

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**Monday 11 September, 2017 at 5.00pm
Committee Room 2
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Agenda

(Open to Public and Press)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Members to declare:-
 - (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
 - (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.
3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24th July, 2017 as a correct record.
4. Readiness for School – Presentation on Ready, Steady, Learn.
5. Update on the Children's Trust.
6. Retention and incentives for social workers.

J Britton
Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury

Distribution:

Councillor J Underhill (Chair),
Councillor S Phillips (Vice-Chair), Councillor C White (Vice-Chair),
Councillors Allen, Ashman, Y Davies, Hickey, L Horton, Preece, Rouf,
Shaeen.

Co-opted Members:-

Rev P French (Church of England Diocese representative)
Vacant (Roman Catholic Archdiocese representative)
Tahira Majid (Primary School Governor representative)
Vacant (Secondary School Governor representative)

**Agenda prepared by Deb Breedon
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Apologies

To receive any apologies from members

Declarations of Interest

Members to declare:-

- (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
- (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.

**Minutes of the Children's Services and Education
Scrutiny Board**

25th July, 2017 at 5.00 pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Underhill (Chair);
Councillors Ashman, Hickey, Phillips, Preece, Rouf,
Shaeen and White.
Co-opted Members Reverend French and Mrs T
Majid.

Apology: Councillors Allen, Y Davies and Horton.

In Attendance: Jim Leivers, Interim Executive Director – Children's;
Sue Moore, Group Head, Education Support
Services.

14/17 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th April,
2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

15/17 **Directors' Presentation of Key Issues and Priorities 2017/18**

The Group Head, Education Support Services and the Interim
Executive Director – Children's provided a presentation to the Board
relating to the following areas of work in their Directorates:

Children's Services:

- Children's Trust;
- Regional Adoption Agency;
- Ofsted Inspections and monitoring visits;

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- Sustaining Statutory Services – Education;
- School Place Planning;
- Delivery of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms;
- Quality of local schools and childcare.

The presentation outlined the current issues for the services, the priorities and risks, the focus over the next six months and in longer term.

The Group Head, Education Support Services highlighted that sustaining statutory services, and some necessary non-statutory, would be a significant challenge with an 80% reduction of Education Services Grant. She highlighted the need to increase year 7 class places by 480 by 2019 and advised that the quality of local schools and childcare may be adversely impacted by the reduction of Educational Service Grant. She explained that currently the standard of schools was deemed to be good or satisfactory, with 70% of secondary schools being good or outstanding.

It was reported that the educational reforms outlined in the Education White Paper prior to the General Election in June 2017 had subsequently been dropped and that the focus for the next six months was as follows:

- Delivery of 30-hour child care provision starting September – Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) figures suggest up to 1800 children will be eligible;
- Ensuring re-inspection of Local Area SEND work is successful – expected in January 2018;
- Development of projects, new schools and expansions to deliver pupil places, particularly in the secondary sector;
- Outcomes from school tests and examinations to define our support to schools in the future.

The Group Head summarised the longer-term focus for the Education Services as follows:

- Delivery of enough secondary school places to meet the needs by 2019;

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- Increase in the quality of secondary schools to above national and regional averages;
- Ensure all statutory processes for SEND are met and partners are fully engaged;
- Reduce the number of young people not in employment or education (NEET) and increase the availability and uptake of apprenticeships.

It was reported that Cabinet approval had been given on capital funding to support expansions of schools to deliver additional places and invest in SEND that this would continue to be pursued in a report to Cabinet in September 2017 to invest in new capital resources to invest in SEND.

In response to questions the Group Head advised that planning permission was being pursued for Wood Green School and that Education Support Services was consulting with academy schools and reviewing how services were packaged to encourage a greater uptake of services provided by the Local Authority.

The Chair thanked the Group Head for the information provided.

The Interim Executive Director – Children's Services explained that the Service was currently overseen by the Children's Commissioner due to the Secretary of State deeming the Authority to be inadequate in September 2016 and that the Authority was moving towards a Children's Trust. He advised that Malcolm Newsam had been appointed Children's Commissioner and would remain in the position for the foreseeable future.

It was reported that seven priorities had been identified as follows:

- Increase the Social Care workforce - manageable workloads;
- Management Capacity – increasing numbers of Team Managers and Group Heads;
- Safe front door and assessment;
- Doing the basics well;
- Having the right mechanisms and equipment in place;
- Effective communication;
- Making Sandwell an employer of choice.

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The Interim Executive Director outlined the focus for the service over the next six months as follows:

- Recruitment of staff;
- Permanent recruitment;
- Volume agency recruitment;
- Ofsted monitoring visit – 5th and 6th September 2017, focus on looked after children and permanence planning;
- Auditing and permanence planning;
- Budget pressures – staff and placements.

In response to questions the Interim Executive Director advised that there had been unexpected increases in the number of looked after children and the number of agency workers employed which had exceeded the amount budgeted, however the priorities outlined indicate what the Authority needs to do to improve services.

In response to a comment made relating to the continuity of social care for children, the Interim Executive Director advised that the issue of retaining Social Workers was key to continuity and that the priorities recognised this issue.

The Interim Executive Director acknowledged that the Scrutiny Board had carried out a recent scrutiny investigation in relation to recruitment and retention of Social Workers, including incentives to retain staff, and agreed to bring a report to a meeting of this Board on 14th September 2017. He advised that it was very useful to consider other ideas and practice in other organisations such as flexible working hours and career breaks.

The Chair of the Board questioned increases to the budget in relation to the increase of social care workforce and was advised that additional resources of £1.4 million to the budget would be required to address the initial shortfall, but as numbers of children in care increase the budget to manage the demand for additional resources would have to be considered. The Interim Executive Director advised that other areas of the Children's Services budget that may have been underspent would be adjusted to manage the overspend.

The Board questioned the timing of the Ofsted inspection when the Trust would not be formalised until the New Year, the Interim

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Executive Director advised that he was confident the Service was improving but that there had been delays to the implementation of the Trust due to elections.

The Board was advised of the longer-term focus which included the following:

- Children's Trust Chief Executive to be appointed and a move to the Trust by December 2017;
- Regional Adoption Agency to progress on track for July 2018;
- Maintain practice improvement activity in readiness for full Ofsted inspection within the next six months.

In response to questions about the Children's Trust the Interim Executive Director advised that there had been issues with appointing to the executive posts of the Children's Trust, however Jacqui Smith had been in post since 1st July 2017 and the post of Chief Executive had been re-advertised and would be appointed in mid-September 2017.

It was reported that the location of the Children's Trust would be at the Wellman Centre and Metsec buildings and that refurbishment work was being tendered and grant allocation been confirmed. The Board was advised that a Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 as amended 2014 (TUPE) to transfer Council Social Workers to the Children's Trust would be taking place.

In relation to developing the Regional Adoption Agency the Board was advised that the Black Country Local Authorities had signed up to a pilot scheme with Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire Councils however they had since withdrawn from the scheme, leaving Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell and Wolverhampton Councils to progress the Regional Adoption Agency. The Interim Executive Director advised that there were technical complications relating to payment of VAT which were being negotiated and it was expected that the Agency would be on track for July 2018.

The Interim Executive Director re-iterated to the Board that there were considerable challenges ahead for Children's Services such as birth bulges and school place planning, and the rising number of looked after children and the recruitment and retention of Social Workers.

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Members referred to scrutiny work carried out in 2016-17 relating to recruitment and retention of Social Workers. Members highlighted the need to grow our own Social Workers, working closely with the university and to use students from universities in social care placements.

The Interim Executive Director confirmed that newly qualified workers were attracted to the Council in the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) which is a twelve month, employer- led programme of support and assessment against the Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers. He advised that there were moves for Human Resources to look at further incentives to retain newly qualified Social Workers for a three-year period following qualification.

The Interim Executive Director indicated that the problem for Children's social care services at this time was the existing Social Workers' capacity to spend time with the students due to heavy caseloads. He further indicated that it could take up to five years to train a Social Worker and there was a gap in supply, which made recruitment and incentive schemes important to take forward.

In response to a question relating to democratic control of the Children's Trust Board, the Interim Executive Director advised that the Board would be Independently chaired however the Scrutiny Board would have a role to hold the Trust to account and challenge performance.

The Chair thanked the Interim Executive Director for his presentation.

16/17 Work Programme 2017/18

The Board was asked to consider its work programme for 2017/18 and the establishment of any working groups as a vehicle to deliver the work programme.

Following a review of the Council's governance structure, at its meeting on 16th May, 2017 the Council had established four scrutiny boards and a scrutiny management board, The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, to deliver Sandwell's scrutiny function. The Council had also appointed two vice-chairs to each scrutiny board, who would take the lead on a topic from within their respective Board's terms of reference, reporting back to the Board on the findings of that work.

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As well as reflecting the Council's 2030 Vision, work programmes were to reflect local needs and priorities. Suggestions had therefore been sought from the public and partners via the Council's social media platforms and newsletters and the Board noted the suggestions received in respect of its terms of reference.

The Board considered the list of potential issues and topics for scrutiny in 2017/18 which were raised through consultation, brought forward from 2016/17 Scrutiny Boards or raised by members present at the meeting. During consideration of the items the Board referred to the terms of reference of the Board, the topic filter tool, the Council's visions and ambitions and the presentation of priorities and risks for the service areas as highlighted by officers.

Resolved that, subject to the approval of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board:-

- (1) a working group be established comprising Councillors White (Vice-Chair), Allen, Horton, Rouf and Co-opted Members Reverend French and Mrs Majid to undertake scrutiny of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND);
- (2) a working group be established comprising Councillors Phillips (Vice-Chair) Ashman, Hickey, Preece and Saeed to undertake scrutiny of care-leavers.
- (3) the following items be placed on the Board's work programme for 2017/2018:-
 - a) School Place Planning;
 - b) Failing Academies;
 - c) Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) update on partnership work;
 - d) Readiness for School;
 - e) Childhood Obesity update;
 - f) School leavers – career guidance;
 - g) Care leavers;
 - h) Oversight of the Children's Trust;
 - i) The Chief Executive of the Children's Trust – Vision and priorities (September 2017);
 - j) Retention and incentives for social workers (September 2017);

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- k) Oversight of Academies;
- l) Briefing note on numbers of adopted children and fostering update;
- m) Safeguarding Children Annual Report;
- n) Serious Case review update.

(Meeting ended 6:30 pm)

Contact Officer: Deb Breedon Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3896

REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

11 September 2017

Subject:	School Readiness – Ready, Steady, Learn
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Simon Hackett - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Director:	Executive Director of Children's Services – Jim Leivers
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	 
Exempt Information Ref:	
Contact Officer(s):	Sara Baber, Early Years Lead

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board:

1. That the Scrutiny Board considers the 'Ready, Steady, Learn' programme and identifies any further information required, or recommendations it wishes to make to the Cabinet.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider a presentation on Ready Steady Learn.

2 IMPLICATION FOR THE COUNCIL'S AMBITION

- 2.1 The Ready Steady Learn programme aims to engage with parents of children between the ages of One to Two years old and support them in understanding their role in their child's development and the importance of the home learning environment to ensure children are emotionally,

physically and linguistically ready for school and in doing so delivering its priority “our children – Sandwell’s future”.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 There is no requirement to consult on this issue.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There are no alternative options.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Ready Steady Learn programme is being delivered through the Children’s Centres with a lead from the Children’s Centre Teachers. The programme constitutes the Early Years element of the Children’s Centre contracts which run for 3 years from 2016 – 2019. There are no further resource implications.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 The Local Authority aims to ensure equality for vulnerable children and families and improve social care practice.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 There are no data protection issues arising from this report

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 The proposals contained in this report have been future proofed for future requirements.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 Ready Steady Learn aims to improve parental understanding child development including speech and physical development of vulnerable children and ensure that they access a good quality pre-school provision. In this way, it will contribute towards the health and wellbeing of the wider community.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 There is no effect to assets or land owned or managed by the Council.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.



17 APPENDICES:

None

Jim Leivers
Executive Director of Children's Services (Interim)

REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

11 September 2017

Subject:	Update on the Children's Social Care Trust and the future role of scrutiny
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Simon Hackett - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Director:	Executive Director of Children's Services – Jim Leivers
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	 
Exempt Information Ref:	
Contact Officer(s):	Jim Leivers, Interim Executive Director Children's Services Tara Malik, Service Manager – Change and Communications Manager and Trust Project Director

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board:

1. That the Scrutiny Board considers the update on the Children's Social Care Trust and its future role in relation to the Trust and identifies any further information required, or recommendations it wishes to make to the Cabinet.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider an update on the Sandwell Children's Social Care Trust, including the following:
 - The current position; and
 - The role of scrutiny in relation to the Trust.

2 IMPLICATION FOR THE COUNCIL'S AMBITION

- 2.1 The Sandwell Children's Social Care Trust aims to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families and improve social care practice. Therefore, the Trust will help achieve the ambitions around caring for vulnerable children and families and helping the community feel safer.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 There is no requirement to consult on this issue.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The Local Authority is under a statutory direction to set up a new arrangement in the form of a Children's Trust to deliver children's social care services. There are no alternative options.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no strategic resource implications arising directly from this report.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The Local Authority aims to ensure equality for vulnerable children and families and improve social care practice. In this way the Trust will contribute towards equality in the wider community.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 There are no data protection issues arising from this report.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 The proposals contained in this report have been future proofed for future requirements.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 The Sandwell Children's Social Care Trust aims to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families and improve social care practice. In this way, the Trust will contribute towards the health and wellbeing of the wider community.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 There is no effect to assets or land owned or managed by the Council.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 To be outlined in the presentation.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.


17 APPENDICES:

None

Jim Leivers
Executive Director of Children's Services (Interim)

REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

11 September 2017

Subject:	Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Simon Hackett - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Director:	Executive Director of Children's Services – Jim Leivers Service Director Children and Families – Vince Clark
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Exempt Information Ref:	
Contact Officer(s):	Executive Director of Children's Services – Jim Leivers Jim_leivers@sandwell.gov.uk Director – Children and Families – Vince Clark Vince_clark@sandwell.gov.uk HR Service Manager – Louise Lawrence Louise_lawrence@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board:

1. Consider the progress that has been made in recruiting and retaining Children's Social Workers
2. Recommend that this work is ongoing as part of the Children's Improvement Plan

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To give scrutiny an update on the recruitment and retention measures within Children's Social Care

2 IMPLICATION FOR THE COUNCIL'S AMBITION

- 2.1 It is essential for the children of Sandwell that Children's Social Care is seen as an 'employer of choice' to ensure that all the required resources are in place to provide a robust and professional service to families and children in need.
- 2.2 It is also one of the Commissioners seven improvement priorities that the Council increases the social care workforce to ensure that caseloads within the service are manageable to allow good social work practice to flourish.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The ongoing improvement of Children's Social Care is reliant upon having the right staffing resources in place.
- 3.2 It has been recognised that there has been insufficient numbers of Social Workers within the service and the establishment has therefore been increased.
- 3.3 It is important that these roles are recruited to with appropriately experienced staff as soon as possible, alongside managing and retaining the existing workforce.
- 3.4 Agency Social Workers have assisted with peaks in workload to keep caseloads at an appropriate level and are essential while permanent recruitment takes place and is embedded.
- 3.5 This report details the ongoing actions in relation to both recruitment and retention

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The employee offer for Children's services includes pledges relating to Case Load, Technology, Work Environment and Supervision. There is also a comprehensive package around professional development and wellbeing. The Council has committed resources to increase the establishment numbers of qualified social workers in Children's Services by 30 to 184. The service has therefore implemented a major recruitment

campaign to cover this shortfall and also to replace the high turnover of staff that has been experienced in recent months.

- 4.2 The availability of experienced Social Workers is not an issue unique to Sandwell MBC, with many neighbouring LA's experiencing this same pressure. The current recruitment plan for Children's Services related to 4 specific strands of activity;
1. Ongoing open recruitment activity through the Sandwell Children's Services recruitment portal - 59 appointments were made in the first 6 month of 2017.
 2. To supplement the ongoing open recruitment process, a dedicated recruitment partner (Sanctuary) have been appointed to undertake a targeted campaign to recruitment of 45 experienced Social Workers and 11 Team Managers by the end of November 2017.
 3. Implementation of a dedicated volume recruitment campaign for agency staff to provide 15 social workers to the service immediately whilst the permanent recruitment of staff is implemented.
 4. Recruitment of 20 newly qualified social workers to start in the service before the end October 2017.
- 4.3 The turnover of experienced Social Workers is higher than desired but a number of initiatives have been put in place to try to combat this including professional development through the L&D offering, and career progression through the F to G process and Aspire management course. The service promotes CSC learning and development opportunities including the online resource, *Research in Practice*.
- 4.4 Data from exit interviews is also collated to inform as to why people are leaving and what can be done to address this. The key themes related to staff leaving have related to issues such as high caseloads, working long hours, poor levels of support and the physical conditions staff work in. All of these issues have been substantial resolved through the implementation of actions to meet the seven service improvement priorities set out by the Commissioner. This has led to improvements and enabled all staff to have good IT kit/smart phones to facilitate agile working, staff will move to new office accommodation in early 2018 as part for the Children's Trust arrangements, social worker supervision levels are now at 90% and caseloads are starting to reduce as new staff have been recruited.
- 4.5 In order to retain newly qualified staff 2 merit increments are awarded upon completion of their ASYE programme. Preparation for progression to a Band G Social Worker then forms part of their professional discussion in supervision.
- 4.6 The quality of agency staff including their commitment to remain in the service has been a concern for us. To this end a dedicated agency has

been engaged to provide experienced Social Workers to the service. In the few weeks that we have been working together, we have recruited 11 SW's into the service (4 have taken up posts and a further 7 are in pre-employment checks), against a target of 15. Further interviews are already planned during September 2017.

- 4.7 The need for an appropriate work life balance for the health and wellbeing and staff has been promoted by the service. New technology has mean that staff are now able to work more agilely and do not have to return to their office base. The message that flexible working (including where appropriate home working) is to be encouraged has been circulated to all staff. In addition, flexi time has been re-introduced across all areas of the service and should assist staff in the management of their time and their caseload – giving staff flexibility around start and finish times and also giving visibility for managers about the hours that are being worked.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 Focus groups have been held with staff. All staff that leave the service are offered exit interviews with responses collated to identify common themes. Trade Unions are kept fully informed on measures being taken around recruitment and retention of staff.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 Consideration has been given to monetary incentives such as 'golden hello' or 'golden handcuff' payments which are paid to staff upon commencement of role and those already in post which in order to tie in their employment with us for a specific period (usually 3 years). Evidence from other local authorities has demonstrated limited success with this option. There are also concerns here around affordability and the integrity of the Sandwell MBC pay and grading structure. Regular reviews of pay and reward package compared with neighbours are undertaken.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Additional resources have been made available in order to pursue the recruitment and retention initiatives detailed above

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 None

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 All HR policies and processes are adhered to regarding the recruitment and retention of staff

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 None

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 None

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 None

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 None

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 None

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 While progress is being made in this area, it is essential that this continues to be a focus for the Council and that the approaches above are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to identify any new initiatives that would also support the service.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None

17 APPENDICES:

None

Vince Clark
Director – Children and Families (Interim)