

CABINET MEMBER (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE)

22nd January, 2013

Cabinet Member

Present: Councillor O'Boyle

Shadow Cabinet

Member Present: Councillor Lepoidevin

Other Members

Present: Councillor Lakha – Chair, Jobs, Skills and Growth Scrutiny Board

Employees Present:

V. Castree (Chief Executive's Directorate)
S. Giles (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
N. Hale (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
N. Hart (Chief Executive's Directorate)
I. Merrifield (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
U. Patel (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
E. West (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)

Public Business

23. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

24. Minutes

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2012, were signed as a true record.

(b) There were no matters arising.

25. Annual Statement of payments to Coventry City Council Foster Carers

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which considered proposals for the annual review of levels of fees and maintenance payments paid to foster carers for 2013/2014.

The report stated that all foster carers approved by Coventry City Council receive a 'maintenance allowance' for each of the children and/or young people in their care. This payment was made weekly and was intended to cover all costs associated with caring for a 'Looked after Child'.

Maintenance payments are set in line with Government guidance and reviewed annually. Historically in Coventry the maintenance fee was set to match the higher rate that is recommended by the Fostering Network. Local Authorities cannot lower their fees but they do have the option to freeze them. Maintenance allowances and fees were frozen last year in Coventry. The recommended national increase last year for maintenance allowances was 5%.

The Fostering Network was recommending a 2% increase on the maintenance payments for 2013/2014 period. If Coventry were to follow this line for child maintenance payments it would increase the shortfall with neighbouring authorities.

It was being proposed that in order to address some of the shortfall, the children's maintenance allowances and all other child care allowances are increased by 5% in 2013/2014.

All foster carers, except those who are related to children, receive a fee in addition to the child's maintenance allowance. There was no statutory guidance in relation to fee levels paid to foster carers.

In comparison to neighbouring authorities, Coventry's fee to foster carer was set at a competitive rate, with individual payments slightly higher than Warwickshire and Solihull. However, a number of Local Authorities, including Coventry's neighbours, pay the fees 'per child' while Coventry paid 'per household'.

The report proposed that for the period 2013-2014, Coventry increased the fee to Foster Carers by 2%.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) approved the recommended payments to Coventry City Council Foster Carers, set out in the Foster Carers Letter in Appendix 1.

This included:

- **A 2% increase in fees to foster carers.**
- **A 5% increase in maintenance payments and all other child care allowances.**
- **Deleting the Mainstream 1 fee payment foster carers and replacing it with Mainstream 2.**
- **Aligning Friends and Family weekly allowance with internal Foster Carers fees.**
- **Any Foster Carer who is currently receiving the Mainstream 2 fee (who has completed the relevant training), who has 5 years or more experience to receive the Mainstream 3 payment from April 1 2013.**

26. The Placement Sufficiency Strategy for Children and Young People's Placements

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which introduced the recently completed placements sufficiency strategy for placements for Coventry's looked after children. The strategy forms the basis of the commissioning plan for 2013-14 on how Coventry City Council, along with its Children's Trust partners, intends to meet the "sufficiency duty". The report further provided an analysis of our needs for placements as well as identifying some gaps in provision types. The Strategy would be used as the basis for developing commissioning plans to ensure we have the correct provision in future. This would enable us to make efficient commissioning decisions and help us achieve value for money when we let contracts.

The Strategy included a detailed action plan which outlined how issues raised in the Strategy would be addressed. The Strategy would be reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure

that we were still commissioning the care our children and young people need and are achieving good value for money.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People):

- 1. Endorsed the Strategy as the means for developing sufficient provision of placements for looked after children and ensuring value for money on the types of provision sourced by the Council.**
 - 2. In particular, endorsed the priorities detailed in section 3 of the Strategy and the action plan as a means of developing sufficient provision.**
- 27. Report back from Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on Looked after Children and Apprenticeships**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Looked after Children and Apprenticeships which was established to determine whether anything could be done to improve the uptake and successful completion of apprenticeships by care leavers. Members felt it was important that, as Corporate Parents, the City Council offered as much support to Care Leavers as possible. The present system had resulted in minimal success by Care Leavers at gaining and maintaining an apprenticeship and therefore to do nothing was not an option.

The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group made eight recommendations for the Cabinet Member to consider and all the recommendations as outlined below were accepted.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) agreed:

- 1. That the Council widens the target pool of Care Leavers from those currently Not in Education, Employment or training (NEET) to include those in learning and on track to successfully complete Level 2 and Level 3 courses in FE colleges and schools.**
- 2. That the Council continues to work with those Looked After Children and Care Leavers who are NEET to develop their skills and personal resilience through provisions such as European Social Fund, the Young Persons' Employment Placement Scheme, work experience in the City Council, whilst recognising that for many of these young people the transition from NEET to accessing and sustaining an apprenticeship will not be achieved quickly or easily.**
- 3. To provide a financial incentive to those Care Leavers on apprenticeship programmes, for example, through a bonus at the end of the first three months of an apprenticeship to be paid through the After Care Service. The financial incentive would be £1200 per year per Looked After Child, the same as a care leaver remaining in education receives the 16-19 Bursary.**
- 4. To continue to provide ongoing support to Care Leavers to help them find**

appropriate work at the end of their apprenticeship programme.

5. That Care Leavers who start an apprenticeship with the City Council, are supported not only by the Council's Entry to Employment Team, but also by a nurturing/peer support mentor within the employing service in addition to links with the relevant Personal Advisor or Social Worker.
6. That City Council departments who take on a Care Leaver as an apprentice, use the support available to them from the Entry to Employment Team, After-Care Service and the Participation Team to maximise opportunities for the apprenticeship to succeed.
7. That the Care Leaver and Personal Advisor work with the appointing manager to decide whether preparation may be beneficial for the team who will be working with and supporting the young person.
8. That the Council actively negotiate with Partners to encourage them to offer apprenticeships, employment and work experience to Care Leavers.

28. Outstanding Issues Report

The Cabinet Member noted the outstanding issues relevant to his portfolio and requested that the report be updated accordingly.

RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People): -

1. Item 1 headed "Implementation of Multi-Systemic Therapy and Keep be deleted as this was launched last year.
2. Item 2 headed "Adoption Services Annual Report and Statement of Purpose" be scheduled into the Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate's forward planner.

29. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(The meeting closed at 2.30 p.m.)