

**Title of meeting: Children and Families Cabinet**

**Date of meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020**

**Subject: Update to Foster Carer Adaptions Policy**

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

**Wards affected: All**

**Key decision: Yes/No**

**Full Council decision: Yes/No**

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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Cabinet member for Children and Families to update and rename the existing policy at appendix A to provide financial support to carers generating increase in placements.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 **That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families approves the amendments to the policy to provide financial support to 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 in line with finance rules.**
- 2.3 **That going forwards the foster carer adaptation policy be referred to as the carer adaptation policy, covering all carers within Portsmouth.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 In June 2019 Children and Families Cabinet agreed the creation of a new policy to support adaptions to carers' homes to secure long term placements for children and/or to increase the number of placements with existing carers.
- 3.2 In April 2020 there was a successful capital bid to support the policy.
- 3.3 Following the approval of this policy a working group was set up to look at the expressions of interests and to make formal decision to take them forward.
- 3.4 The working group felt the financial contribution needed to be capped at £50,000 each, allowing for a greater number of placements to be supported by the council.

3.5 The group also felt that the accompanying financial appraisal should demonstrate payback/equivalent savings of the sum invested within 2 years.

3.6 Both of these changes are reflected in the updated policy.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

4.1 The updated policy will give better financial security to CFE.

4.2 The updated 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 The policy and Financial Assistance Agreement detailing the circumstances and repayment due to Portsmouth City Council remain the same should the carers default and the loan become repayable.

#### **5. Integrated impact assessment**

5.1 A new IIA is not required for this decision. The previous Preliminary Equality Impact Assessment showed 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 two 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 - Updated Adaptation of Homes Policy for Families Policy**

**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: