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CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting WEDNESDAY, 19 JULY 2017, 5.00 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

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Date 21 July 2017

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Graham

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you, Tony Young, Director of Social Services, and Officers for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 19 July to present the **Draft Cabinet report on Families First Recommissioning**.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review the draft Cabinet Report prior to its consideration at Cabinet on 27 July 2017. During the way forward section of the meeting the Members considered the information in the report, together with answers to their questions, and agreed to provide you with the following comments, concerns and recommendations for consideration prior to Cabinet approving the report.

The Committee expressed some concern that the timeline was both ambitious and complex. The Members requested that the Committee should be kept informed of the progress being made on recommissioning Families First.

The Committee also raised concerns about the promotion of Families First services across the City. The Committee recommended that a communications strategy be developed to ensure that everyone is aware of the services, support and access arrangements for Families First.

The Committee expressed its grave concern that the Council was entering into 4 year contracts to the value of £5M each year, although the Welsh Government was only committing to annual budget announcements. The Committee recommended that this be taken into account in all contracts for Families First.

The Committee did consider that the option appraisal documentation attached to the report needed to be more transparent and if possible independently assessed in future.

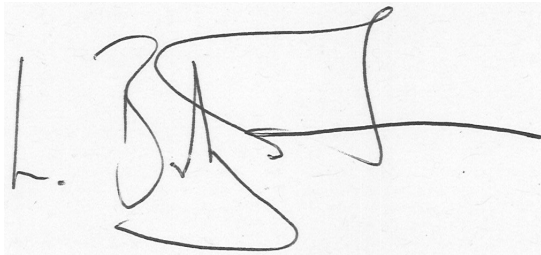
Finally, the Committee agreed to include the consideration of progress reports on Families First in its work programme for the next year.

I hope that these comments, advice and requests for information will be of use and support in improving outcomes for vulnerable children. The Committee looks forward to receiving a response to this letter before the Cabinet meeting on 27 July 2017.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires:

- Further briefings on the progress being made in recommissioning Families First;
- To present to Committee the draft Communication Strategy for Families First;
- Confirmation that the contracts will reference, the possibility of funding being withdrawn during the 4 Year period;
- That future options appraisals are transparent and independently assessed; and
- Provide regular progress reports throughout the 4 years on outcomes from Families First.

Yours sincerely

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COUNTY COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services
Jo Watkins – Cabinet Business Manger
Chantel Abel – Assistant to the Cabinet member
Angela Bourge – O M - Resources
Ceri George - Improvement Project Manager - Prevention and Partnerships

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Fy Nghyf / My Ref : **CM 38103**

Dyddiad / Date: **25th July 2017**

Councillor Lee Bridgeman
Chair – Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Annwyl / Dear Councillor Bridgeman

Re: Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 19th July 2017

Thank you for your letter of 21st July following our attendance with the Director at the Scrutiny Committee on 19th July to consider the draft Cabinet Report in relation to Families First Recommissioning.

In reply to your comments, observations and recommendations we have consulted with the Director and agreed the following response to each issue in the order in which you set them out in your letter.

- **Further briefings on the progress being made in recommissioning Families First.**

Noted and agreed.

We acknowledge that the recommissioning timetable is ambitious but we are confident that it is realistic given the work that we have already undertaken to prepare for this.

We welcome the opportunity to keep the Scrutiny Committee updated on progress and would like to suggest that perhaps the first update is provided in January 2018 when we expect to be in the mobilisation period post contract award and pre new services becoming fully operational in April 2018.

- **To present to Committee the draft Communication Strategy for Families First.**

Noted and agreed.

The central Families First team is currently developing a Communication Strategy, which we will be happy to share with Scrutiny as soon as it has been completed.

In the first instance, this will inform information sharing with current and potential providers as we transition from existing arrangements to implementing the new programme.

ATEBWCH I / PLEASE REPLY TO :

Swyddfa Cymorth Y Cabinet / Cabinet Support Office Ystafell / Room 510, Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Glanfa'r Iwerydd /
Atlantic Wharf, Caerdydd / Cardiff, CF10 4UW
Ffôn / Tel: (029) 2087 2420

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Additionally, we are working with the Family Information Service to develop the elements that relate to communication with our wider stakeholders, including families. The central team has allocated additional resource to the Family Information Service to improve their capacity to support Families First in this piece of work. The two teams will work together over the next few months to ensure that communications are in place to raise awareness of new arrangements as they come on stream from April 2017. This will consider issues raised at the Committee regarding appropriate branding.

In the meantime, we will also be launching the new Early Help Front Door arrangements in this interim year. This should significantly improve information available to professionals and families alike, and streamline the pathway for accessing existing services. There will be an awareness campaign linked to this new development that we will share with the Committee as it becomes available.

- **Confirmation that the contracts will reference the possibility of funding being withdrawn during the 4 Year period.**

Noted and agreed.

We are working closely with our colleagues in Commissioning & Procurement, Finance and Legal Services to mitigate the risks associated with the current funding arrangement and the need to offer contracts, where we are securing services externally, for a longer period. As such, all contracts will have a break clause in them that enables the Council to withdraw the service if grant funding ceases to be available.

- **That future options appraisals are transparent and independently assessed.**

Partially accepted.

I am of the view that, as an integral part of their role, officers have approached the options appraisal with due impartiality and transparency, although it is accepted also that the constrained nature of the arrangements during the interim year has limited the scope to include further options at this stage.

However, to reassure the Committee, the options appraisal attached to the report was shared with current Lead Providers of Families First services and they had an opportunity to provide their feedback ahead of the document being finalised for Cabinet. The content of the appraisal was also broadly based on feedback provided by stakeholders at Families First engagement events held over recent months.

Further, it is important to emphasise that the governance arrangements for agreeing and confirming the deployment of the fund includes all statutory and relevant third sector partners.

- **Provide regular progress reports throughout the 4 years on outcomes from Families First.**

Noted and agreed.

Families First has to comply with strict Welsh Government reporting requirements that evidence grant expenditure and impact. A Families First annual report collates this performance information as well as providing case studies to illustrate impact. In previous years, the report has usually been presented to Scrutiny for information and review. We would welcome the

opportunity to continue this reporting cycle for the new programme.

Thank you again for your comments and suggestions. I look forward to being able to present to you again on progress with Families First and the important services that the programme delivers for families in Cardiff, as set out above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G J Hinchey'.

Councillor / Cynghorydd Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Aelod Cabinet dros Blant a Theuluoedd

