

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 22 OCTOBER 2008**

### **SOCIAL WORK SERVICES BUDGET SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY - PROGRESS REPORT**

#### **Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Cabinet on progress in relation to the development of the Social Work Services Budget Sustainability Strategy and to make recommendations accordingly.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** At Cabinet of 2 July 2008 it was agreed that a Social Work Services Sustainability Strategy would be presented in December for Members consideration. There were a number of work streams associated with this including home care; adult packages and fostering services.
- 2.2** There was also a decision that the first work stream to be fully considered should relate to children's homes in East Ayrshire and whether the Council should remain as a direct provider.

#### **3. PROGRESS TO DATE**

- 3.1** Following the Cabinet meeting of 2 July 2008 the Project Steering Group was established in respect of taking forward the Budget Sustainability Strategy. It has formally met on three occasions.
- 3.2** The initial priority for the Steering Group was to consider the issues relating to children's homes.

#### **4. CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION**

- 4.1** Based on the profile of children who are looked after and accommodated there is an identified need to continue to have children's home provision in East Ayrshire. There are currently two children's homes in the area, one located in Kilmaurs and a second one, newly opened, in Auchinleck.
- 4.2** In addition, Montgomery Place provides enhanced provision including educational and psychological services input as part of an integrated approach with the aim of preventing children and young people being placed in a residential school outwith East Ayrshire and to support those young people in a residential school outwith East Ayrshire to be re-integrated back into the area.

- 4.3** Over the last 5 years there has been an increase in the number of children looked after and accommodated away from home from 155 to 276. The age profile of children and young people in residential care remains on average at 13 years and above. The older the child is when accommodated, the less likely the child will be returned home or placed with foster carers once in residential care.
- 4.4** There is no doubt that there will be a need for residential care for the older age group of children and young people. The issue however is whether this should be provided directly by East Ayrshire Council or contracted out to an external provider.
- 4.5** The unit cost of Kilmaurs Children's Home is £1,782 and Sunnyside is £2,225. Kilmaurs has 8 places and Sunnyside 6 places. Montgomery Place is £3,104. The cost for similar provision to Montgomery Place being commissioned by another local authority is £4,000. Montgomery Place has 4 places.
- 4.6** There are only two other Council's who contract out residential care. At this stage, the level of detail is not available to ascertain if provision is comparable, however, the unit cost for one authority is £2,870.
- 4.7** The market for external provision of residential social care (i.e. not integrated with educational provision) is not well developed. The limited experience of the two other authorities which have commissioned external provision is that the flexibility of in house provision is removed.
- 4.8** Based on the information available to date, it is not proposed to market test.
- 4.9** A Member / Officer group should therefore be established to consider options for in house provision. These considerations will also include the arrangements for Throughcare that have been identified in terms of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. There is also an opportunity for the group to consider the provision of accommodation which meets the needs of young people leaving residential care and for whom the Council retains 'corporate parenting' responsibilities. Issues around the supply of temporary accommodation to young homeless people, with the support necessary to help them obtain the skills required to sustain a permanent tenancy, were highlighted by the Scottish Housing Regulator following their recent inspection of the Council's Housing Service. Measures which respond to these concerns are included in the Improvement Plan which has been agreed between the Council and the Regulator.
- 4.10** Currently, the closed Bellsford House is incurring costs to the Council in terms of security. The requirement would be for a single storey building, and if development were on the Bellsford site, the present premises would require demolition.

## **5. HOMECARE**

- 5.1** There continues to be significant upward pressure in terms of the home care budget. The upward activity to date has required immediate management action to manage the overspend. The overspend primarily relates to the current cost of staffing and in particular the costs associated with the current shift patterns and contracted hours leading to high overtime costs.
- 5.2** The immediate management action has included the need for authorisation for overtime to move from Home Care Managers to Team Managers with associated evidence that all other options have been considered; the establishment of three mobile teams in the North of the Authority to reduce the need for incurring overtime costs with existing staff and the establishment of a pool of temporary/bank workers which will enable the Council to reduce the number of hours above contracted hours.
- 5.3** It is recognised that there is a requirement to establish a model which reduces both the management structure and the current cost for internal home care hours. Consideration will also require to be given to increasing externalisation.
- 5.4** Consideration will also be given to the threshold at which home care is provided to individual service users.
- 5.5** Work is on target for Cabinet consideration in December 2008.

## **6. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FUNCTION**

- 6.1** The administration review is ongoing and more recently Vanguard has been brought in to consider all of the administrative key processes. This work is on target for Cabinet consideration in December 2008.

## **7. FOSTERING**

- 7.1** There continues to be an increase in upward trend in the cost of fostering and in particular, external fostering placements. This still largely although not solely relates to the number of external foster placements required. External foster placements are generally required either because a specialist foster placement is needed or there are no available carers within the East Ayrshire area.
- 7.2** Since October 2006, although link and foster placements have been increasing, independent sector foster placements have increased at a slower rate.
- 7.3** The focus of activity currently is to:
- i) review the profile of children in external foster placements;
  - ii) bring rigour to contractual arrangements with external foster agencies; and

- iii) develop a recruitment strategy for foster carers which looks not just at foster carer campaigns but how foster carers are supported.
- iv) review the process and permanency arrangements for children and young people.

## **8. ADULT SUPPORT PACKAGES**

**8.1** The priority to date has been children's homes, fostercare and homecare.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**9.1** Any change in the present pattern of provision will have budgetary implications. The member-officer group will therefore require to consider which of the various options represents the best value for the Council both in terms of capital and revenue expenditure.

## **10. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**10.1** Nil

## **11. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

**11.1** Nil

## **12. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

**12.1** The balance of financial risk requires to be carefully considered against the risk to service users.

## **13. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**13.1** Members of Cabinet are asked to:

- (i) Approve the recommendation to establish a Member / Officer Group to consider options for in house provision of a new replacement children's home, together with wider issues related to accommodation of looked after children as described in para 4.9 of this report.
- (ii) Note the progress in relation to the work streams.

Graham R Short  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

7 October 2008  
KG/AB

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1. CABINET PAPER OF 2 JULY 2008 - SOCIAL SERVICES BUDGET SUSTAINABILITY**

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR, ACTING EXECUTIVE HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK**

Anyone wishing further information please contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services on 01563 – 576003 or Kay Gilmour, Acting Executive Head of Social Work on 01563 – 576917