

Written statement of a key decision
Cabinet

Title	Revised Special Guardianship Order (SGO) financial support policy
Decision maker	Cabinet Information about cabinet, including the names and contact details of the cabinet members, can be found here: http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=251
Date of decision	28 February 2019
Report exemption class	Open
Reason for being a key decision	<p>This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.</p> <p>This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.</p>
A notice was served in accordance with Part 3 (Key decisions) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.	
General exception or special urgency (as defined in the constitution)	No
Purpose	<p>To approve a change to the policy for Special Guardianship financial support so that foster carers who decide to apply for a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) for a looked after child continue to receive financial allowances at the rate equivalent to fostering allowances and fees for the duration of the SGO arrangement.</p> <p>Under the current policy carers are required to complete a means test two years after the SGO is made and their allowances are adjusted based on this. Consequently many foster carers are reluctant to apply for an SGO where this has been assessed to be in the child's best interests as they are concerned about the</p>

	financial impact of this decision.
Decision	That: (a) The revised financial policy for special guardianship orders at appendix 1 is approved; and (b) the policy is implemented from 1st April 2019.
Reason for the decision	As set out in the report. Documents relating to this decision are available at http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=50028553
Options considered	1. Do nothing. Looked after children who could be cared for outside of the looked after system without the intrusion of state intervention continue to be looked after because their foster carers are concerned about levels of financial support. Herefordshire will continue to have higher numbers of looked after children than statistical neighbours and caseloads will be higher for social workers than is necessary. 2. Implement revised policy for SGOs made following implementation of the new policy only. This could be seen as unfair and result in complaints and legal challenge from existing SGO carers. 3. Apply the new policy to all new and existing SGOs from 1 April 2019. This is the proposed option as it will maintain a fair and transparent approach to financial support whilst also promoting the opportunity for children to be cared for outside of the looked after system where this is assessed to be in their best interests.
Declarations of interest (see below)	
Call-in expiry date (decisions are not subject to call-in where special urgency provisions apply)	6 March 2019

Councillor:	Date 28 February 2019
Leader of the Council (Councillor JG Lester)	

- 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.