

## Officer Decision Record – Executive Decision

**If Key Decision: Decision Ref. No.**

n/a

*If not a Key Decision write n/a above*

### OFFICER DECISION RECORD <sup>i</sup>

Officer Key Decisions are subject to the Council's Call-In Procedure (Annex 9 of the Council's Constitution <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/freedom-of-information-and-council-data/open-data-statistics-about-hertfordshire/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/who-we-are-and-what-we-do.aspx>)

<b>Subject: Foster Carer Allowances</b>	
<i>(If a Key Decision please use the same title as provided in the Forward Plan)</i>	
<b>Type of Decision: <del>Executive</del>/Non-Executive</b> <i>(Please delete as applicable)</i>	<b>Key Decision (Executive Functions only):</b>  Yes/No
Officer Contact: Marion Ingram  Tel: 07876 130972	Executive Member/Committee Chairman: Teresa Heritage  Portfolio (Executive Functions only):

**Decision** The decision has been taken to reduce the number of levels at which foster carers are paid, merging the current level one and level two. It has also been decided that the carers will receive an increase which is higher than inflation. The increase is weighted towards those foster carers who look after adolescents since this group are harder to recruit and most in demand.

Subject to the completion of necessary adjustments to the payment system the decision will be implemented in October 2020.

Additional costs are being met through an underspend in the existing allowances budget.

#### 2. **Reasons for the decision**

The overarching review of allowances was conducted for a number of reasons;

- several neighbouring authorities increasing their rates and leaving Hertfordshire offering comparatively uncompetitive allowances

- some dissatisfaction being expressed by some carers regarding the level of allowances
- significant recruitment difficulties having been experienced over the last two years resulting in increasing numbers of children needing to be placed with foster carers recruited by independent agencies where quality assurance and placement oversight is significantly reduced.
- Any child placed with a foster carer recruited through an independent agency costs the local authority approximately twice the cost of placing with an HCC foster carer.

The decision to reduce the number of levels was based on an analysis of the needs profile of children placed with level one and level two carers. The needs being met were broadly the same despite the lesser skills payment made to level one carers. This situation has arisen as a consequence of the placement shortage and the overall increased level of need of the children looked after by Hertfordshire.

3. **Alternative options considered and rejected** Consideration was given to not streamlining or increasing allowances other than by inflation however this was rejected for the reasons described above.

Various permutations of uplift were explored prior to deciding on the proposed levels. The decided upon arrangement will impact most on level one carers and those carers who are looking after teenagers, the two groups most in need of an uplift.

4. **Consultation** (*see Summary of Requirements below*)

**Was any Councillor consulted?**      **Yes/No** (*delete as applicable*)

**If yes:**

(a) ~~Comments of Executive Member/Committee Chairman~~ (*delete as applicable*) Teresa Heritage, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families and Deputy Leader of the Council, and Graham McAndrew, her deputy, were consulted through the Executive Member Briefing process and Teresa has subsequently confirmed her agreement to the proposed streamlining and uplift in allowances.

(b) Comments of other consultees

5. **Any conflict of interest declared by a councillor who has been consulted in relation to the decision**

*(If a Councillor declares a conflict of interest DO NOT PROCEED without seeking advice from Democratic Services or Legal Services).*

6. **[Following consultation with the Executive Member/Committee Chairman,] I am proceeding with the proposed decision.** *(delete words in square brackets if no requirement to consult the Executive Member/Committee Chairman)*

Signed: ..... Marion Ingram .....

Title: Operations Director Specialist Services.....

Date: ...21.05.2020.....

Copies of record to:

- All consultees
- hard & electronic copy (if required to be made available for public inspection) to Democratic Services Manager - Room 213 County Hall.<sup>ii</sup>

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**Summary of Requirements to Inform/Consult Councillors**

<b>Significance of Proposed Action</b>	<b>Controversial</b>	<b>Relevant Councillor(s) to be Consulted</b>
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Technical/Professional/ Routine	No	No need to inform or consult councillors
Technical/Professional/ Routine	Yes	<b>Executive Functions:</b> Consult relevant Lead Executive Member and, where appropriate, Local Councillor  <b>Non-Executive Functions:</b> Relevant Committee Chairman and, where appropriate, Local Councillor
Local	No	<b>Executive Functions:</b> Inform Lead Executive Member and Local Councillor  <b>Non-Executive Functions:</b> Inform Local Councillor
Local	Yes	<b>Executive Functions:</b> Consult Lead Executive Member and Local Councillor  <b>Non-Executive Functions:</b> Consult Local Councillor
General or County-wide	No	<b>Executive Functions:</b> Consult relevant Lead Executive Member (s)  <b>Non-Executive Functions:</b> Consult relevant Committee Chairman
General or County-wide	Yes	<b>Executive Functions:</b> Consult relevant Lead Executive Member (s) and the Leader of the Council  <b>Non-Executive Functions:</b> Consult relevant Committee Chairman/Leaders all Political Groups

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