

66 **SOUTH WEST PENINSULA FRAMEWORK CONTRACT FOR INDEPENDENT FOSTERING** - agenda item 6

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson, introduced the report, noting: the importance of looked after children growing up in a stable environment; the national shortage of foster placements; the importance of having available and appropriate placement options; that residential care is not appropriate for most children; and that foster placements are more cost effective than residential care. Cllr Nicholson further noted that whilst the new framework included a slight increase in cost, it remained more cost effective than residential care.

The Strategic Commissioner – Vulnerable Children and Young People, Louise Palmer, added to the points raised by Cllr Nicholson, noting: work to keep any increased costs to a minimum; the Commissioning Teams past performance and cost reduction; the intention to increase the Council's own fostering capabilities to improve placements for children.

Further points raised in debate included: contract review points and timescales; the importance of ensuring placements are in Somerset wherever possible; the cost of out of county placements; in-house placements; and the importance of ensuring children are given the best possible care.

In response to the points raised in debate Cllr Nicholson noted that the Council was not considering increasing in-house residential homes as this was not the best use of the Council's skills and resources.

The Chair highlighted that there was support for the proposal and both the junior cabinet members and cabinet members were in consensus.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendix and discussion the Cabinet RESOLVED to authorise the Director of Children's Services to enter into the Peninsula Framework for independent fostering for a period of 4 years (48 months) from 1st April 2018.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

CONFIRMATION OF NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA FOR SCHOOLS AND HIGH NEEDS – agenda item 7

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson, introduced the report noting that: the dedicated schools grant is used to fund education in Somerset; this report followed the paper brought to Cabinet on 13 December 2017, confirmed the total funding allocation for Somerset; and that the final allocations to schools would be subject to a Cabinet Member key decision. Cllr Nicholson further welcomed the funding increase, but noted that Somerset was still one of the 40 worst funded Local Authorities; and highlighted that the Council continues to lobby Government for fairer funding.

The Strategic Finance Manager, Finance Strategy, Martin Young, added to the points raised by Cllr Nicholson noting that: grant funding has no impact on the Council's base budget; and that the funding allocations would be considered by Schools Forum later today.

Further points raised in debate included: the importance of continuing to lobby central government; the financial implications if Somerset were funded at the national average level; and the impact on Academy funding. Members further questioned if the other of the 40 lowest funded Councils were rural county councils.

In response to the points raised in debate the Director of Finance and Performance noted that if Somerset were funded at the national average level this would equate to £400 per pupil resulting in an additional £28m of funding. The Strategic Finance Manager, Finance Strategy, further noted that the vast majority of the 40 lowest funded Councils were predominately rural.

The Chair confirmed that there was support for the proposals and that both the junior cabinet members and cabinet members were in consensus.

Following consideration of the officer report and discussion the Cabinet resolved to:

1. Approve the allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for delegation to Somerset Schools and High Needs provision, (including Academies and Free schools)
2. Devolve approval of the final formula allocations at individual school level for 2018/19 (received 19 December 2017) to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

68 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS** – agenda item 7

There was no other business.

(The meeting ended at 10.26am)

CHAIR