

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

Approve that Bedford Borough Council join the Eastern Region Local Authorities' Regional Adoption Agency (RAA)

Delegate the RAA negotiations with other Local Authorities and the Department for Education (DfE) to the Director of Children's Services

2. Date of decision

1 November 2018

3. Reasons for decision

Bedford Borough Council is required under the Education and Adoption act 2016 to enter RAA arrangements by 2020.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The council is required to join an RAA. Other regional partners may be considered should circumstances change.

5. How decision is to be funded

The RAA is funded within existing budgets

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

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The Mayor has been consulted on this decision



Signed Shan Hunt Date 1/11/2018 Name of Decision Taker SHAN HUNT

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 2nd November 2018

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 13th November 2018

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....~~YES~~ or NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Executive Decision

Date - 1 November 2018

Report by - Director of Children's Services

Subject - Regional Adoption Agency

1. Executive Summary

The report proposes Bedford Borough Council Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) arrangements in accordance with the requirements set by the Department for Education Regionalising Adoption arrangements launched in June 2015. Each Local Authority is required to be part of an RAA by 2020.

2. Recommendations

The portfolio holder considers the report and if satisfied approve to;

- i) approve that Bedford Borough Council join the Eastern Region Local Authorities' RAA**
- ii) delegate the RAA detailed negotiations with other Local Authorities and the Department for Education (DfE) to the Director of Children's Services**

3. Reasons for Recommendations

Bedford Borough Council is required under the Education and Adoption act 2016 to enter RAA arrangements by 2020.

4. Key Implications

(a) Policy

The DfE require local authorities to enter into RAA arrangements. The majority of Local Authorities in the Eastern Region intend to create the 'Adopt East RAA.' This would consist of Bedford Borough, Hertfordshire, Luton, Essex, Thurrock, Southend, Norfolk and Suffolk. Like many other RAA arrangements the 'Adopt East RAA' is still to be approved by the DfE, to approve this the Council is required to take a decision detailing their proposed RAA arrangement as part of the approval process.

(b) Legal Issues

The Government policy paper, 'Regionalising Adoption', published in 2015, sets out their plans for all local authority adoption services to merge into larger regional adoption agencies.

In addition the Government subsequently legislated to provide powers in the Education and Adoption Act 2016 to require local authority adoption services to Regionalise, where they were not making voluntary plans to do so by 2020.

(c) Resource Implications

Bedford Borough currently incurs costs within for adoption team and the costs of joining an RAA are within existing allocated budgets and are anticipated to be less than £10,000.

(d) Risk Implications

The DfE may not approve the 'Adopt East RAA', this is a risk for all RAA arrangements. If this were the case the director of Children's Services would have the authority to negotiate the alternative arrangements with some or all of the Local Authorities within the Eastern Region of Local Authorities which are; Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Luton, Essex, Thurrock, Southend, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk parameters of this report.

(e) Environmental Implications

There are no specific environmental issues arising from this report.

(f) Equalities Impact

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

5. Details

In June 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) published 'Regionalising adoption' announcing its desire that all LAs join larger regional groups of LAs and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) to radically redesign the adoption system in their areas and to provide excellent adoption services with a strong focus on innovation and practice. This was underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the recent publication 'Putting Children First: delivering our vision for excellent children's social care' published in July 2016. A further publication, 'Adoption: A vision for change', set out the DfE expectation that LAs become part of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) by 2020 and, under the Education and Adoption Act 2016, the Secretary of State for Education now has the power to direct an LA to be part of an RAA. The Regional Adoption agency (RAA) is a requirement placed on Local Authorities by the Department for Education (DfE).

The key aims of an RAA are to:

- Provide children who have adoption as their plan with an adoptive family that meets their needs
- Ensure that all those affected by adoption receive the information, support and advice that they need to understand the adoption journey
- Ensure that families are well prepared, enabled and supported to care for the children with plans for adoption

The RAA should be developed so that the focus is on the child's journey through the adoption process, looking to deliver high standards of practice which will lead to better outcomes for the child.

Key objectives of an RAA are:

- Make available a range of different adoption placement types, including early placement approaches such as Foster to Adopt
- To have an effective and well performing service which would be reflected in the performance data within the adoption scorecard
- Early identification of children for whom adoption is the right option
- Timely placement of all children including sibling groups and older children
- Placements which are sustainable with the right support provided as it is needed
- A sufficient range and number of adopters able to parent children with a wide range of profiles and needs, enabling more children to be placed "in house"

The proposed Adopt East RAA and any alternative arrangement will include an officer governance board consisting of the Director of Children's Services from each participating Local Authority.

The current plans are that Bedford Borough Council Adoption Team within Children's Services would remain employed by Bedford Borough Council and lead on adoption for Bedford Borough Council children who are looked after.

6. **Summary of Consultations and Outcome**

The following Council units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Management Team

7. **Ward Councillor Views**

Not applicable for this report

Report Contact Officer: Colin Foster, Director of Children's Services
(colin.foster@bedford.gov.uk)

File Reference: Executive Decisions

Previous Relevant Minutes: None

Background Papers: Regionalising Adoption, DfE, June 2015
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437128/Regionalising_adoption.pdf
Adoption: A vision for Change, DfE, March 2016
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512826/Adoption_Policy_Paper_30_March_2016.pdf

Appendices: None