

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

<b>TO:</b>	POLICY COMMITTEE (ACTING AS SOLE MEMBER FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN)		
<b>DATE:</b>	8 MARCH 2021		
<b>TITLE:</b>	BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN 2021/2022 BUSINESS PLAN		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLORS:</b>	CLLR JASON BROCK, CLLR LIZ TERRY, CLLR ASHLEY PEARCE,	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR CHILDREN, LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR EDUCATION
<b>SERVICE:</b>	PROCUREMENT & CONTRACTS	<b>WARDS:</b>	ALL
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	KATE GRAEFE	<b>TEL:</b>	0118 937 4132/ 74132
<b>JOB TITLE:</b>	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR PROCUREMENT & CONTRACTS	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	kate.graeffe@reading.gov.uk

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) is a wholly owned company of Reading Borough Council. The company's Articles of Association set out its obligations in terms of reporting to the Council as Sole Member as well as the matters which are reserved to the Sole Member.
- 1.2 The Business Plan appended at Appendix 1 has been submitted by the Company in response to its obligation to agree an annual Business Plan and contract sum, a matter reserved to the Sole Member.
- 1.3 This covering report sets out the key points arising from the Company's Business Plan.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is recommended that Policy Committee, in its capacity as sole member for BFfC:

- 2.1 Agrees the Company's Business Plan and contract sum for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix 1 and 4.5 of this report
- 2.2 Notes and agrees the provision for transformation funding as set out in 4.1 and 10.2 of this report

#### Appendix 1: BFfC Business Plan 2021/22

#### 3. BACKGROUND AND WORK TO DATE

- 3.1 The Council has 100% ownership of BFfC, which is run by a senior management team reporting to the Company board of directors. In turn, the Board reports to the Council (Policy Committee) as its sole member.
- 3.2 Policy Committee acting as sole member/ shareholder for BFfC receives:

- An annual report from BfC on performance (contract and financial);
- An annual report from BfC on the Company's Business Plan;

3.3 The agreement of the BfC Business Plan is a reserved matter, requiring the approval of Policy Committee in its capacity as sole member. Policy Committee approved the BfC Business Plan for 2010-22 on the 9th March 2020.

#### **4. BfC BUSINESS PLAN**

4.1 The BfC Business Plan continues to build on the improvement journey progress to date, such improvement being demonstrated through both a revised Ofsted rating across all areas improving from Inadequate to Requires Improvement to be Good in September 2019 and services now coming out of intervention in February 2021. The Business Plan incorporates a revised Transformation Programme, which still contains five workstreams, within which there is an updated and refocused list of 14 projects. The revised list of the Transformation Programme projects can be found at section 6.4 (page 13) of the Business Plan. To support this, provision has been made within the Council MTFS for £1.5m transformation funding.

4.2 A key part of improving services for children and families includes investment being made for provision of additional SEND places, with £4m provisioned in the capital programme for FY2021/22 and which will further support Company savings delivery through fewer placements being made outside the borough.

4.3 Workforce planning remains a key part of the Company service improvement journey. There remains a commitment to better understand the underlying issues and a shared priority to reduce usage of agency social workers.

4.4 The Business Plan comes at a time when the Company as well as the Council are still operating in 'response' to the current pandemic, with the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, speaking about COVID-19 'hiding' abuse and the potential for further increase in demand for services. The Company have and continue to mitigate risk of such uncovered demand through increased contacts for the most vulnerable contacts.

4.5 In agreeing the FY2021/22 Business Plan, Policy Committee (acting as sole member), is especially asked to note: the Council has made provision for a contract sum of £47,436,300, a reduction of £985k from the FY2020/21 figure. This includes £6.76m for leases and services provided by RBC via Support Service Level Agreements.

#### **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 All elements within this report are focused on the Corporate Plan priorities of: Ensuring the Council is fit for the future and Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children.

5.2 Performance in delivery of these aims is monitored via the Service Delivery contract between RBC and BfC and associated KPIs. The contract KPIs are to remain as previously agreed for FY2021/22

#### **6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 No environmental implications arising from this report. As stated within the BfC Business Plan, BfC commit to supporting Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan and to mirror the Council's commitment to achieving a carbon neutral borough by 2030. BfC will also review our transport, energy and other aspects of their carbon footprint, seeking to reduce this alongside the council and will also continue to work

with schools in how they, in turn, support delivery against the overall carbon neutral objective.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

7.1 No community engagement has been carried out or is required in the creation of or as a result of this report.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct
- that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant
- protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected
- characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken in the preparation of this report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The agreement to the Business Plan for BFfC is a reserved matter under the Articles of Association for the Company. This requires agreement to the plan via Policy Committee acting as sole member for the Company.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The proposed Contract Sum for BFfC for FY2021/22 as stated in this report has been provisioned for within the MTFS, to be agreed at Council on the 23rd February 2021. This figure includes proposals for £4.2m savings.

10.2 The Company's FY2020/21 Forecasted Outturn at Period 9 totals a pressure of £0.239m based on the continued successful outcome of the recovery plan and opportunities. Further work is underway to reduce the deficit to breakeven by the 31st March 2021.

10.3 The Council has made provision for transformation funding within its MTFS for FY2021/22 of £1.5m. Within this provision, the business cases for £1m of the funding has been agreed (for projects relating to Children in Need, placements and SEN transport). The ability to call on the remaining £500k provision will be subject to agreement of supplied business cases.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 None