

Title of meeting: Children and Families Cabinet

Date of meeting: 21st June 2019

Subject: Creation of a new Foster Carer Adaptions Policy

Report by: Alison Cloutman, Business Partner to Children and Families Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes/No

Full Council decision: Yes/No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To seek approval from the Cabinet member for Children and Families for the creation of a policy at appendix A to provide financial support to foster carers generating increase in foster carer placements.

1.2 To seek approval of the financial appraisal, appendix B supporting the policy.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families approves the policy to provide financial support to foster carers who meet the requirements as laid out in the policy at appendix A.

2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families gives 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.

2.3 That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families Services approves the Financial Assistance Agreement at appendix B.

3. Background

3.1 In April 2015, Children and Families Services received a capital bid for £200,000 towards financial support for adaptions to foster carer properties. The aim as described then in the capital bid continues to this day, to provide adaptions to foster carer homes to secure long term placements for children and/or to increase the number of foster placements with existing carers.

3.2 There is currently £86,733 remaining in this capital line.

3.3 With the introduction of the business partner role to Children, Families and Education Services, giving housing advice to the service, the requirement for a formal policy became more apparent to meet the adaptations required to enable long term placements and increased placements with good carers.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1 Currently spend has been adhoc from this budget line, with each proposal being separately approved by the cabinet member, and a policy is required to provide regulation and financial certainty for repayment if necessary.

4.2 The policy will detail the process to follow for social workers, enabling a better understanding as to whether Portsmouth City Council is able to support families.

4.3 The mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of the city's looked after children is paramount and by enabling them to stay together with siblings or to remain with a family in the long term, we will continue to support the wellbeing of the child.

4.4 Children, Families and Education Directorate will commission Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings Services to deliver the work; this is seen, both, as giving value for money and guaranteeing that the work will be delivered to a high quality, on time and to budget. It will also remove the need for 3 quotes for the work.

4.5 The policy and Financial Assistance Agreement both detail the circumstances and repayment due to Portsmouth City Council should the carers default and the loan become repayable.

5. Equality impact assessment

5.1 A Preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been completed, a copy of which is attached as Appendix C; no adverse equality implications were identified

6. Legal implications

6.1 The Children Act 1889 would allow the Local Authority to advance payments with regard the promotion of the welfare of a child (sec17, sec 20 and by reason of a applicable powers with respect to say a Care Order or a Special Guardianship Order). These statutory powers are additional to any power under the Localism Act 2011 with respect to a general power of competence to do as proposed within the report. The policy and report gives adequate protection for advanced payments for recoupment within an initial 5 year period based upon agreement default being the trigger, advance would be subject to loan to value enabling the PCC advance to be secured if necessary by way of legal charge upon the recipients' home.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1 The Adaptation of Homes Policy for foster families will provide a fair and consistent framework for allocating capital funding from within the approved capital programme to foster carers.
- 7.2 Each request will be subject to a financial appraisal and will only progress if the capital cost can be offset by equivalent revenue savings or costs avoided over the following three years.
- 7.3. The Section 151 Officer, or his representative, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services, will have delegated authority to approve schemes up to a value of £50,000. Schemes above that value will require consultation with and the approval of the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Children's Services Portfolio.
- 7.4 Schemes can only be approved if sufficient funding is available within the approved capital programme.

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Signed by:

- Appendices: A - Adaptation of Homes Policy for foster Families Policy**
B - Financial Assistance Agreement
C - EIA

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
rejected by on

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Signed by: