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FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

**Children's Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet
2010**

**31st August 2010
6th September**

**Leicester City Council's Pledge to Looked After Children and Leaving
Care and the Children In Care Council**

Report of the Strategic Director, Children

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Care Matters introduced a mandate for all Local Authorities to make a Pledge, or Promise, to their Looked After Children and Young People, to set out what they undertake to provide for them. Care Matters also introduced the idea of a Council for Children and Young People "in care", which would allow them direct access to the Strategic Director, Children and the Lead Member, in order to enable their involvement in policy and service design at all levels of the organisation.
- 1.2 This report sets out the work completed by Leicester City Council in respect of the Pledge and Care Council and makes recommendations for the Local Authority, ensuring the pledge is fully integrated through the council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet receive and endorse the content of this report
- 2.2 That the 'Pledge' is adopted by the City Council and monitored and reviewed accordingly.
- 2.3 The Children in Care Council continue to be supported and inform the Local Authority about the progress of implementing the Pledge.

3. Summary

- 3.1 There is an expectation for all local authorities to work with children and young people to develop a 'pledge' for the children in their care. This is their commitment to support the most vulnerable children and establishes Looked After Children as being integral to communities and neighbourhoods.
- 3.2 Care Matters identifies underpinning principles that Local Authorities must adhere to in complying with the basic statutory duties relating to Looked After Children. It places a responsibility on Local Authorities to ensure children in care have been consulted and involved in developing the pledge, the regular review of the 'pledge' and it is reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 3.3 The pledge is a statement about the support and services children in care can expect to receive in relation to: -
- what they can expect from Leicester City Council as a child in care
 - encouraging best practice
 - promoting better outcomes
 - reinforcing our corporate parent responsibilities.

4. REPORT

4.1 Background

4.1.1 The Care Matters programme requires every local authority to work with its key partners to produce a "pledge" for the children and young people in care. In addition to this there is a requirement for children to have the 'right to have their voice heard and influence the work of the local authority, through participation in a 'Children in Care Council'. (Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care page 11)

4.2 Children In Care Council

4.2.1 In order to meet these requirements, work has been undertaken and a Children in Care Council was established enabling regular, good quality dialogue and involvement in planning and delivering services. To strengthen the quality of this work a new post of a care-experienced worker was developed to facilitate and advocate for Looked After Children and work with the Children in Care Council.

4.2.2 The Children in Care Council is here for children and young people that are currently in care or have left care, To date the Children In Care Council has a diverse membership of 15 children and young people. The council meets regularly and undertakes a range of work. The Children in Care Council role is to listen to children and young people in care and to work on their behalf to help improve services for them.

4.2.3 The types of activities undertaken thus far have included an exploration into the life experiences of all those young people involved in the care council. There has been a particular focus on important issues that the young people have faced when 'coming into care' 'being in care' & 'leaving care'. Issues that were

important were discussed and then collated by Tim Clare LAC – project worker and then through collaborative working were incorporated into the ‘pledge’. The aim of the CICC will then be to assess and evaluate the services looked after children receive working alongside the council’s pledge to view whether or not the pledge is being adhered to.

4.2.4 In terms of the composition of the CICC please note that it was open to all LAC and that young people were not “cherry picked”.

4.3 Pledge

4.3.1 Leicester City Council’s Pledge has been developed in consultation with a range of young people, the Corporate Parenting Forum and Operational Groups. A draft pledge was circulated to elected members, partners, carers and officers of the council for consultation. Amendments were made following a series of consultations over a 6-month period. The final Pledge consists of 55 statements of intent relating to all aspects of children’s care and relates to the Every Child Matters Outcomes For Children. The Pledge states how the City Council will ensure Looked After Children:-

- Stay Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Achieve Financial Well-being
- Are Involved in Positive Activities
- Are provided with good services that are fair and meets their needs

4.3.2 In June 2010 Children and Young People, Elected Members, Senior officers, the Strategic Director for Children and facilitators attended a joint event where all participants made a commitment and endorsed the pledge by signing an enlarged copy of the pledge. The plan is to have the pledge framed and placed in a prominent position within the Town Hall for all to see.

4.4 Future Plan

4.4.1 The Care Matter Board will monitor the pledge following endorsement by Cabinet and the Children’s Trust and it is intended that progress will be reported to the Corporate Parenting Forum on a regular basis.

4.4.2 Work will be progressed by the Care Matters Board in consultation with the Children In Care Council to ensure positive actions are agreed for the ongoing delivery of the pledge. A marketing and communication process will be agreed to ensure Looked After Children have ready access, understand and continue to contribute to the pledge.

4.4.3 It is intended that the Pledge will be issued to all Looked After Children, elected Members and officers of the Local Authority and Partners with professional responsibility to or working with Looked After Children, emphasizing the

expectation that in carrying out their duties they deliver all aspects of the Pledge throughout their work.

4.4.4 A Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding Training Program for Elected Members has now been established and there is a specific session on the Children in Care Council and the Pledge.

4.4.5 Both the Pledge and the Children in Care Councils views about the progress of the Pledge will be subject to Ofsted's Inspection Process for Looked After Children. Additionally, all Children in Care Council members are invited to meet with Dr Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director, on behalf of the Government, to ascertain children's views on how Local Authorities are doing in meeting their 'promises' to children through the Pledge.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report presents a progress update on the work completed across the Council to develop the Children In Care council and the Children's Pledge. As such there are no direct financial implications arising and no additional funding has been requested, although it should be noted that the funding for the dedicated worker is from the Care Matters Beacon Award and is time-limited (Colin Sharp, Head of Finance , Investing in our Children, Ext 29 7750).

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications (Kamal Adatia, Head of Legal Services, Ext 29 7044).

5.3 Climate Change Implications

5.3.1 N/A

5.4 Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/ NO	Paragraph/References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Entire report
Policy	Yes	Entire report
Sustainable and Environmental	N/A	
Crime and Disorder	N/A	
Human Rights Act	Yes	Entire report
Elderly/People on Low Income	N/A	

Corporate Parenting	Yes	Entire report
Health Inequalities Impact	N/A	

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Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)