
Children & Family Services: Adopt Thames Valley - The Development of a Regional Adoption Agency

Committee considering report:	Executive on 4 May 2017
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	25 April 2017
Report Author:	Mac Heath
Forward Plan Ref:	EX3285

1. Purpose of the Report

To approve plans for West Berkshire Council to join and progress developments as a Regional Adoption Agency as a shared service hosted by Oxfordshire County Council with a wider base group of partner authorities. This report provides an overview of plans to set up a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) across the Thames Valley region. It sets out the legislative framework, potential benefits for children and families and describes the planned timetable for setting up the RAA.

2. Recommendations

To ensure Members are fully aware of the commitment to developing Adopt Thames Valley as a shared partnership to develop a new Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and seek agreement to progress.

3. Implications:

- 3.1 **Financial:** The service specification, team structure and funding mechanism for the new service are being developed at present, ensuring that the service is delivered next year within the set allocated budget for 2017/18. Work is also underway in each of the participating local authorities to obtain political agreement to setting up Adopt Thames Valley with the view to launch the new partnership in November 2017. It is planned to develop and agree a formula that will benefit from better value through economies of scale in the recruitment and assessment process for adopters' with an improved potential through placing children with adopters' in a more timely way.
- 3.2 **Policy:** N/A
- 3.3 **Personnel:** It is likely that a role that currently sits within Children and Family Services for adoption support may be transferred within the new arrangement alongside current discussions. This is currently approximately 0.4 FTE Social Worker post.
- 3.4 **Legal:** Legal discussions are currently taking place across the involved authorities to ensure the full and clear arrangements for the partnership are in place.

3.5 **Risk Management:** The project is not without risks. Whilst the larger scale presents opportunities for more efficient and effective adoption services there will also be challenges created by working across a wider geographic area with a diverse group of local authorities. These risks are being managed through robust project management and a strong governance structure overseeing the development of the new service.

3.6 **Property:** N/A

3.7 **Other:** N/A

4. Appendices

Appendix A (1) – Supporting Information