

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	<b>Children, Adults, Health &amp; Wellbeing Panel</b>
MEETING DATE:	<b>15<sup>th</sup> June 2021</b>
TITLE:	<b>Adoption West Scrutiny Panel Annual Report</b>
WARD:	All
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>	
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> Adoption West Annual Report AW Appendix1 TOR AW Appendix2 AW Appendix3 Forward Work Programme	

### **1 THE ISSUE**

1.1 To consider the annual report of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Adoption West.

### **2 RECOMMENDATION**

**The Panel is asked to;**

**2.1 Note the annual report of the Joint Scrutiny Panel of Adoption West**

**2.2 Invite areas of focus for the scrutiny panel in 2021-22**

**2.3 Suggest the contents that should be included in the scrutiny panel's annual report in future; and any comments on formatting the information for ease of reading.**

### **3 THE REPORT**

3.1 Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency and was formed in March 2019. Scrutiny arrangements are not required for a regional adoption agency, but it was felt that this would be good practice, so a scrutiny panel was formed in 2020, and comprises councillors from all 6 Local Authorities that form the adoption agency, which are Bath & NE Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

3.2 There are close links between Adoption West and B&NES Children's Social Care. Mary Kearney-Knowles, Director Children's Services and Education

represents B&NES at Board level and attend quarterly Adoption West Board Meetings. The Adoption West Board has responsibility for, organisational strategy, financial oversight, performance and risk management, policies and procedures of the Regional Adoption Agency. The Scrutiny panel's meeting schedule mirrors the board meetings.

- 3.3 Rachael Ward, Head of Service: Care Outcomes, is vice chair for the Leads Meeting. This takes place bi-monthly and involves all 6 LAs and senior representatives from Adoption West. The meetings provide a strategic overview across all LAs of the work and developments within Adoption West. A key area of work is to ensure quality, consistently and equality in service.
- 3.4 Alongside this, the LA also meets quarterly with Adoption West to consider B&NES specific issues at a strategic level. These meetings aim to ensure that shared policies and practice are effective and also identifies any areas of development. This meeting is attended by Heads of Service, Team Managers and Adoption West.
- 3.5 The Head of Service also chairs a bi-monthly Tracker Meeting in which individual children with a plan for adoption, or potential plan of adoption, are considered in detail. This meeting ensures that there is no drift or delay in achieving permanence for children and explores operational aspects of service delivery. It is felt that this approach provides the LA with oversight of both operational practice and strategic work in B&NES.

3.6 Numbers adopted BANES in 2020/2021:

- (1) 12 Orders granted
- (2) 16 Adoption Orders

## **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 An Adoption West and Local Authority Partner Relationship document describes the relationship between BANES, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Councils and Adoption West in relation to governance and operational practice. The successful delivery of adoption services by Adoption West and the local authorities will be dependent on a high level of joint working and clear lines of communication between the six LAs and Adoption West managers and staff at all levels of service delivery.
- 4.2 As a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) it is also subject to an Ofsted inspection of arrangements.

## **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)**

- 5.1 Adoption West is expected to deliver its range of services within the agreed budget. The resources and budget amount was agreed when Adoption West was created. The expenditure is monitored on a quarterly basis at Board level, and Adoption West's budget is appraised annually with the involvement of each Local Authorities' Finance Manager. Additional cost pressures/service developments need to be presented by Adoption West and taken through the individual 6 Local Authorities' Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP) process. The scrutiny papers indicate that there may be some financial pressure.

emerging in relation to the post adoption offer. This will be fed into the MTFP for BANES for consideration for 2022/2023.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

## **7 EQUALITIES**

7.1 An EIA has not been carried out on this report

## **8 CLIMATE CHANGE**

8.1 As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic Adoption West's scrutiny panel have moved to online meetings, which has cut down on the need for travel. The intention is to continue this and have only one in-person meeting per year.

## **9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 None

## **10 CONSULTATION**

10.1 This report has been reviewed with the Local Authority Finance Manager that supports Adoption West.

<b>Contact person</b>	Michelle O'Doherty 07748 787654
<b>Background papers</b>	None
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	