

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting4th September 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Review of Children, Education and Social Care Delivery Arrangements - Children's Services

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on the Review of Children, Education and Social Care Delivery Arrangements – Children’s Services.

The report highlighted some of the challenges in Children’s Services, and the need to review the Service delivery arrangements.

The delivery arrangements for Children’s Services had changed considerably since 2011, there had been a significant number of Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Reviews and Service Reviews as well over the last three years.

In 2011 there were Four Heads of Service who had Children’s Services responsibilities within their remit:-

Head of Business Support and Improvement
Head of Children and Young People’s Services
Head of Education, Early Years and Complex Needs
Head of Children and Young People’s Strategy

One of the above posts was jointly funded by Primary Care Trust (NHS), and one post’s remit spanned both Children’s and Adult Services.

As a result of the changes within the NHS in 2011, the joint post was no longer required. At the same time there was a significant reduction in the funding of the Early Intervention Grant, so a decision was taken to delete the post and allocate the responsibilities to the remaining three Heads of Service.

Since that time there had been significant increase in legislative changes and revised Government policy that had led to further and continued challenges and demands on Children’s Services. These had included:-

- 0-25 Special Educational Needs (SEN) Reforms
- The changing focus on Schools/Academies and the Local Authority's role in that
- Ofsted Inspection Framework of Local Authority School Improvement, where Good is now the minimum expectation
- Revised Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care, where Good is now a minimum expectation across all Services
- Greater focus on LSCB Board with a separate Ofsted Judgement as part of the Inspection framework
- A greater focus on the Early Help Strategy and Offer and the need to evidence the effectiveness
- A greater focus on commissioning of Children's Services i.e. Children's Centres/ Youth Service, will continue

More recent developments had also contributed or would contribute to increased demand within the Service, including Health and Wellbeing Board and the newly revised partnership arrangements, the proposed development of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) with Hartlepool and the Troubled Families work. Members were be aware the Head of Service post which previously had responsibility for Troubled Families had been deleted. The Government had announced a national Phase 2 of the programme for a further five years, until 2019/2020 and this work would be led by Children, Education and Social Care (CESC). The Service had also seen a significant increase in Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs).

There continued to be a significant impact on workloads as a result of Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services. There had, for example, been 22 Ofsted Inspections in Stockton between January – July 2014 across Schools, Children's Centres and Children's Homes.

The Local Authority would also receive a four week Inspection of Services for children in need of help, protection, looked after and care leavers, along with a review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) sometime over the next two years and there was a real need to continue to focus on Inspection preparation and implementing the Improvement Plan following the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review earlier in the year.

Cabinet were aware Children's Social Care continued to have increased pressures on the budget relating to Looked After Children as they receive, on a quarterly basis, "Children's Social Care Activity and Performance" report. (The last report to Cabinet was 17 July 2014.) The two key areas of budgetary pressure being external placements and independent foster care provision and there was a need to undertake more focussed work around this area, particularly relating to foster care

provision now that the Joint Venture arrangements for residential provision are progressing.

The ability to commit more focussed time and capacity to look at some of the longer term strategic challenges to reduce the number of children who become Children in Need, Children Looked After and Children in Need of Child Protection Plan was however limited with the ongoing extensive operational demands on the two key Heads of Service.

The Corporate Director, in agreement with the Chief Executive and Lead Member, did bring in some additional capacity for six months in early 2014, to assist with Ofsted preparation, the revision of the Early Help Strategy, the development of the new HWB arrangements, and to undertake a piece of work around Fostering moving forward which was beneficial, and enabled the service to complete a number of key priority pieces of work, but additional capacity will be needed to progress any further work moving forward.

Over the last year in particular, there had been increased competing demands placed on the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Social Care, as along with the challenges in Children's Services, the introduction of the Care Act and the Better Care Fund, along with the increased focus on the quality of provision within Adults Services had meant she had needed to focus more of her time on Adult Services.

The Corporate Director was also expected to focus time on the Corporate work relating to the innovation and budgetary challenges in the organisation including Chairing the Big Ticket Children's Social Care Programme Board and Adult Social Care Programme Board, as well as focussing on the services within her remit. She was also involved in both Regional and National meetings relating to her role as Director of Adult Social Services / Director of Children's Services.

The temporary increase in staffing capacity in Adult Services had assisted the Director in ensuring the key strategic priorities in Adult Services were being delivered, along with EIT Reviews, and ensured there was strong focus on operational services which was reflected in the recent LGA Review of Safeguarding. The Adult EIT Reviews had also made their target savings.

This additional capacity would need to be revisited in 2015 to assess whether the interim arrangements were required longer term on a permanent basis and whether there was a need to look at structural changes in Adults in light of the Care Act implications and the National/Government agenda regarding the integration of Health and Social Care Services.

There would be a need to consider the arrangements for receiving Adult referrals in light of the Care Act and the proposed MASH developments. This would need to take place over the coming months.

As part of the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services, the Annual Assurance Review would be requested of the Chief Executive regarding the Director of Children's Services undertaking more than one role.

The arrangements in place in Adult Services and the proposals to review Children's Services would be reflected in an update of the Assurance Review.

The Council had supported a long term, organisation wide, approach to succession planning, staff development and capacity growth – in the Shaping a Brighter Future Programme. Cabinet would receive a further update on this in November. Some of the early work in CESC was already highlighting some very pertinent facts:-

- None of the permanent Heads of Service in CESC wish to consider applying for the Corporate Director's role when she retires.
- There is a pressing need to consider future succession planning in Children's Services CESC, as part of the Shaping a Brighter Future (SBF). There was some resilience in Adult Services, but a review of Adult Services should be considered in 2015, in light of the Better Care Fund and Care Act implications.
- At least two of the current Heads of Service working in Children's Services had indicated they do not intend to work beyond 2016.
- A number of Third Tier Managers in Children's Social Care were considering other work options due to the demands of the role.
- There were also emerging challenges in relation to recruitment in Children's Services. Whilst the Council had always had challenges around recruiting experienced Children's Social Work staff and Team Managers, we were seeing emerging challenges relating to more specialist roles.
- Early work indicated there were some opportunities within Children's Services for succession planning, and these would be explored as part of the review of Children's Services and more broadly as part of the Shaping Brighter Futures Programme.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. Cabinet receive a further report from the Corporate Director with proposals.
3. Reasons for the Decision

To review the service delivery and succession planning arrangements in Children's Services to ensure delivery of effective services to children, young people and their families.
4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Beall declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 8 - Review of Children, Education and Social Care Delivery Arrangements – Children's Services as his wife was employed in Children's Services. Councillor Beall did not vote on the item.
6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A
7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday, 12th September 2014

Proper Officer
08 September 2014