

# Report to Cabinet

**15 March 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	Appointment of a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Children and Education, Councillor Simon Hackett
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education <a href="mailto:Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk">Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Mandip S. Chahal, Senior Commissioning Manager for Statutory Services <a href="mailto:Mandip1_chahal@sandwell.gov.uk">Mandip1_chahal@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1. Recommendations

1.1 That Cabinet, on behalf of the Council as the sole owner of Sandwell Children's Trust:




- a) notes the completed sequence of events that are contractually required to appoint a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust;
- b) notes and takes into account in its decision-making, the response from the Secretary of State for Education; and
- c) agrees the appointment Jane Bleach as a non-executive director of Sandwell Children's Trust for the period of 3 years from 1 March 2023.





## 2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1. The appointment of the previous non-executive director ends in February 2023. To ensure that the requirement for independent non-executive directors as set out in Article 13.1.4 of the Articles of Association for Sandwell Children’s Trust (the Trust) is met a recruitment exercise was undertaken.
- 2.2. The Trust wishes to appoint Jane Beach to the role of non-executive director for a period of 3 years, commencing on the 1 March 2023.
- 2.3. The Council has written to the Secretary of State to consult on making this appointment. At the time of writing this Cabinet report, Department of Education (DfE) officials have confirmed by email that the Secretary of State has not objected to the appointment.
- 2.4. Following the completion of the required process to consult the Secretary of State, and to consider the response, the Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out in this report.

## 3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>SCT works with families, foster carers, schools, statutory and voluntary providers to support the achievements of vulnerable children and those in the care of the council</p> <p>SCT works to ensure that children in the care of the Council receive the support and opportunities that any parent would give their child</p>
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p>SCT ensures coordination between social care and the NHS to better protect vulnerable children</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p>



	<p>SCT supports families to improve children's life chances</p> <p>SCT works closely with the police to ensure that children are protected from the impact of crime, domestic violence, and all forms of exploitation</p>
	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</p> <p>SCT supports care leavers to live independently in the community, working closely with Housing to ensure care leavers are able to good quality accommodation in Sandwell.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy</p> <p>SCT works with families to access services and support so that they are able to improve their economic well-being and the life chances for their children</p>

#### 4. Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 At its meeting on 19 October 2016, Cabinet was advised of the Government's Statutory Direction (under Section 479A of the Education Act 1996) to set up a new arrangement in the form of a children's trust to deliver children's social care services. As a result, the Trust started operating on 1 April 2018.
- 4.2 On 22 March 2017, Cabinet considered the types of decisions that would be of such strategic importance that they could not be decided by the Trust but would be "reserved to" the Council as the owner of the Trust for decision:
- 4.2.1 the Council as the decision maker in its capacity as the body that is responsible and accountable for the discharge of the relevant children's social care services functions; and
- 4.2.2 the Council as the decision maker in its capacity as owner of the Trust in relation primarily to the Reserved Matters, as set out in the



Memorandum of Understanding, and other legally required decisions.

- 4.3 Cabinet agreed that: “In order to fulfil the role as sole owner of the Trust, it is recommended that the full Cabinet itself operates as the decision-making body for matters in relation to the Trust.” It also agreed that, in order to clearly differentiate between decisions which Cabinet is considering in its two roles (i.e. as owner of the Trust and as children's services authority), separate reports be prepared to set out clearly which role the Cabinet is undertaking at any time. In relation to decisions taken in its role as owner of the Trust, Cabinet agreed that any recommendations should include authority for officers then to formalise the decision in relation to any company law paperwork.
- 4.4 The Memorandum of Understanding which the Council has entered into with the DfE sets out the composition of the board of directors of the Trust as follows:
- 4.4.2 A Chair (non-executive director) as appointed by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Council;
  - 4.4.3 Three executive directors comprising the Trust's Chief Executive and two other members of the executive management team;
  - 4.4.4 Three non-executive directors with collective knowledge and expertise across children's services and/or public services; and
  - 4.4.5 Two additional non-executive directors appointed by the Council (e.g. members and/or officers).
- 4.5 Apart from the appointment of the Chair, all other appointments are required to be made in consultation with the Secretary of State. The appointment of the two non-executive directors appointed by the Council in paragraph 4.4.4 above is a 'Reserved Matter' and therefore a decision to be taken by the Cabinet.



- 4.6 Appointed individuals will, as executive and as non-executive directors of the Trust, have a fiduciary duty to the Trust, meaning that they will act in good faith, and in the best interests of the Trust.
- 4.7 The Council, as sole owner of the Trust is required to consult with the Secretary of State on certain 'Consultation Reserved Matters' prior to notifying the Trust of its decisions in respect of that Consultation Reserved Matter. The Secretary of State is invited to: *“make written representations to the Council within 10 working days of being notified of the matter.... In making its decision the Council must take into account the representations made by the Secretary of State.”*
- 4.8 The Consultation Reserved Matters relevant to the recommendations in this report are:
- 4.8.2 Approval of the registering of any new member of the Company;
  - 4.8.3 Approval of any Additional Executive Director removals or appointments (including the approval of appointment terms for Additional Executive Directors and any amendments to such terms);
  - 4.8.4 Approval of any Independent Non-Executive Director removals or appointments (including the approval of the appointment terms for Independent Non-Executive Directors and any amendments to such terms).
- 4.9 In line with the Article 14.2.1(b) of the Articles of Association the Director of Children’s Services has been involved in the recruitment process as the representative of the member of the Trust. Children and young people were also part of the recruitment process as part of the continued commitment of the Council and the Trust to amplify the voice of the child.
- 4.10 Jane is a qualified chartered accountant with over 30 years’ experience, nearly 20 of them at partner level, providing audit and advisory services to clients before spending 12 years in senior management and leadership positions at regional, national and main board level. She is now a consultant advising a range of businesses and social enterprises in interim, project-based or non-executive



advisory board roles. She brings significant board expertise in many areas: strategy development; responsible and effective financial management; talent development; proportionate public interest regulation; diversity and inclusion; the effective management of risk; social impact; and the delivery of exceptional client service.

## 5 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternative option would be to reject the recommendation. However in line with the Governance Side Agreement with the DfE (which superseded the Memorandum of Understanding) and the Trust's Articles of Association there would be a vacancy on the board that would still need to be filled. A new recruitment process would need to be undertaken which would leave a gap in the governance arrangements of the Trust for a period.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>Sandwell Children's Trust receives a significant financial resource to deliver the Council's statutory responsibilities for children's social care, this includes the cost of the non-executive Directors.</p> <p>The amount that SCT receives is agreed annually in line with mechanisms set out in the Service Delivery Contract.</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>The Governance Side Agreement between the Council and Department for Education sets out the composition of the board of directors of the Trust.</p> <p>The Council is required, as sole owner of the Trust, to consult with the Secretary of State on certain 'Consultation Reserved Matters' prior to notifying the Trust of its decisions in respect of that Consultation Reserved Matter. The approval of any removal or appointment of an Independent Non-Executive Director is such a matter.</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with and risks have been identified arising from the recommendations being sought. This has concluded that there are no significant risks that</p>



	require reporting and that suitable measures are in place to mitigate the risks identified to acceptable levels.
<b>Equality:</b>	An Equality Impact Assessment screening is not required for this report.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	SCT continues to support children and families in Sandwell and as the quality of service that they deliver improves so does the impact they have on improving the health and wellbeing of children and families.
<b>Social Value</b>	SCT supports children to achieve, feel safe, be supported and access opportunities. SCT supports care leavers to access education, employment and training. Having strong governance and oversight supports SCT to achieve service improvement and better support children and families in Sandwell.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	There are no climate change implications attached to this report

## 7. Appendices

None

## 8. Background Papers

Cabinet Paper dated:

19 October 2016

[04 - Formation of a Children's Trust](#)

[04 - Formation of a Children's Trust - Appendix](#)

7 December 2016,

[04 - Formation of Children' Trust - MoU](#)

[04a - Appendix 1 Strategic Project Risk Register](#)

[04b - Appendix 2 Formal Commissioner Response](#)

22 March 2017

[22 - Role of Sandwell MBC in relation to Sandwell Children's Social Care Trust](#)

