

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	5 OCTOBER 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE, EARLY HELP AND EDUCATION SERVICES IN READING		
LEAD COUNCILLORS:	TONY JONES	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to update on the current status and future direction in the creation of 'The Company' that will run all of Children's Social Care, Early Help and Education Services in Reading.
- 1.2 There are no decisions required in relation to this report as Reading Borough Council are operating under a statutory Direction notice from the Secretary of State UNDER SECTION 497A(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee take regular updates on the progress of the Children's Company.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Statutory Direction notice from the Secretary of State UNDER SECTION 497A(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

4.2 In August 2016 Ofsted published their inspection findings following an inspection of Children's Services in Reading. Children's Services were rated 'Inadequate'.

4.3 As a result of the inadequate rating and in line with the Government's reform programme 'Putting Children First' the Department for Education issued a statutory direction notice (September 2016) to the Local Authority and appointed a Commissioner. The direction notice required Reading Borough Council to comply with any direction of the Commissioner in improving services for children.

4.4 The Commissioner submitted his final report to the Secretary of State which was published by the Department for Education (September 2017) and his recommendation was that children's services come out of the direct control of the Council for the period of their intervention.

4.5 A second statutory direction notice was issued (September 2017) to the Local Authority and a commissioner appointed. The direction notice requires the Local Authority To develop and draft, in consultation and agreement with the Children's Services Commissioner:

- i. a business case for the agreed alternative delivery model, and outline implementation plan, by 30 September 2017;
- ii. an updated long-term improvement plan to address the findings of the 2017 report by 30 September 2017, and to include the proposed arrangements for monitoring progress and reviewing the improvement plan as appropriate;

4.6 The Local Authority has submitted a Transition Project Business Case to the Department for Education. The Business case outlines the intentions of Reading Borough Council, in line with the statutory direction notice. The document identifies the costs associated with establishing a new company to deliver children's social care, education and early help Services. Reading Borough Council has requested £2.869 million from the Department of Education to enable the set-up of the company. The cost to Reading Borough Council is estimated at an additional £577k which relates to staff time.

4.7 An initial mobilisation meeting took place on 14 September 2017 and was attended by representatives from the Department for Education with the Commissioner, the Chief Executive of Reading Borough Council and the Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services. The Local Authority Expect to receive a 'letter of comfort' indicating that they will receive a grant from the Department for Education to 'set-up' the company. This letter will be followed within approximately 8 weeks with the conditions of grant.

4.8 Timescales for the set-up of the company are indicative at this stage but the expectation from the Department from Education is that the company will 'go live' on 1 October 2018.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The following strategic aims will contribute to the following strategic aims:

1. Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
2. Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living;

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The set-up of the company is under the direction of the Secretary of State and at this stage there has been no opportunity to engage with the community.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed at this stage.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This decision has been taken under UNDER SECTION 497A(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The costs of setting up the company have been requested in a business case submitted to the DFE. The total cost of Company set-up is estimated at £3.446m of which £2.869m has been requested.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Putting Children First
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/putting-children-first-our-vision-for-childrens-social-care>
- 10.2 Direction Issued to Reading Borough Council September 2016
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-issued-to-reading-borough-council>
- 10.3 Direction Issued to Reading Borough Council September 2017
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643864/Reading_Direction_Sept-2017.pdf
- 10.4 Independent Report to the Secretary of State September 2016
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reading-childrens-services-report-to-the-secretary-of-state>