



## **ACHIEVING FOR CHILDREN BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY 28 JULY 2014**

The Achieving for Children (AfC) Board of Directors met on 28 July 2014 for an away day at Dorich House and considered the following substantive items:

### **Business Items**

The Board reviewed and agreed the minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee that recently met for the first time.

Nick Whitfield introduced the AfC CEO Report and the AfC Performance Report for Q1 2014-15. The CEO Report provides an overview of AfC's achievement and areas for improvement over the previous quarter for consideration by the Board. The Performance Report sets out AfC's performance against the performance indicators included within the data repository that are reported to the two Councils as part of the contract arrangements. As this was the first time the reports had been received, the Board discussed the content, and format, of both the reports including how to effectively understand qualitative indicators of performance, morale and cultural change.

It was agreed that it would be useful for the Board members to be given access to the weekly blog of Nick Whitfield, the AfC CEO, to be sent all updated service plans and to be invited to attend the Bureaucracy-Busting Workshops.

Paul Bettles, the AfC Director of Finance, presented the Financial Report for Q1 2014-15 and the Budget for 2014-15 and the Board discussed the outstanding budget issues that remain. The Board approved the budget and requested that Nick Whitfield escalate the outstanding budget issues to the Children's Services Commissioning Board.

David Groves, the chair of the Board, also presented a draft Conflict of Interest Policy which has been reviewed by lawyers at both Councils and considered by the Board at a previous meeting. The Policy sets out the process for dealing with any potential conflicts of interest and ensures transparency of the Board. The Policy was approved by the Board.

### **Implications of the financial outlook**

Nick Whitfield led the Board in a discussion of the implications of the financial outlook for AfC. This included consideration of the medium term financial outlooks for both Councils, the implications of significant cuts in the Commissioning Agreement, options for service/ business developments, and the potential of the Thames Agreement proposals that aim to bring services together across Kingston and Richmond. This generated considerable debate about the options for enhancing services, reducing costs and business development. The Board requested that Nick bring a paper in October to the Board meeting setting out potential areas of growth and potential areas for efficiencies for further discussion.

### **Performance in Children's Social Care**

Sylvia Chew, Director of Kingston Children's Social Care worked with Moira Gibb, Non-Executive Independent Director, to prepare a presentation for the Board, offering with an insight into social care performance, staffing levels and staff-led initiatives, national and local policy and potential business development opportunities in the area. The Board discussed the current situation in both boroughs and noted the clear evidence of progress as well as the risks facing staff and the organisation. The Board expressed thanks to the Children's Social Care teams in both boroughs for the hard work that has enabled progress to be made.

#### **Working with partners to create a preventative approach**

Rob Henderson, AfC Deputy CEO, provided an update on Partner and Business Engagement. Rob informed the Board that AfC is pursuing a number of different partnerships- to support cultural change, for new business, and to share practice and development new ideas. Work has been undertaken and conversations have been held with organisations such as Apple and John Lewis, the NSPCA, YMCA, and other local authorities. Rob will continue to lead on this and will update the Board further at future meetings.

Rob also provided the Board with an update in relation to opportunities to bid to deliver services on behalf of other Local Authorities that AfC has been pursuing.

In addition, the Board raised the issue of staff engagement. Rob will provide the Board with a summary of the feedback received as part of the staff engagement survey, and will bring a report during the autumn setting out the results of the main staff survey.

#### **Medium term business priorities**

In light of the earlier discussions about budgets, the Thames Agreement, the need to focus on service quality, and business opportunities, the Board discussed the medium term priorities for AfC. It was agreed that it would be useful for Nick Whitfield and Ian Dodds, Director of Standards and Improvement, to set out what AfC would want with regard to accommodation, HR and ICT to inform future 'Thames Agreement' related discussions and bring this to a future meeting.