MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEMBER SIGNING HELD ON THURSDAY, 29 MAY 2025, 3:30PM - 3:45PM

PRESENT: Councillor Zena Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Families Economy

In attendance: Pauline Simpson, Strategic Commissioner, Priti Gaberria, Head of Children's Commissioning and Nazyer Choudhury, Principal Committee Co-Ordinator

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Cabinet Member referred to the filming at meetings notice and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

5. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / QUESTIONS

There were none.

6. APPROVAL TO COMMISSION INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCIES VIA A DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN SERVICES

The report sought authority to undertake a procurement exercise to commission Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) placements for children looked after via Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) ensuring compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

The Council had a statutory duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 to provide sufficient local accommodation for looked after children. This required local authorities to take steps that secured, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which met the needs of children that the local authority was looking after.

The Council currently spot purchases foster care provision from a range of IFAs due to insufficient capacity within in- house foster carers. Setting up the Council's own

Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) would support in budling a long-term arrangement with providers, focusing on developing closer relationships. This would assist Haringey in managing the market, controlling costs and working in partnership to increase the number of foster placements within the Borough to support children looked after.

In 2023/2024, 123 children looked after were placed with IFAs and £5.8 million was spent on this provision.

As of Feb 2025, 87 children looked after were placed in IFA placements

In FY 2024/2025, £5.1 million was spent on independent fostering.

A new DPS would be established and the estimated spend up to 4 years term was estimated at £22.5 million. This figure included an annual inflation of 4%.

The new DPS would enable the Council to commission fostering placements for children and young people from IFAs until such time as the Procurement Act 2023 (Commencement and Transitional and Savings Arrangement Regulations 2024) permit, currently not being less than 4 years.

The Cabinet Member RESOLVED

1. To approve the estimated spend of up to £22.5 million on Independent Fostering Agencies over a period of 4 years via the DPS which is inclusive of annual inflation of 4%.

2. To approve the commissioning fostering placements from Independent Fostering Agencies for Children looked after via the corporate DPS pursuant to Regulation 34 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

3. Where contracts valued at £500,000 or more that require approval by the Cabinet Member as per Contract Standing Order (CSO) 9.07.1 d) or modified as per CSO 10.02.1 b) (variations and extensions to contracts of £500,000) or more; to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Lead member for Children's, Schools and families to award, vary or extend any individual call offs or block contract arrangements under the DPS to successful providers up to £1 million per award or any individual variation and extension.

Reasons for decision

Services would be commissioned through Haringey's DPS and be aligned to the procurement regulations, ensuring compliance and flexibility in developing the provider market.

The Council had a statutory requirement to provide accommodation for children who were in its care and to improve outcomes and actively promote the life chances of children they look after. It was the responsibility of local authorities to act as the best possible parent for each child they looked after.

Haringey's Looked After Children's Sufficiency 2022- 2026, as part of this strategy, the Council aimed to place the majority of looked after children in high-quality, cost effective, local, family-based placements. Commissioning Independent Fostering Agencies supported the Council in achieving this goal.

Alternative options considered

Do nothing: This option was discounted: The Council had a statutory duty under section 22G of the Children Act 1989 to take steps that secured sufficient accommodation within its area for children in their care.

Doing nothing would mean continuing to spot purchasing without a framework in place which would mean a lack of purchasing control and the element of competition to drive cost efficiencies to secure better value for money. This would not be compliant with procurement regulations.

Deliver in house: The Council already had its own in house fostering service and other arrangements such as kinship network. This would not meet the sufficiency requirements for all children looked after.

7. APPROVAL TO COMMISSION RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES PLACEMENTS VIA A DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM (DPS) FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The report sought authority to undertake a procurement exercise to commission Children's Residential Home Placements for children looked after via Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) ensuring compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The Council had a statutory duty to ensure there is a range of local homes available, sufficient to meet the needs of the children in the care of the local authority.

The Council currently spot purchased children's residential home placements. Setting up the Council's own DPS would support in budling a long-term arrangement with providers with a major focus on developing closer relationships with registered Children's Homes in Haringey.

In 2023/2024, £8.5 million was spent on registered children's homes placements for children looked after. This included providers registered for residential family centres and secure accommodation. Compared to FY 2022/2023, this is a decrease of £370,000 due to the initiatives in place to step down children looked after from residential care with reunification back home or into foster care according to their needs.

In FY 2024/2025, £9 million was spent on children's homes placements. This included providers registered for residential family centres and secure accommodation. As of Jan 2025, 26 children looked after were placed in children's residential homes.

The estimated spend up to 4 years term is £39.7m (annual costs of £9m). This figure included an estimated annual inflation of 4%.

The new DPS would enable the Council to commission Children's Residential Home placements until such time as the Procurement Act 2023 (Commencement and Transitional and Savings Arrangement Regulations 2024) permits, currently not being less than 4 years.

The estimated annual expenditure on providers registered to care for children looked after with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities was estimated at £6.9 million and would enable the Council to deliver its statutory duty and ensure good quality homes which represented value for money.

The Cabinet Member RESOLVED

1. The estimated, spend of up to £39.7 million (annual costs of £9m) on children's residential placements over a period of up to 4 years which includes an estimated annual inflation of 4%.

2. The commissioning of Children's Residential Homes for Children Looked After via the corporate DPS pursuant to Regulation 34 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

3. Where contracts valued at £500,000 or more that require approval by Cabinet as per Contract Standing Order (CSO) 9.07.1 d) or modified as per CSO 10.02.1 b) (variations and extensions to contracts of £500,000 or more; to delegate authority to the Director of Children Services in consultation with the Lead member for Children's, Schools and families to award, vary or extend any individual call offs or block contract arrangements under the DPS to successful providers up to £2 million per award or any individual variation and extension.

Reasons for decision

Approval to procure residential children's homes placements via the DPS would ensure compliance with Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Haringey's Looked After Children's Sufficiency 2022- 2026, set out actions to improve the availability, quality, and impact of placements as well as how best parents and carers, children and young people and whole families could have access to the support they needed to prevent breakdowns in relationships, support important family attachments and enable children and young people to remain at home with consistent care, wherever possible.

In addition, the Children Acts 1989 and the Children and Young Person Act 2008 placed a sufficiency duty on local authorities to secure accommodation for children in their care, stating "the Local Authority must take steps to secure, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the Authority's area boundaries which meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority’s area”.

Services would be commissioned through Haringey’s DPS system and be aligned to the new procurement regulations, ensuring compliance and flexibility in developing the provider market.

Alternative options considered

Do nothing: This option was discounted: This would mean continuing to spot purchasing without a framework which was not compliant with Procurement regulations.

Do nothing: The Council had a statutory duty under section 22G of the Children Act 1989 to take steps that secured sufficient accommodation within its area.

Deliver in house: The Council already has its own registered Children’s Home Residential since November 2022 which could accommodate up to 6 children in care. This would not meet the sufficiency requirements of children looked after.

CABINET MEMBER: Councillor Zena Brabazon

Signed by Cabinet Member ………………………………..

Date …………30 May 2025………………………