

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families held on Friday, 21 June 2019 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Rob Wood (in the Chair)

Councillors Judith Smyth
Matthew Atkins

Apologies for Absence

4. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

5. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Wood declared that his daughter worked for Motiv8 and his son-in-law worked for the Harbour School. He also declared that he was a local authority governor at Charter Academy, Ark Ayrton Primary Academy and Ark Dickens Primary Academy.

6. Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements

Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families & Education, presented the report and highlighted the following areas:

- Derek Benson has been appointed to the independent chair and scrutineer post mentioned in paragraph 4.2 b).
- The Society of St James had been added to the list of relevant agencies under the partnership agreement (Appendix 2).
- There is a small amendment to Appendix 1. Section 6.1 refers to the Sustainability & Transformation Partnership for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight; the new version refers to the Integrated Care System (the correct title for the structure referenced in the arrangements).

In discussion the following points were raised:

In response to comments about the remit of the senior officers of the lead agencies the Director explained that the aim of the arrangements is to underline and strengthen the principle that everyone is obliged to act outside their own agency's constraints and expected remit in order to safeguard children. Children's Services will keep testing people's understanding of this principle.

The Cabinet Member and the Director noted the value of the comment as it will help reinforce safeguarding.

In response to a query about exercising authority the Director explained that under statute named people are statutory partners. Their responsibility is delegated on a day to day basis to named people who have authority. The requirement to act is always there; officers such as the Director of Children's Services and the lead members' requirements are specified in legislation.

The arrangements need a named partner in the NHS and as the NHS has many trusts and organisations within it the commissioning authority was seen as the best place for the responsibility. The arrangements have named all local NHS providers and voluntary sector organisations that provide NHS services so they are all equally accountable for the delivery of safeguarding.

The Cabinet Member noted the arrangements were "a living document" and asked how it would be modified. The Director suggested that as the arrangements had been formally approved any changes to the text would have to go before another decision meeting. Children's Services will ensure people understand the intent of the document when they talk through it and carry out training. The Portsmouth Children's Safeguarding Board website has extensive information on safeguarding.

The Cabinet Member suggested holding "a soft review" and, if the amount of feedback merits it, a formal review. Matters should be reviewed at a reasonable level to reflect practice.

DECISION

The Cabinet Member approved the new strategic safeguarding children partnership arrangements on behalf of the City Council ready for publishing (Appendix A). The arrangements have been approved already by the Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group and by Hampshire Police

7. Creation of a new Foster Carer Adaptation Policy

Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families & Education, presented the report on behalf of the Business Partner for Children and Families, and highlighted the following areas:

The policy consolidates previous practice and introduces criteria for giving financial support to foster parents for adaptations in order to secure long-term placements for children with disabilities. Previously spending had been on an ad hoc basis but since the allocation of a business partner from Housing it was apparent a more formal and consistent policy was needed.

In response to questions from members the Director explained that:

As there was no longer a need to obtain three quotes for work, the Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Services Directorate will have responsibility for carrying out the work and overseeing the process; they decide if it is to be

done in-house or whether to secure tenders. In the current economic climate decisions are likely to be taken more carefully than in the past. The Director acknowledged members were anxious best value for money continues to be secured under the policy.

A retrospective annual review could show how effectively the money has been spent and how child-focussed the adaptations were, for example, if children with more challenging needs were helped to find placements. Tangible results could also help with applying for future funding.

Members thought the policy demonstrated that the council is child-focussed and works in the interests of looked after children. It is important being able to offer families the flexibility of making adaptations, particularly for children who may be difficult to place.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families:

- 1. Approved the policy to provide financial support to foster carers who meet the requirements as laid out in the policy at appendix A.**
- 2. Gave delegated authority to the Director of Children, Families and Education to approve individual business cases, the S151 Officer has already detailed delegated authority to Finance Managers to approve capital spend up to a maximum of £50,000.**
- 3. Approved the Financial Assistance Agreement at appendix B.**

The meeting concluded at 4.25 pm.

Councillor Rob Wood
Chair