

## **EXECUTIVE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2016 starting at 6.30 pm

### **Present**

Councillor Stephen Carr (Chairman)  
Councillors Graham Arthur, Robert Evans, Peter Fortune,  
Kate Lymer and Peter Morgan

### **Also Present**

Councillor Angela Wilkins

## **17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Colin Smith.

## **18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations.

## **19 FOSTER CARER ALLOWANCES**

### **Report CS16040**

Following a review of current foster carer allowances and consultation, a revised schedule of allowances was recommended for implementation.

Of three options, it had been previously agreed (at the Executive Working Party on Child Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting) that the consultation with carers should focus on Option 2 (which included cessation of the additional allowances paid to foster carers to cover birthday, Christmas and holiday expenditure), estimated to generate savings in the region of £692,819 per annum in a full year. Details of the options and potential savings were appended to Report CS16040.

In parallel with the L B Bromley consultation, the Bromley Foster Care Association (BFCA) also surveyed its membership. Outcomes indicated concern for the proposed changes as did outcomes from open meetings. The Portfolio Holder and his assistant met BFCA representatives on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The Portfolio Holder was minded to recommend a revised proposal which left the current professional fees unchanged, introduce the DfE weekly maintenance allowances, and continue to pay the two weeks additional allowance towards holiday cost but to cease the additional week allowances for birthday and Christmas payments. Additionally, the Portfolio Holder was prepared to recommend that the reduction in maintenance allowance was phased in, with 50% of the reduction from 1 September 2016 and full implementation from 1st September 2017.

Following subsequent representations from the Chair of the BFCA, the Portfolio Holder revised the proposals further to include Christmas and

birthday allowances .The consequent rates, outlined in Report CS16040, would generate savings of c£545k as opposed to c£693k.

Along with an intention to improve support and training for Foster Carers the Portfolio Holder for Care Services felt the measures presented a good package. Councillor Angela Wilkins (Crystal Palace) suggested there would be indirect costs from the measures and was particularly concerned about the way the process had been handled. Cllr Wilkins also referred to the cost of bringing up a child and suggested that higher costs were linked to younger and teenage children. As such Cllr Wilkins asked why flat rate reductions were not being proposed. Cllr Wilkins also enquired about the level of data provided by comparator boroughs.

It was understood that the comparison figures were like for like and officers had not been asked to consult on flat rate reductions although previous consideration had been given at the Executive Working Party on Child Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.

The Portfolio Holder for Care Services highlighted that the Council very much values the role of Foster Carers. An intention of an extra weekly amount to cover higher teenage costs was to improve the numbers of foster carers for the age range. The Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation suggested that schools provide a greater push to help looked after children further achieve academically. In this regard, the Portfolio Holder for Education highlighted the Education White Paper.

In considering the recommendations in Report CS16040, the Portfolio Holder for Care Services proposed that Recommendation 2 ii be qualified to indicate that the revised rates of allowances be implemented with immediate effect for new Foster Carers and from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 for existing Foster Carers.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (1) the content of Report CS16040, including the appendix, be noted;**
- (2) the revised foster carer allowances (outlined at paragraph 3.14 of Report CS16040) be implemented with immediate effect for new Foster Carers and from 1st September 2016 for approved existing foster carers;**
- (3) the Department for Education maintenance allowances be used as the core allowance in the calculations for connected person, special guardianship, adoption and child arrangement financial assessments from 1st July 2016 for all new carers; and**
- (4) a review be endorsed of foster carer training and support packages, in consultation with foster carers, and monitored through the Executive Working Party for Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.**

Chairman

The Meeting ended at 6.55 pm