

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE (ACTING AS SOLE MEMBER FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN)		
DATE:	13 MARCH 2023		
TITLE:	BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN 2023/2024 BUSINESS PLAN		
LEAD COUNCILLORS:	CLLR JASON BROCK, CLLR GRAEME HOSKIN CLLR RUTH McEWAN	PORTFOLIO:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR CHILDREN, LEAD COUNCILLOR FOR EDUCATION & PUBLIC HEALTH
SERVICE:	FINANCE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	DARREN CARTER	TEL:	
JOB TITLE:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE	E-MAIL:	darren.carter@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 Notes and agrees the increase in the proposed contract sum for 2023/24 to £51.430m which includes growth of £3.679m from the provisional contract sum included in the MTFP for FY22/23
- 2.2 Notes the Delivery Fund bid as set out in 4.8, which is in addition to the contract sum
- 2.3 Agrees the Company's Business Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

Appendix 1: BFfC Business Plan 2023/24

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 BfFC on performance (contract and financial)
 - An annual report from BfFC on the Company's Business Plan
- 3.3 The agreement of the BfFC Business Plan is a reserved matter, requiring the approval of Policy Committee in its capacity as sole member. Policy Committee approved the BfFC Business Plan for 2022/23 on 7 March 2022.

4. BfFC BUSINESS PLAN

- 4.1 By 2025, Brighter Futures for Children (BfFC) will have delivered children's services in Reading for six years. Their vision, from the start of the Company in December 2018 was - and still is - to protect and enhance the lives of the children of Reading and help families find long-term solutions to ensure children lead happy, healthy and successful lives.
- 4.2 By 2025 the aspiration is that they will have developed and embedded new ways of working with and for the community to help families avoid situations which compromise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and prevent them from reaching the thresholds for statutory intervention.
- 4.3 To achieve their strategic objectives, they have set four key priorities which are based on what success would look like by putting our children and young people at the heart of what we do.

Priority 1: We will work together and across local partnerships to provide the right support and services at the right time to deliver the best possible outcomes for children and their families.

Priority 2: We will deliver effective early help services to prevent the escalation of need at a later stage while contributing to increased resilience across the partnership to meet children's need at the earliest opportunity.

Priority 3: We will deliver a sustainable Children's Social Care Service through practice rooted in relationship-based and timely statutory engagement with families.

Priority 4: We will influence and support education settings to offer high quality inclusive teaching and learning to support achievement for all, including those who require bespoke, specialised or SEND support.

- 4.5 There are three enablers that are critical in supporting the delivery of these priorities:

Enabler 1: Building a stable workforce of permanent staff

Enabler 2: Improved quality and ways of working

Enabler 3: Resources aligned to priorities and delivering value for money.

4.6 In agreeing the FY2023/24 Business Plan, Policy Committee (acting as sole member), is asked to note that the Council has made provision for a contract sum of £51.430m within its Medium-Term Financial Plan. This is an increase of £2.472m from the FY2022/23 contract sum and includes £6.716m for leases and services provided by RBC via Service Level Agreements.

4.7 The increase in the contract sum is broken down as follows:

	£m
2022/23 Contract Sum	42.242
Pay inflation & increments	1.544
Contract inflation	1.161
Other pressures	2.093
Savings	(2.326)
2023/24 Contract Sum (excl. SLA's & leases)	44.714
SLA's & Leases	6.716
2023/24 Contract Sum	51.430

4.8 Transformation Funding of £0.257m has been agreed on a one-off basis for 2023/24 from the Council's Delivery Fund for, with the ongoing costs to be managed by BfFC:

£137k 2 x Consultant Practitioners to support Newly Qualified Social Workers

£120k Recruitment and Retention payments for Social Workers

The recruitment and retention payments for Social Workers were approved by Policy Committee on 23 January 2023. A review of previous Delivery Funding allocations will be undertaken to assess compliance with the Flexible use of Capital receipts regulations.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 In Spring 2021 the Council refreshed its Corporate Plan, incorporating a number of major change projects under 3 themes:

1. Healthy Environment
2. Thriving Communities
3. Inclusive Growth

5.2 The BfFC Business Plan, aligns with and contributes to delivery of the Thriving Communities theme.

5.3 Performance in delivery of these aims is monitored via the Service Delivery contract between RBC and BfFC and associated KPIs, itself managed through an established Contract Management Group. The contract KPIs are to remain as previously agreed for FY2023/24 with updated targets being agreed. A number of the contract KPIs are also reported quarterly as part of the Corporate Plan. Any additional targets for the additional funding provided to BfFC in addition to the contract sum will also be subject to monitoring through the Contract Management Group.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report. As stated within the BfFC Business Plan, BfFC commit to supporting Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan and to mirror the Council's commitment to achieving a carbon neutral borough

by 2030. BfFC will also review their 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 FY2023/24 as stated in this report has been provisioned for within the MTFs and agreed at Council on 28 February 2023.

10.2 The Company's 2022/23 Quarter 3 forecast outturn is that spend will exceed the contract sum by £0.871m. There are total pressures of £2.696m consisting of:

£0.700m pressure on transport related budgets due to rising inflation of £0.275m and increasing demand pressures totalling £0.425m

£0.569m due to agency staff within Children's Social Care. This pressure has arisen due to the additional cost of employing agency workers who are all covering vacant posts

£1.065m due to demand for Children's Social Care. This budget variance is the result of £0.361m inflation pressures and £0.704m of demand led pressures

£0.251m pressure on Children's Home income generation

£0.111m of Other Pressures.

10.3 These pressures are mainly offset by £0.663m of demand led budget pressure reductions that are anticipated to be delivered over the remainder of the financial year. Other offsetting positive variances include additional Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Grant from Central Government of £0.410m and £0.752m of other savings.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None