

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families held on Tuesday, 18 December 2018 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Rob Wood (in the Chair)

12. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Smyth.

13. Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared. However, Councillor Wood wished to place on record that his son-in-law works for the Harbour School, and his daughter works for Motiv8. He also wished to record that he is a local authority governor at Charter Academy, Ark Ayrton Primary Academy and Ark Dickens Primary Academy.

14. Children and Families Portfolio Budget Monitoring for the Second Quarter 2018-19

Graham Smith, Group Accountant, introduced the report and highlighted the following areas:

- that there was an overspend of £5.6m which was attributable to the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding service and was continuing to grow.
- The overspend on Looked After Children placements was currently projected at £4.170k, an increase of £419,000 since the beginning of the year, as a result of increased numbers of children and placement costs.
- That there was also a probable shortfall of income, within the adoption and fostering service primarily as a consequence of not having adopters available for possible usage by other agencies.
- It was noted that there had been an offer from Oxfordshire to take a total of ten unaccompanied minors over the next ten months. Placements were also being found in West Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey.

Decisions

The Cabinet Member

- 1) Noted the Children and Families Portfolio forecast budget position, at the end of September 2018, of £5.6m in excess of current approved cash limit provision.
- 2) Supported the ongoing process of budget review and implementation of proposals to reduce the projected overspend position and move towards

the delivery of a balanced budget within the area of Children's Social Care.

- 3) Noted the position in respect of the approved capital schemes for the portfolio.

15. Annual Adoption Panel Activity Report April 2018 (information report)

The Director presented the report and highlighted the following areas:

- That there was continued progress in the number of children being placed for adoption.
- That the timeliness and number of Looked After Children leaving foster care through adoption has generally continued to be in accordance with government-led targets. Portsmouth had an average of 31 children needing adoptive families at any time over the course of a year. For the period 1st April-31st October 2018 seven children had been adopted and applications for adoption orders for two children were currently pending in court.
- That of those children placed with adoptive families there were two pairs of siblings age 0-6yrs, who had been placed together and despite a robust support package in place one adoption placement had ended for an older child with emotional and behavioural issues.
- That a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) project team had been established to drive the development of Adopt South, which would comprise Portsmouth City Council, Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council; Southampton City Council as well as the voluntary adoption agencies (VAAs), Barnardo's, Parents and Children Together (PACT) and Adoption UK. With the contributions from the VAAs the four local authorities would provide a regional agency specialising in the recruitment of adoptive families.
- Whilst Portsmouth had experienced a reduction in the number of prospective adoptive families it had continued to use a range of means to identify the most suitable adoptive families for children. The majority of families recruited lived within a 50 mile radius (but not within the city) in order to protect the identity of the adoptive placement. Of the children matched, 75% percent were matched with Portsmouth approved adoptive families and 25% percent with other agency adoptive families. One of the benefits of Portsmouth becoming part of the RAA would be a reduction in the number and costs of children placed with other agency families.
- The benefits of a regional adoption agency to Portsmouth would include the removal of local competitive recruitment for prospective adoptive families as well as immediate access to a wider pool of adoptive families for Portsmouth children across the region. Adoptive placements would be more localised within the local regional area, promoting efficiency in adoption support

The Cabinet Member noted that

- 1) It is required by Standard 25.6 of the Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011 for Local Authority Adoption Services that the executive receive a six-monthly written report outlining the management and performance of the adoption agency.
- 2) The Cabinet Member noted the performance of the Portsmouth Adoption Agency in terms of:
 - 1.1 Reducing waiting times for children being placed in permanent families.
 - 1.2 Sustained number of children adopted in contrast to the national picture
 - 1.3 The progress of Portsmouth becoming part of a regional adoption agency

The Cabinet Member noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 16.30

Councillor Rob Wood
Chair