

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**14 FEBRUARY 2019**

**REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Cllr Mrs McCoy**

#### **ADOPTION TEES VALLEY: BI-ANNUAL REPORT**

1. Summary

This report provides the first of a regular set of reports on progress around adoption, and the role of Adoption Tees valley, the regional adoption agency (RAA) established on 1 May 2018. It details the story so far, initial performance information and plans for improvement. A similar report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on 7 February 2019.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to note and agree the report.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To ensure that appropriate oversight is provided to the new adoption agency.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or

voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

## **CABINET DECISION**

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#### **SUMMARY**

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#### **RECOMMENDATION**

Cabinet is asked to note and agree the report.

#### **DETAIL**

1. Adoption Tees Valley began operating as a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), as defined in the Education and Adoption Act (2016) on the 1 May 2018.
2. It brings together the former Local Authority adoption services of Darlington; Hartlepool; Middlesbrough; Redcar and Cleveland; and Stockton.
3. This report is a review of adoption activity, as defined by the Adoption Leadership Scorecard (ALB) measures for the first five months of operation of ATV, and represents the bi annual reporting period of 01.05.2018-30.09.2018. In subsequent years the full half year report will be covered.
4. Adoption Tees Valley has enjoyed a successful start with a number of children achieving placements who had waited some time for adopters. Additionally a significant number of adopters who were waiting at the time of transfer have now been matched with children, and in many cases the children have moved in.
5. It is too early to reach a judgement on the impact of the move to the RAA on the Adoption Scorecard timeliness (A1, A2 and A3) measures, as there is a time lag in adoption work, and scorecard measures reflect adoption matches and placements that are for children who are now adopted, but for whom the adoption journey started some time ago.
6. However, early indicators which are available are that timeliness is improving for children, and that with a greater "pool" of adopters more children, including "hard to place" children have achieved their permanent families through adoption. The time between Placement Order to match has slightly increased, and this is reflective of some of the early work that inevitably needed to take place, in managing the change process of five separate teams coming together as one.

7. Adoption Tees Valley has worked collaboratively with senior leaders, and social work teams across the Tees Valley, and there is now a well-developed mechanism for early referral of any child with an adoption plan. The impact of this is that ATV has been able to track and plan for these children, and early permanence is being achieved for more children, and in many cases adopters are being identified at an early stage.
8. In the first six months, 24 children were placed for adoption.
9. At the outset Adoption Tees Valley “received” 45 adoptive families who were approved, but not yet matched. Within the period of this report, 26 families were matched, either with children from within, or outside of the Tees Valley area.
10. Adoption Tees Valley has had a significant impact on the pool of adopters waiting, and many have now have children placed with them. While the timeliness for this cohort of adopters is not as good as aimed for in the longer term, this is because many have these waited some time prior to regionalisation.
11. Adoption Tees Valley has recruited a steady stream of new adopters, but within this period there were just three new approvals, with a further 20 prospective adopters in assessment at the period end. Again, the change process has impacted on getting prospective adopters to panel, however, this is an improving picture.
12. The vision for Adoption Tees Valley is to be a centre of excellence and resource for adopted children and their families throughout the period of their childhood, and beyond where necessary. There can be considerable support needs for children and families after the Adoption Order is granted, and sometimes even shortly after placement. Many adopted children have needs associated with early trauma; attachment difficulties; separation and loss; and may need some help with recovering and managing the long term impact of these issues.
13. Adoption Tees Valley is setting out to deliver a core offer to all adopters and children, through regular engagement events, activities, and then through training, workshops and informal support. The service is also the agency through which therapeutic support can be commissioned, funded by the Adoption Support Fund (ASF).
14. The overall picture is that the new organisation has made a good start, and has been especially successful in matches with the families which were transferred to it.
15. Further details are included in the attached report.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

16. There are no specific community impact implications in this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

17. There are no specific implications associated with this report. Adoption Tees Valley was provided with an agreed budget for the first 3 years of its operation.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

18. No specific legal implications arising from this report. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is the host authority for Adoption Tees Valley, and all necessary legal agreements to transfer services were completed as part of the set up phase...

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

19. Implications are low risk and managed through existing arrangements.

## **COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES**

20. The successful operation of an option service supports the policy principle of supporting the most vulnerable, with a specific focus on children who are not able to live with their birth parents, and who would benefit from being matched successfully with families looking to adopt.

## **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

21. The successful delivery of an adoption service forms a significant part of the children in, and leaving our care strategy which was agreed by Cabinet in 2018.

22. Adoption forms part of a range of options for children to leave care, and the design and delivery of an effective, efficient service with high quality outcomes is a clear priority in supporting children to be able to live in safe, nurturing homes.

23. Monitoring of effectiveness will continue to be overseen by the Corporate Parenting Board.

## **CONSULTATION**

The Cabinet Member has been consulted on this report. A similar report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board.

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Education related? No

Background Papers None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property: None