

Report Title:	Achieving for Children Annual Reports 2022/23
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No – Part I
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Amy Tisi, Cabinet member for Children’s Services, Education and Windsor
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet - 25 October 2023
Responsible Officer(s):	Lin Ferguson, Executive Director of Children’s Services
Wards affected:	All

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REPORT SUMMARY

The Achieving for Children (AfC) Board of Directors has now approved the 2022/23 Impact Report, Equalities Report and Annual Report and Accounts. These annual reports provide information about AfC’s impact and performance across the boroughs of Richmond, Kingston and Windsor and Maidenhead between April 2022 and March 2023. They are being presented to Cabinet to support the Council’s oversight of AfCs performance in its role as joint owner of AfC.

Children's Services have continued to perform well in 2022/23 and the reports evidence a significant positive impact for the children, young people and families who live in the borough.

The Annual Equalities Report details good progress in embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion within AfC both in terms of staff experience and development as well as in the way we deliver services.

The Annual Report and Accounts for 2022/23 has now been independently audited and the auditors have confirmed that they present a true and fair view of Achieving for Children’s financial performance and position. The auditors are also satisfied with the assessment that AfC continues to be a ‘going concern’.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet notes and makes any recommendations in relation to:

- i. **The Achieving for Children Impact Report**
- ii. **The Achieving for Children Equalities Report**
- iii. **The Achieving for Children Annual Report and Accounts**

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

- 2.1 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead owns a 20% share in AfC and also commissions the company to deliver the Local Authority’s Children’s Services.

Cabinet has an important role in the Ownership Governance of AfC. This role includes making a series of key decisions that inform strategic direction as well as receiving reports regarding the organisation’s performance.

- 2.2 AfC’s three owning councils have appointed a dedicated Board of Directors to oversee strategy and internal control within AfC. As part of this role the Board approves the statutory Annual Report and Accounts each year and also publishes an Annual Impact Report and Equalities Annual Report.
- 2.3 The AfC Board of Directors has now approved the 2022/23 Impact Report, Equalities Report and Annual Report and Accounts. These annual reports provide information about AfC’s impact and performance across the boroughs of Richmond, Kingston and Windsor and Maidenhead between April 2022 and March 2023. They are presented to this Cabinet to support oversight of performance, achievements, challenges and priorities.

Options Table 1: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
Cabinet notes the information presented	n/a
Cabinet notes the information presented and makes recommendations / requests more information	n/a

3. KEY IMPLICATIONS

Annual Impact Report 2022/23

- 3.1 The Impact Report will be published in September 2023 and provides an overview of AfCs strategic priorities, organisational values and key achievements for the year. It is not a statutorily required document but is a helpful summary of AfC as an organisation and is the main document that is used to update partners and celebrate achievements each year. The Impact Report is attached at appendix A.
- 3.2 Good progress continued to be made against all of AfCs six strategic priorities with staff going above and beyond to support children, young people and partners. AfC’s strategic priorities were agreed by the Local Authority in December 2019 and reconfirmed in March 2023 as part of the Business Plan. We are still seeing the impact on families and young people of the pandemic, particularly in relation to mental health and wellbeing. Supporting families through the cost of living crisis has also been a specific focus this year.
- 3.3 The quality and impact of the AfC offer for Windsor and Maidenhead children and young people has once again been confirmed by a series of positive external inspection results.
 - Our children’s social care services continue to be judged by Ofsted as ‘Good’ in Windsor and Maidenhead.
 - Our independent fostering agency (IFA), which operates across all three boroughs, has been judged ‘Good’ by Ofsted

- We achieved a positive Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk in Windsor and Maidenhead in May 2022, which focused on our 'front door', including our Single Point of Access.
- In Windsor and Maidenhead at the end of 2022-23, the Department for Education and NHS England reviewed our progress against our written statement of action and have made the decision that there is no need for it to be formally monitored any more because we have 'demonstrated clear and sustained progress'.
- We received a 'Good' rating across all areas following the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of our Health Visiting and School Nursing Service in Windsor and Maidenhead in November 2022.
- We achieved 'Good' inspection ratings of our Youth Offending Services in Windsor and Maidenhead.
- We achieved a 'Good' inspection rating by Ofsted of our Way to Work Apprenticeship Programme in May 2023.

3.4 The Cabinet is asked to note the following key points:

- **Achieving a strong early help offer** - In Windsor and Maidenhead, we established our family hubs approach, which brings together children's centres, youth centres and parenting services. Our family hubs are now fully staffed and demand for services has been high. We have provided one-to-one support to 823 children and 3,400 children and young people have attended group sessions on topics such as digital safety, drug and alcohol awareness, and esteem. We provide a full menu of interventions to improve parents' skills and knowledge, such as the positive parenting programme and baby massage classes.
- **Achieving fun and engaging holiday activities** - To support our families during school holidays, we successfully delivered the FUEL (Feed Ur Everyday Lives) programme. The programme, which took place over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays offered a range of fun and enjoyable activities and food to children and young people aged five to 16 years who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals (FSM). 832 children and young people attended sessions at Easter, Summer and Winter during 2022.
- **Achieving with our families** - The newly formed Families First team (final name to be decided) supports families in crisis who are at imminent risk of having their child or children taken into care. Families are fast-tracked to receive support, and are ultimately supported to keep their children at home or find a family network in order to care for their children. The team also supports children to return home from care, if this is the best option for them, as well as 'step downs' of children/young people from residential care to family based care, when this is appropriate.. So far, we have supported 11 families and in all cases the children have remained in the family home.
- **Achieving positive futures through apprenticeships** - Our Way to Work apprenticeship service was rated 'Good' by Ofsted this year which confirms that our service continues to help young people on their journey into work. We

specialise in supporting learners who may be more vulnerable through the provision of dedicated pastoral care that wouldn't be available with other providers. 93% of our learners progress into a higher apprenticeship, employment, or further training. 100% of apprentices that complete their apprenticeships in Achieving for Children remain in our organisation

- **Achieving Better Mental Health** - Since the pandemic, we have found that our children and young people are needing more support to help them improve their mental health. In Windsor and Maidenhead, the Emotionally Related School Avoidance (ERSA) project has been established to support those children who find it difficult to attend school. Through the project, 44 schools have received training, support and consultation on ERSA, have been given access to a newly created toolkit, and have been provided with additional strategies to help them to effectively support these children. Feedback from pupils, parents and the schools has been extremely good. We now have a dedicated specialist therapist for Children in Care. This post provides consultation for staff, 1:1 therapy for individual children and young people and is a key link with health colleagues to ensure priority and robust pathways for this cohort of children.
- **Achieving for our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities** - We are working hard to improve the inclusive services we provide to children and young people with SEND. This includes supporting our young people with SEND to transition to independence and adulthood through our supported internships. We have improved and will be continuing to improve our Local Offer for parents and carers and our new Parent/Carer Forum, SEND Voices has been established and is embedding well.
- **Achieving a more diverse and inclusive organisation** - Our staff led EDI Board has continued to be instrumental in driving forward EDI improvements across the organisation. This year we have launched our AfC EDI Staff Networks, learnt together through a series of focus months, piloted 'safe spaces', enhanced our staff development offer and supported a staff Ramadan Challenge.

Annual Equalities Report 2022/23

3.5 AfC's Annual Equalities Report will be published in September 2023 and outlines AfCs approach to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion, key demographics of our workforce and service users as well as what was achieved during 2022/23 and planned for the next couple of years. The Annual Equalities Report is attached at Appendix B. There has been a strong focus on strengthening EDI in relation to our workforce during 2022-23. Of particular note this year:

- In 2022/23, 177 AfC staff members, of which 45 were managers, attended 1,449 hours of EDI training. An additional 282 members of staff completed our equality and diversity eLearning. We also trialled safe spaces during November and plan to use the learning from what AfC colleagues found helpful to shape our approach in future.
- To raise awareness, we have successfully celebrated a number of cultural events, such as Black History Month (BHM), LBGQTQI+ Month,

International Women's Day and Menopause Awareness Day. We put on an extensive programme for BHM in 2022. This included special guest speakers, spotlights on staff from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, blogs from senior leaders relating to BHM topics, and a considerable bank of BHM resources for staff to consider. To build on this, the EDI Board has created an EDI calendar of events, which includes key celebrations for all protected characteristics.

- We launched a reverse mentoring programme designed for staff in non-management posts and from underrepresented groups (such as Black, Asian and Minority ethnic backgrounds; staff with disabilities; LGBTQI+ staff). Three of our senior leaders nominated themselves to be mentored by staff members who had put themselves forward to be part of the programme. Mentors received training prior to the programme starting and then met monthly with the senior leader that they were matched to to provide guidance, insight and challenge. Feedback from those taking part has been positive and the EDI Board and the Leadership Team will be reviewing the programme to decide whether to roll it out more widely.
- We are in the process of trialling a virtual support hub to improve how we support AfC colleagues working with disabilities. The hub is a group of AfC colleagues, with different specialisms, who come together to jointly think about what reasonable adjustments and resources can be made available to support all AfC colleagues to reach their potential at work. We hope the hub will improve how we support our colleagues, improve our inclusive culture and lead to a more timely response to needs.
- We reported for the first time as part of the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) last year. The WRES which aims to better understand the experience of staff from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds based on a number of metrics relating to leadership, recruitment and retention, learning and career development, culture and experience, health and wellbeing, and employee voice. We have incorporated the data from the WRES into our annual equalities report for this year.
- We advertised, and recruited to, a funded part-time EDI Lead role who will become the vice chair of the EDI Board. There was a significant level of interest in this post and interviews were held with eight excellent internal candidates. Taz Mudali, Events and CPD Consultant for the Social Work Teaching Partnership, was appointed and will start in her role in August. We are excited to have dedicated time to support the organisation to continue learning and developing. We will be working to establish our second organisational action plan in the Autumn of 2023 with a focus on embedding learning into our natural organisational culture and approach.

Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23

- 3.6 The publication of an Annual Report and Accounts is legally required to comply with the Companies Act 2006. The document has been audited by Crowe LLP who have confirmed that they are satisfied that it provides a true and fair view of the company's

financial position and performance for the 2022/23 financial year. They have also confirmed that they are satisfied with the view of the AfC Board that the organisation is a 'Going Concern'. The Annual Report and Accounts will be submitted to Companies House for publication in October 2023. The Annual Report and Accounts is attached at appendix C. The document is made up of two key sections:

Annual Report

3.7 The purpose of the annual report is to give an overview of the organisation's key priorities and performance against those priorities as well as to provide factual information regarding governance arrangements. The minimum scope of content and topics to be addressed are prescribed by the Companies Act 2006 and the company has flexibility to include additional sections where there is further information that it would like to share or where it would be beneficial to the reader. The Annual Report comprises three key elements:

- **Introduction** by the Chair of the AfC Board
- **Strategic Report** which outlines progress against the organisation's 2022/23 key objectives, key risks and how the organisation intends to manage those risks, summary financial information (management accounts basis) and a brief look forward to the next five years.
- **Directors Report** which outlines the organisation's governance arrangements, workforce information, Board and senior leadership remuneration and responsibilities.

Statement of Accounts

3.8 The Statement of Accounts is the technical part of the report that summarises the financial performance and position of the organisation. It has been produced in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards. These standards prescribe the minimum level of disclosure / content and the accounting basis on which figures must be reported. This accounting basis is different to the methodology used to produce AfC's management accounts, which are reported to the Committee for budget monitoring and outturn purposes. Note nine of the accounts provides a reconciliation between the two reporting presentations. The core statements are comprised as follows:

- **Statement of comprehensive income and expenditure** shows the company's financial performance during the 2022/23 year. On a financial accounting basis AfC made a surplus of £73 million last year. The surplus was generated by the actuarial valuation of AfC's Local Government Pension Scheme assets and liabilities. There were positive returns on investment and changes in demographic / financial assumptions. The in year surplus has reduced the overall pension deficit being carried forward but does not represent a cashable surplus.
- **Statement of changes in equity** shows the movement and value of the organisations net worth for the 2022/23 year. At the end of March 2023 the organisation was worth -£5.3 million compared to -£78.5 million the year before. This negative position is being driven by the deficit associated with the Local Government Pension Scheme relative to AfCs status as a Community Interest Company meaning that it cannot hold significant assets. The net deficit has significantly reduced during 2022/23 due to favourable movements in the

valuation of the pension fund deficit.

- **Statement of financial position** shows the net worth of the Company as at the 31st March in accordance with IFRS. It shows what the Company owes and owns and the equity within the Company that is attributable to AfC's parent Councils. AfC held assets worth £56 million at the end of the year and these were mainly made up of buildings leased from the three owning councils, amounts owed by debtors including the three councils and cash. There was £61 million of liabilities including the pension fund deficit and amounts borrowed from the council via an established operational cash flow facility.
- **Statement of cashflows** shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents during the reporting period and how cash movements relate to the profit and loss for the period. At the end of the year AfC held £8.4 million in cash and cash equivalent assets. AfC holds cash flow for operational purposes and does not invest money long term to generate interest.
- **Notes to the core financial statements** provide additional detail about the figures in the statements outlined above. Note nine provides a comparison of the organisation's management accounts position that is reported to this Committee during the year to the Financial Accounting surplus detailed earlier in this report.

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

- 4.1 AfC has been established as a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee. As one of the owners of AfC, Windsor and Maidenhead owns 20% of the company.
- 4.2 AfC has reported a net surplus for the year of £73 million and a total value of -£5.3 million. The overall surplus results from Local Government Pension Scheme valuation and does not represent a cashable surplus. The nature of the AfC set up is that the company is not permitted to own significant assets. This means that the net worth of AfC is always likely to be negative as there will always be significant financial obligations attached to offering staff the Local Government Pension Scheme. These obligations are managed over time with triennial valuations assessing the level of employer contributions needed to ensure that pension obligations can be met at the time scheme members retire and they become due. The 20% stake in AfC attributes a proportion of the profits and losses to the Local Authority.
- 4.3 Benchmarking information continues to indicate that the services delivered by AfC represent good value for money. Impower, an independent consultancy company who has a model that maps Local Authority performance, rated the Windsor and Maidenhead services as low spend and high outcomes. National financial benchmarking information shows that on a per head of 0 - 25 population basis the spend on children's services are in the lowest 10% when compared to 151 comparative Local Authorities. Children's Services continued to be rated as good by independent inspectors.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Achieving for Children is required to produce and publish an Annual Report and Statement of Accounts that complies with the Companies Act 2006 and International Financial Reporting Standards. There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Table 1: Impact of risk and mitigation

Risk	Level of uncontrolled risk	Controls	Level of controlled risk
Risk that the quality of children's services deteriorates as levels of need continue to increase and the level of financial resources become tighter.	High	Experienced and qualified professionals oversee children's services for the borough on a day to day basis. These professionals work together to advise on how to manage risk at a strategic and operational level. Officers will provide advice and guidance to inform Councillor decision making in terms of how funding could be prioritised to best meet local young people's needs and also on what strategies can be adopted to support families and children, including on how to manage escalating levels of need.	Medium
Risk that AfC is not a 'going concern' and this leads to financial and reputational damage to the Local Authority as well as service disruption.	Medium	The AfC Board makes an annual assessment of whether AfC is a 'going concern'. This judgement is informed by the Chief Operating and Finance Officer who is an experienced and qualified accountant. The assessment and annual accounts are independently audited each year by an external audit firm that is appointed by AfCs three owning councils. The Annual Report and Accounts are also presented to Cabinet each year alongside the audit opinion to enable a dedicated space for Cabinet scrutiny.	Low

<p>Risk that AfC fails to operate in a way that supports equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) leading to reputational damage and services that don't align with the Local Authority's own values.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>AfC and the Local Authority formally review strategic direction at least once a year to ensure it remains aligned. EDI is embedded into AfCs priorities and values. AfC also has a dedicated EDI Board who meet quarterly to review progress, set future plans, resolve problems or explore opportunities and consider emerging information from an EDI perspective. The EDI Board is chaired by the Chief Operating and Finance Officer which provides a direct link into the AfC Leadership Team and AfC Board. The AfC Board includes council appointed directors and also the council's Director of Children's Services. The Annual EDI Report summarises progress and priorities and is presented to the Cabinet each year for discussion.</p>	<p>Low</p>
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○ **7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS**

○ 7.1 AfC undertakes an Equality Impact Assessments for all significant programmes of work. Assessments are published on the AfC website to support transparency. The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are echoed through AfCs priorities, delivery models and policies. No EQIa is needed for this report as there are no decisions being requested.

7.2 AfC is part of the work being undertaken by all three owning Local Authorities that seek to move towards more sustainable ways of working. AfC also seeks to work in an environmentally sustainable way. Examples of ongoing programmes include improving the environmental footprint of our buildings, moving to more sustainable fleets for home to school transport, moving to paperless working and working with contractors during tenders to set environmental targets or expectations. AfC agreed its first Environment Strategy and plan in 2022 and it is available to view on the company website.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 The documents presented in this report provide information on the 2022/23 performance and position of AfC. Where relevant, specific consultation and engagement activity has been undertaken for each of the priorities or activities undertaken during the year. The AfC Board and relevant officers have been engaged in the production of the annual reports. The report and appendices has also been considered and debated by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 October 2023.

9. TIMETABLE

9.1 The documents discussed in this report were formally published on the AfC website in September 2023. The Annual Report and Accounts will also be lodged with Companies House for publication in line with statutory company reporting requirements.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 This report is supported by three appendices:

- Appendix A - AfC Annual Impact Report 2022/23
- Appendix B - AfC Annual Equalities Report 2022/23
- Appendix C - AFC Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23
- Appendix D – Comments from the 12 October 2023 People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 This report is supported by two background documents:

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- AfC Reserved Matter Ownership Decisions February 2023
<https://rbwm.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s45552/Item%208%20Reserved%20Ownership%20Decisions%20Covering%20Report.pdf>
- AfC Business Plan approval December 2019
<https://rbwm.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s28856/fullAfC%20Business%20Plan%202020-24-%20December%202019-%20for%20RBWM%20v2.pdf>
- AfC Governance Review
https://rbwm.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s29683/Governance%20proposed%20next%20steps%20January%202020_240220.pdf

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12. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy)</i>	
Andrew Vallance	Head of Finance/ interim S151 Officer	22/8/23	27/9/23
Elaine Browne	Deputy Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer	22/8/23	27/9/23
<i>Deputies:</i>			
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Procurement Manager (or deputy) - if report requests</i>	

<i>approval to go to tender or award a contract</i>			
Lyn Hitchinson	Procurement Manager	22/8/23	27/9/23
<i>Mandatory: Data Protection Officer (or deputy) - if decision will result in processing of personal data; to advise on DPIA</i>			
Samantha Wootton	Data Protection Officer	22/8/23	27/9/23
<i>Mandator y: Equalities Officer – to advise on EQiA, or agree an EQiA is not required</i>			
Ellen McManus-Fry	Equalities & Engagement Officer	22/8/23	24/8/23
<i>Other consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Stephen Evans	Chief Executive	27/9/23	27/9/23
Andrew Durrant	Executive Director of Place	27/9/23	27/9/23
Kevin McDaniel	Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Health	27/9/23	27/9/23
Lin Ferguson	Executive Director of Children's Services & Education	11/8/23	21/8/23
<i>Assistant Directors (where relevant)</i>			
<i>External (where relevant)</i>			
N/A			

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Windsor	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
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Non key decision	No	No
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