

Record of Cabinet decisions

Tuesday, 3 August 2021

3.00pm to 3.25pm

Date of publication: 4 August 2021

**Subject to call-in these decisions will be effective from 12 August 2021
The record of decisions is subject to approval at the next meeting of the Cabinet**

Present:	Councillor Alan Jarrett	Leader of the Council
	Councillor Howard Doe	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services
	Councillor David Brake	Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services
	Councillor Rodney Chambers, OBE	Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships
	Councillor Jane Chitty	Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation
	Councillor Phil Filmer	Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services
	Councillor Adrian Gulvin	Portfolio Holder for Resources
	Councillor Mrs Josie Iles	Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member (statutory responsibility)
	Councillor Martin Potter	Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools
	Councillor Rupert Turpin	Portfolio Holder for Business Management
In Attendance:	Neil Davies, Chief Executive	
	Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance	
	Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer	

Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Record of decisions

The record of the meeting held on 13 July 2021 and of the urgent decision taken by the Leader on 28 June 2021 were agreed by the Cabinet and signed by the Leader as correct records.

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Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

Proposal to Amend the Current Payment Scheme for Medway Local Authority Foster Carers

Background:

This report detailed proposed changes to the current Foster Care Fees and Allowance Policy. This was recommended for approval to close the gaps in provision of sufficient local placement accommodation, to increase the number of looked after children in a family setting and was an important element of the financial sustainability of the Children and Adults Services Directorate. The implementation of a revised scheme was crucial to improving the 'offer' to attract and retain Local Authority Foster Carers in Medway.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been due to consider the proposals at its meeting on 29 July 2021. However, this meeting had been postponed to 5 August 2021, therefore the Committee had been unable to provide any comments for the Cabinet's consideration.

A diversity impact assessment had been undertaken and was attached at Appendix 3 to the report. The outcome concluded that there were adverse financial impacts, with those caring for 9- and 10-year-old children being most affected by the proposed changes. As a result, transitional payments had been agreed for 12 months for those carers currently caring for these children. Some carers were financially adversely impacted by the change to Skills and Service payment, but the new payment was clearer and fairer in implementation and so improved equality of opportunity.

Decision number: **Decision:**

The Cabinet noted the progress against the investment in the 'offer' and improvements at Section 3 to the report.

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- 89/2021** **The Cabinet approved the proposed changes to the allowances scheme for Local Authority Foster Carers at Appendix 2 to the report, as summarised below:**
- **A scheme based on a defined Maintenance element to meet the child's needs and a separate Reward fee based on a child's age and needs in the form of a tiered structure.**
 - **An entitlement to 14 days paid respite for foster carers with children in long and short-term placements, or up to 21 days respite for foster carers approved for children with disabilities.**
 - **An annual Skills and Services payment based on length of service.**

- 90/2021** **The Cabinet approved the Medway concessions for Local Authority Foster Carers at Appendix 2 to the report, as part of the offer to attract and retain carers, as summarised below:**
- **An annual contribution to the Council Tax up to a maximum of £310 per fostering household.**
 - **A seasonal discount up to a value of £500 per fostering household per year.**

- 91/2021** **The Cabinet approved the revised scheme for Connected Carers**

The Cabinet noted the revised financial profile based on an implementation date of 1 September 2021.

Reasons:

The implementation of a revised scheme is crucial to improving the 'offer' to attract and retain Local Authority Foster Carers in Medway and achieve necessary cost reductions.

National Bus Strategy, Enhanced Partnerships and Bus Service Improvement Plans

Background:

This report set out Medway Council's proposed response to the publication of the Government's National Bus Strategy, including the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan for Medway.

The National Bus Strategy expects all Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to set up an Enhanced Partnership (EP). By the end of October 2021, Government expected all LTAs to publish a local Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). This must set out how LTAs will use their EP to deliver an ambitious vision for bus travel, meeting the

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overarching goal of the National Bus Strategy to grow back patronage after the pandemic and then to increase it and raise the mode share of the bus.

Local authorities were required to report the views of passengers and third parties during the establishment and development of the BSIP. This would initially be achieved through a review of existing evidence and data. Further engagement with key stakeholders on the Council's emerging proposals would then take place later in the summer.

It was proposed that the developed BSIP would be reported to Cabinet ahead of the Government's publication deadline of 31 October 2021. A Diversity Impact Assessment would be undertaken as part of that work.

Decision number: ***Decision:***

The Cabinet noted the work currently being undertaken to develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the intention to undertake further engagement on emerging proposals during the summer prior to reporting the completed plan to Cabinet in October 2021.

Reasons:

To ensure Medway Council demonstrates its commitment to the principles outlined in the National Bus Strategy, securing existing funding allocations, and putting the Council in a position where it can bid for future funding to improve public transport in Medway.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022-2023

Background:

This report informed the Cabinet of the progress that had been made on the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022-2023 and requested approval to proceed with a public consultation with a view to changing the council tax reduction scheme from April 2022.

The aim was to simplify the scheme for both applicants and the service by moving away from the current means tested reduction to an income-based discount based on percentage bandings and income-grid scheme more aligned to council tax discounts than benefits.

Decision number: ***Decision:***

The Cabinet noted the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

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92/2021 **The Cabinet agreed to proceed with a public consultation, with a view to changing the council tax reduction scheme from April 2022.**

93/2021 **The Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business Management to finalise the consultation document mentioned in paragraph 4.6 of the report.**

Reasons:

The scheme continues to balance the need for supporting those currently in receipt of CTRS and the ability of the Council to fund the scheme within the current budgetary constraints.

The Council's Council Tax Discretionary Relief scheme provides additional support in the case of hardship.

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Leader of the Council

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Date

Jon Pitt, Democratic Services Officer

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