



Cabinet Meeting

12 November 2014

Report title	Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children Strategy 2014-17	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Sarah Norman	
Originating service	Children, Young People and Families	
Accountable employee(s)	Martyn Sargeant	Democratic Services Manager
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Report to be/has been considered by	Community Directorate Management Team	20 October 2014

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

Endorse the strategic approach to the provision of services for looked after children (LAC) set out in the Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children Strategy attached to this report.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to obtain the Cabinet's endorsement for the latest Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children Strategy which sets out how the City Council plans to fulfil this duty over the next 3 years (2014-17). It is a requirement that the Strategy is formally approved by the Council.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 A Sufficiency Duty was placed on local authorities in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 and this has been reinforced by the Draft Statutory Guidance Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2009). Section 22G requires local authorities to take reasonably practicable steps that secure sufficient accommodation for looked-after children under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in a child's best interest to be accommodated by the local authority. There is a requirement to ensure access to a sufficient range of placements so that, whenever it is in the interests of a looked-after child, they can be placed locally with access to the full range of services and support necessary.

3.0 Overview of the Strategy

- 3.1 The Strategy has been developed within the context of the need to balance obtaining better outcomes for Looked After Children within a financial climate where the increasing LAC population has placed increasing strain on placement budgets. The implementation of the Strategy will contribute to achieving more cost effective placements for children and young people who are admitted to the care of the City Council.
- 3.2 A key strategic drive within the strategy is to increase the proportion of LAC who are placed in family based settings and to reduce the reliance on residential care where possible. To this end the Strategy relates to decisions already taken by the Council to decommission the residential homes that it owns and manages and to end most of the existing block contracts with an external provider of residential care. It is recognised that for some young people in care, residential placements will be the best match to their needs and provision for these situations are being made via continued membership of the regional residential framework.
- 3.2 The Strategy highlights continuing work to broaden the range and capacity of placement options available for Looked After Children including the drive to recruit more mainstream foster carers as well as establishing of a new Specialist Foster Care service which will address the needs of those young people with complex needs who might otherwise be placed in residential homes.
- 3.3 In its conclusion the Strategy identifies 6 key themes which will be critical to the successful delivery of the Strategy over the next three years. These key themes will form the basis for a Sufficiency Strategy Implementation Plan which will be produced following the sign off of the Strategy and this will be used to monitor the achievement of the Strategy's aims going forward.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The report has no direct financial implications.
- 4.2 The strategy relates to how placements for looked after children will be managed over the next three years. The approved budget for 2014/15 for the Looked after Children's Service is £29.4 million.
[NM/30102014/S]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The production of the Strategy fulfils the Sufficiency Duty placed on local authorities in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 which has subsequently been reinforced by the Draft Statutory Guidance Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2009).
RB/03112014/O

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 A Stage 1 Equality Analysis Form has been completed and submitted to the Equalities Team for comment. The Strategy itself highlights changes in the LAC population with regard to age and ethnicity. However, the feedback from the Equalities Team has highlighted the need for a more detailed analysis of the LAC population with regard to all the "protected characteristics" going forward. Similarly a more detailed analysis will also be required in terms of establishing whether there are any differentials in terms the experience of children and young people in care. These issues will form a specific strand of the implementation plan which will be formulated following the formal approval of the Strategy.
- 6.2 Inclusion of a specific equalities strand in the implementation plan will ensure that in future there will be a much more robust data set and analysis to underpin the Council's on-going commitment to equality outcomes for children and young people in care.

7.0 Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no specific environmental implications relating to this report and appended papers.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 The Strategy makes reference to children's residential homes which are owned and managed by the Council, and the plans, and the consequent loss of jobs. These plans have already been considered and approved by Cabinet in September 2014.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 9.1 The Strategy makes reference to children's residential homes which are owned by the Council, two of which are managed by the Council directly and two which are managed by an external provider (the Cambian Group). The plans to decommission three of these premises have already been considered and approved by Cabinet.
- 9.2 One of the homes , The Wergs, will be leased by the Cambian Group for at least one more year and thus will continue to operate as a children's home. The future of Red Gables and Upper Pendeford Farm will be managed through the Council's normal disposal processes.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 Proposals Regarding Children's Residential and Fostering Provision presented to Council Cabinet meeting 10 September 2014