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| Report Title: | Children's Services Business Plan 2017-2018 |
| Contains Confidential or Exempt Information? | NO - Part I |
| Member reporting: | Cllr Natasha Airey, Lead Member for Children's Services |
| Meeting and Date: | Cabinet – 23 March 2017 |
| Responsible Officer(s): | Alison Alexander, Managing Director/Strategic Director Adult, Children and Health Services |
| Wards affected: | All |

REPORT SUMMARY

1. In September 2016, the Royal Borough agreed to enter into a partnership with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames to deliver its children's services through Achieving for Children, a community interest company. This report provides the business plan for the delivery of children's services through Achieving for Children in 2017-2018, together with the improvement plan.
2. The Royal Borough had its inspection of children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers under Ofsted's single inspection framework in March 2015 and received an overall judgement of Requires Improvement. It is unlikely that there will be a further inspection under this framework for at least three years. As a result, the Royal Borough signed up to a safeguarding peer review by the Local Government Association to take place in December 2016. This commitment was made in order to assess progress following the inspection. The areas for consideration identified in the peer review have been consolidated within the existing improvement plan that had been developed following completion of the initial Ofsted action plan and forms the appendix to the 2017-2018 business plan.
3. This report also confirms that the formal transfer of children's services to Achieving for Children will be effective 1 August 2017 and outlines the arrangements that will be put in place between 1 April and 31 July 2017.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet notes the report and:

- i) **Approves the Children's Services Business Plan for 2017-2018 and accompanying improvement plan.**

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Achieving for Children

- 2.1. In September 2016, the Royal Borough agreed to enter into a partnership with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames to deliver its children's services through Achieving for

Children, a community interest company. This report provides the business plan for the delivery of children's services through Achieving for Children in 2017-2018.

Peer review

- 2.2. The Royal Borough had its inspection of children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers under Ofsted's single inspection framework in March 2015 and received an overall judgement of Requires Improvement. It is unlikely that there will be a further inspection under this framework for at least three years. As a result, the Royal Borough signed up to a safeguarding peer review by the Local Government Association to take place in December 2016. This commitment was made in order to assess progress following the inspection.
- 2.3. Whilst it is not an inspection, the peer review is undertaken against a standard set of key lines of enquiry and the local authority can specify additional lines of enquiry. The Royal Borough requested a focus on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Duty and Assessment team and the SMARTness and quality of child protection plans including development and delivery. The standard themes are:
 - Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child.
 - Outcomes, impact and performance management.
 - Working together, including the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - Capacity and managing resources.
 - Vision, strategy and leadership.
- 2.4. Overall, the feedback from the review was very positive, see section 3 for a summary of the strengths and areas for consideration under each of the standard themes. The self assessment completed by the Royal Borough in advance of the site visit was reflected in the outcomes of the peer review and there were no surprises in terms of the peer review team's findings. The team concluded from the cases that they had reviewed that there was no evidence of unsafe practice. Many of the areas of strengths identified by Ofsted, particularly around focus on children and practice within the Pods (the long term social work teams), have been confirmed by the peer review.
- 2.5. The areas for consideration identified have been consolidated within the existing improvement plan that had been developed following completion of the initial Ofsted action plan.
- 2.6. The key headlines from the review were:
 - Ambitious and innovative political and senior managerial leadership.
 - Political and managerial commitment to continue to enhance stability and consistency to children's services in the Borough.
 - Excellent examples of collaborative and transparent working with all partners.
 - Children are at the heart of everything that is done.
 - Required performance and standards need to be fully embedded across services.
 - Processes need to be streamlined to support effective co-ordination and planning that meets the needs of children.
 - Continue to enhance stability and support staff during this time of change.

- Staff and partners are passionate about the contribution they make for children and young people.

Improvement plan

2.7. Drawing together good practice from other authorities, areas for consideration identified in the peer review and current performance, the Children’s Services improvement plan, see appendix 1 to the business plan, is shaped around eight key themes:

- Delivery of an integrated early help offer and alignment with MASH.
- Missing/child sexual exploitation.
- Recruitment and retention of staff including caseloads, supervision and management development.
- Corporate parenting.
- Educational improvements for those eligible for free schools meals.
- Alternative provision offer for vulnerable children and young people.
- Quality assurance and performance management, including audit.

2.8. The business plan is the operational delivery plan for children’s services. The service specification with Achieving for Children sets out the performance management framework and expectations for the contract.

Timescales

2.9. Cabinet will be aware that the Royal Borough has been working with Achieving for Children to complete all the work to enable Children’s Services to be delivered through Achieving for Children from April 2017.

2.10. The formal decision to enable the Royal Borough to enter the partnership with the founding councils, Richmond and Kingston, needs to be made at their relevant executive meetings. Formal decisions are scheduled for 19 and 27 April, with the final ratification in Richmond on 4 July 2017.

2.11. Between March and July 2017, the Royal Borough and Achieving for Children will continue to develop their partnership working, as already agreed, forming relationships between staff and services and identifying opportunities for joint work and integrated services. The formal transfer of staff will take place on 1 August 2017.

Table 1: Options

| Option | Comments |
|--|--|
| Approve the Children’s Services Business Plan for 2017-2018 and accompanying improvement plan. This is the recommended option. | The business plan with the improvement plan sets out the objectives for Children’s Services for 2017-2018 in order to meet the needs of children and young people in the borough. |
| Not to have a business plan and improvement plan for Children’s Services This is not the recommended option. | Not having clear priorities for improvement for Children’s Services for 2017-2018 will not enable the Royal Borough to meet its statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in the borough. |

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The key implications of the recommendation are at table 2.

Table 2: Key implications

| Outcome | Unmet | Met | Exceeded | Significantly Exceeded | Date of delivery |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Delivery of Children's Services improvement plan 2017-2018 | 30 June 2018 | 31 March 2018 | 28 February 2018 | 31 January 2018 | 31 March 2018 |

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

4.1 No financial implications. All activities outlined in the Improvement Plan will be met from existing budgets.

4.2 On 15 December 2016, Cabinet agreed to the recommendation: "Approves the consideration for purchase of shareholding a 20% stake in Achieving for Children and recommends to Council that this is funded from the 2016/17 capital programme, delegating authority to the Leader, Lead Member for Finance and Managing Director/Strategic Director Adult Children and Health Services to negotiate and agree the value of the shares." The admission fee of £750K has now been agreed with Richmond and Kingston.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The statutory framework for the local authority to deliver services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and young people leaving care includes:

- Children Act 1989.
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- Children Act 2004.
- Working Together 2015 (statutory guidance).

5.2 Delivering the improvements identified will support the Royal Borough to properly comply with its legal obligations regarding its duties towards children in need of help and protection, children in care and young people leaving care. Failure to make such changes could lead to potential risks to vulnerable children and young people in need, and a failure of the local authority to comply with its legal obligations.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The risks are set out in table 3

Table 3: Risks and controls

| Risks | Uncontrolled Risk | Controls | Controlled Risk |
|---|--------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Impact of transition to Achieving for Children delays implementation of improvement plan. | MEDIUM | Tight performance monitoring. Senior management sponsorship | LOW |
| Improvement activities do not have the desired impact. | MEDIUM | Robust monitoring of the improvement plan. Redefinition of improvement activity as required. | LOW |

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

7.1 None.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 The report will be considered by Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 22 March 2017, comments will be reported to Cabinet.

8.2 Consultation has also taken place with senior managers within Children's Services.

8.3 Consultation is taking place with the Youth Ambassadors and Kickback, the children in care council on 21 March 2017.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 As the improvements identified following the December 2016 peer review have been consolidated within the existing Improvement Plan, a number of the activities are already underway.

Table 5: Implementation timetable

| Date | Details |
|-------------------------------|--|
| January 2017 to 31 March 2018 | Delivery of Children's Services Improvement Plan |

9.2 Implementation date if not called in: Immediately.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Children's Services Business Plan 2017-2018

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 Adult, Children and Health Services Directorate Business Plan 2016-2017.

12. CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

| Name of consultee | Post held | Date sent | Commented & returned |
|--------------------|--|-----------|----------------------|
| Cllr Natasha Airey | Lead Member for Children's Services | 22/2/17 | 23/2/17 |
| Alison Alexander | Managing Director | 22/2/17 | 23/2/17 |
| Russell O'Keefe | Strategic Director | 22/2/17 | |
| Andy Jeffs | Strategic Director | 22/2/17 | |
| Rob Stubbs | Section 151 Officer | 22/2/17 | |
| Terry Baldwin | Head of HR | 22/2/17 | |
| Ian Dodds | Deputy Chief Executive, Achieving for Children | 22/2/17 | |

REPORT HISTORY

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|---|----------------------------|
| Decision type: Key decision 16 January 2017 | Urgency item? No |
| Report Author: Hilary Hall, Head of Commissioning – Adults, Children and Health, 01628 683893 | |