

ACHIEVING FOR CHILDREN BOARD OF DIRECTORS 26 April 2016

The Achieving for Children (AfC) Board of Directors met on 26 April 2016 in Kingston. The following substantive items were considered:

2015-16 Quarter 4 Review

Ian Dodds, Deputy Chief Executive, provided an update on performance; and Paul Bettles, Director for Finance and Resources, provided an update on finances for Q4 2015-16.

The Board discussed current performance, noting the high performance in Richmond and the improvements in Kingston following staffing appointments. The Board discussed the process for target setting to ensure appropriate stretch but still recognise where performance is above national and statistical neighbour averages.

Paul tabled a first draft end of 2015-16 management accounts position compared to that reported to the Board at the end of Q3. Paul explained the further growth in social care placement and Special Educational Need (SEN) transport budgets, and the need for end of year change controls. The Board then discussed local budget pressures and agreed to arrange a workshop in May to review the draft 2015/16 accounts.

Governance

David Groves, Non-Executive Independent Director and chair of the Board, led a discussion about governance arrangements and the composition of the Board. The Commissioning Councils are currently undertaking a review of governance as part of the consideration of the potential growth of AfC and David will seek to ensure that the views of the Board are included within it.

Business Plan

Ian Dodds, Deputy Chief Executive, presented the latest version of the Business Plan to the Board and the proposed reporting framework. Ian informed the Board members that the two Councils had seen, and are happy with, the Business Plan, subject to final official sign off. The new Business Plan will include a 'plan on a page' which summarises the key programmes so that employees can familiarise themselves with our key areas of work.

The potential development of children's homes

Ashley Whittaker, Change and Improvement Manager, attend the Board to provide an update about the potential to develop in-borough children's homes. The Board discussed the opportunities that this could present to improve provision for individuals, the practicalities regarding site and staffing, and reviewed the financial business case. The Board agreed that officers should develop detailed proposals for two children's homes in Kingston and Richmond and engage with the Councils to identify suitable properties. The detailed proposals will then be reviewed again by the Board.

Education Vision

Charis Penfold, Director of Education Services, presented a paper setting out the recent national policy proposals which could impact on schools and on AfC's Education Services Directorate. These include: the ending of funding for local authority school improvement services from September 2017; establishing a national funding formula for schools, changes to the high needs block which funds services for pupils with SEN, and changes to LA education funding. The Board also discussed the implications of the government drive to make every school an academy and the formation of multi-academy trusts. Charis will return to the Board in the autumn with a clear plan for education services in response to the challenges that have arisen.

Leaving Care Commissioning Plan

Ian Dodds set out the proposal to commission the majority of our leaving care accommodation to one or more providers. This aims to ensure young people are in suitable placements and reduce costs relating to spot-purchasing of places. The needs assessment has been completed and a market-testing event is about to commence. Ian will return to the next Board meeting to present the draft specification.

Update from the AfC Youth Board

Rob Henderson, Deputy Chief Executive, presented an update from the AfC Youth Board, who have been involved in the consultation relating to youth centre closures and are embarking on a project relating to risky behaviour. Rob will meet with the Youth Board to provide greater clarity about risky behaviour project and he will facilitate the Youth Board meeting with the lead members for children's services in Kingston and Richmond.