2023/24.
- c) Noted this will be the seventh consecutive year the local authority has applied for disapplication and that the previous six applications have been successful.
- d) Agreed that a request for additional funding be sought from the Secretary of State, on behalf of the Children's Services Committee, to assist in discharging statutory responsibilities to schools.

## **31. Temporary Accommodation at Kingsley Primary School to Support Children with Special Education Needs (SEND) – Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services**

### **Type of decision**

Key decision test (i) and (ii) – General Exception Provisions apply.

### **Purpose of report**

For members to approve the use of the High Needs Funding reserve (non DSG) to provide temporary accommodation at Kingsley Primary School to support an increase in the number of children attending the school with additional needs and to ensure the accommodation is appropriate to meet their needs

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

The Committee was advised that Kingsley Primary School is commissioned by the Local Authority to deliver a 25 place ASD additional resourced provision (ARP) and have significant expertise in supporting children with Autism. The success of their provision had led to parents of children with additional needs requesting places at the school even if they do not live in the community. In addition there had been a significant number of children that had transferred to Kingsley mid-year when parents considered the current school their child is attending cannot meet need.

It was reported that the Kingsley School building is an appropriate size to meet the needs of 60 children in each year group. However the ongoing increase in the number of children attending the school with additional needs is placing significant pressure on the school to safely meet the children's needs. This is because these children require extra space to manage their need with more staff needed. A recent review of the accommodation showed that it was becoming unsafe to educate the children in the space available. Therefore it was felt that the quickest way to ensure the safety of the children and staff was to rent a temporary building (Portakabin). It was highlighted that the current situation is not sustainable and the proposed Portakabin accommodation is only temporary (approx. two years). It is therefore critical that the situation be reviewed to identify permanent solutions. The actions that were being implemented were detailed in the report.

The Committee debated issues arising from the report. Support was expressed for working with all schools to develop an Inclusion Strategy so parents were confident that the provision their children attend can meet their needs.

### **Decision**

The Committee approved, with no dissent, the use of the High Needs (non DSG) reserve to fund a temporary building at Kingsley Primary School to support an increase in the number of children attending the school with additional needs and to ensure the accommodation is appropriate to meet their needs.

Prior to the meeting concluding an elected member acknowledged the success of the recent Celebration Success Event. The Chair agreed that the event had been a success and reiterated that he would continue to discuss with political group leaders, the promotion of corporate parent training. It was highlighted that there is a meeting of the Corporate Parent Forum scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> November and it was suggested that all elected Members be invited to attend that meeting.

The Committee agreed that an e mail be sent to all elected members advising of the Corporate Parent Forum meeting.

The meeting concluded at 4.45 p.m.

**H MARTIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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