

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF A NON-KEY DECISION CABINET

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| ITEM: | UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN |
| Members Present | Councillors: AW Johnson (Leader), H Bramer, D Harlow, J Lester, PM Morgan (Deputy Leader), PD Price. |
| Date of Decision: | 28 July 2016 |
| Exempt: | No |
| Confidential | No |
| Urgency/Special Urgency: (As defined in Constitution) | No |
| Purpose: | To approve joining the National Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Transfer Scheme and accept the statutory responsibility for a number equivalent of up to 0.07% of the child population within the county. |
| Decision: | <p>THAT:</p> <p>(a) the principle that the council will offer sufficient placements so that the number of UASC accommodated in its looked after system is equivalent to 0.07% of our child population be accepted; and</p> <p>(b) the director for children’s wellbeing be requested to, working with partner councils as appropriate, continue to make the case to government for sufficient funding to adequately resource these additional pressures and provide a further report on the outcome of those negotiations.</p> |
| Reasons for the Decision: | <p>The current system means that in most cases children remain in the care of the local council where they claim asylum, resulting in a small number of councils looking after the vast majority of the children – most notably Kent – and many councils looking after very few or no UASC.</p> <p>This is not sustainable and so over the past 12 months there has been discussion and negotiation on a national level with Directors and Assistant Directors of Children’s Services and with the Local Government Association and central government about introducing a national transfer scheme; as shown in appendix 1.</p> <p>The key principles underpinning the UASC transfer scheme are that there is a fair, equitable and transparent system for caring for children across the UK; the scheme is voluntary and locally led; distribution is based on a proportion of a county’s child population; builds on existing structures and regional models with a phased introduction and that knowledge and resources are pooled recognising existing commitments to the adult</p> |

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| | <p>dispersal scheme; as indicated within appendix 2.</p> <p>The transfer scheme offers an opportunity to Herefordshire Council to demonstrate compassion and opportunities to children and young people who will have experienced conflict and trauma both within their home countries and during their journey to the UK</p> |
| Options Considered: | <p>The current scheme is voluntary. Should Herefordshire Council refuse to join there is a risk of reputational damage with central government, the media and members of the public. There are provisions within the Immigration Act 2016 to enforce the scheme if local councils do not agree to join on a voluntary basis. The Home Office has made it clear that it would use these powers only as a last resort, however the council would risk losing control of when children are transferred to its area.</p> |
| Conflict of Interest ■ (See below) | |
| Date the decision is due to take effect: | 3 August 2016 |

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| <p>COUNCILLOR AW JOHNSON</p> <p>LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> | <p>Date: 28 July 2016</p> |
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- a record of any conflict of interest declared by any executive member who is consulted by the member which relates to the decision;

And

- in respect of any declared conflict of interest, a note of dispensation granted by the relevant local authority's head of paid service.