

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD**

16<sup>th</sup> March 2007

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm in Conference Room 1, Belle Vue Community, Sports & Youth Centre, Kendal Road, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor Pam Hargreaves, Children's Services Portfolio Holder

Officers: Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services  
Paul Briggs, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Phil Warrilow, Interim Manager, Children and Families  
Sue Johnson, Assistant Director, Children's Services  
John Collings, Assistant Director, Performance and Achievement  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

### **33. 2007/08 Capital Works Programme** (*Director of Children's Services*)

#### **Type of decision**

Key (Tests i and ii)

#### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval to the 2007/08 Capital Works Programme for Children's Services.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The Authority annually receives Government funding to support, maintain and develop the school building stock. This is to support major repairs or refurbishment as individual schools use their own maintenance budgets for day to day repairs. The prime motivation behind the works programme is to deliver improvements in education and raised standards of attainment. This year's programme is set against a background of major capital investment via Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the Primary Capital Programme. BSF in particular could result in a £90 million programme of new build and major refurbishment for secondary schools by 2012 while from 2008/2008 Hartlepool will be part of a Primary Capital Programme which will provide major investment in primary schools over 15 years.

Details were given of the School Capital Allocation funding confirmed by the DfES and a proposed programme of works was appended to the report

with estimated costs. Based on these estimates the programme was within the overall budget by approximately £40,000. This had purposely been arranged in order to leave the Department with a contingency sum of money in the event of unexpected developments, particularly emergency situations in respect of health, safety, security or where the school, or parts thereof, would need to be closed unless immediate action was taken. In such circumstances the Department requested special dispensation to carry out such works in advance of formal approval. The Portfolio Holder was happy with this course of action but requested that she be advised as to the commencement of such works through informal methods prior to receipt of the formal report.

#### **Decision**

1. That the Capital Works Programme for 2007/08 be approved.
2. That the Director of Children's Services be allowed dispensation and discretion to authorise building works not included in the initial programme of works but where a significant health, safety and/or security issues is exposed in advance of formal approval by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

### **34. To approve a Variation to an Instrument of Government** (*Director of Children's Services*)

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

To approve a variation to the Instrument of Government for a Church of England aided secondary school.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

In accordance with Schools Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003, the Governing Body of St Hild's C of E Voluntary Aided Secondary School had agreed at a meeting of the Governing Body held in Spring 2007 to a change to the second Sponsor Governor position from Heerema Hartlepool Ltd to Hartlepool College of Further Education. This was approved by the Diocese of Durham. The Governor Support Officer advised that this would not have any particular effect on St Hild's C of E Voluntary Aided Secondary School or any other schools in the Borough

#### **Decision**

That the variation to the Instrument of Government be approved.

### **35. Connexions Delivery Plan 2007/08** *(Director of Children's Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-Key

#### **Purpose of report**

To seek endorsement for the Local Delivery Plan for Connexions in Hartlepool 2007-08

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

Since the inception of Connexions in 2002 there has been a requirement for an annual Local Delivery Plan. From April 2007 Connexions funding, delivery and responsibility for performance targets for Hartlepool will transfer to Hartlepool Borough Council.

Planning Guidance issued by DfES establishes a number of requirements for business plans. They must be signed off by Government Officer (GO) before 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007 and must demonstrate that robust arrangements are in place to secure a variety of aims, details of which were outlined in the report. The Local Authority would continue to deliver information, advice and guidance and targeted youth support under the new Children's Services arrangements. There was also information on 'areas for improvement' identified through the annual self-assessment process involving young people, staff and partner agencies. A copy of the draft Connexions Delivery Plan was appended to the report for the Portfolio Holder's attention.

#### **Decision**

1. That the Connexions Delivery Plan 2007-08 be endorsed
2. That regular quarterly updates on this matter be brought to the Portfolio Holder

### **36. Foster Carers – Scheme of Allowances 2007-08** *(Director of Children's Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

#### **Purpose of report**

To propose a scheme of foster care allowances, in particular allowances in respect of payments for looked after children and young people in foster

placements within the Council's Fostering Service.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The current scheme of foster care allowances was approved by Cabinet in November 2004. The scheme required updating to take account of the changing position locally and to respond to the introduction of "The National Minimum Fostering Allowance and Fostering Payment Systems – Good Practice Guidance" in July 2006. Part of a wider package of measures to improve support for foster carers the national minimum allowance sets a clear benchmark for payment to all foster carers.

Hartlepool Fostering Network rates were already in excess of the national minimum and the gap would continue to increase for 2007/08. Details of the current and proposed future rates were appended to the report. The proposed 3.2% increase could be contained within the overall Children and Families budget.

### **Decision**

1. That all payments to carers be increased from 11<sup>th</sup> April 2007;
2. That the Fostering Network minimum rates be increased by 3.2% and maintained until such time as the national minimum rates are equal or greater and
3. That all other payments be increased by the 3% inflation rate agreed by Council

## **37. Local Government Access to Information**

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Minute 38 – Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports - (Para 1 – Information relating to any individual)

## **38. Children's Homes: Regulation 33/34 Reports (Para 1)** (Director of Children's Services)

### **Type of decision**

For information

**Purpose of report**

To present the Regulation 33/34 (formerly Regulation 22) report of visits to the authority's Children's Home.

**Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The report covered the months of November and December 2006.

**Decision**

That the report be received and noted.

**J A BROWN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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