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## Report of the Chief officer for Children and Young people's social Care Member Management Committee

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010

Subject: Corporate Fostering Panel

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### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity   
Community Cohesion   
Narrowing the Gap

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## Executive Summary

1.1 To seek Member Management Committee approval to designate the Corporate Fostering Panel as a Strategic and Key Partnership and appoint elected members to that Panel from a pooling arrangement

### 2.0 Purpose Of This Report

2.1 To seek Member Management Committee approval to designate the Corporate Fostering Panel as a Strategic and Key Partnership and appoint members to that Panel.

### 3.0 Background Information

3.1 Leeds currently has 3 Fostering Panels and 3 Adoption Panels. Due to the volume of work it has been necessary to establish a fourth Fostering Panel and this has become operational. It is proposed that these operate as sub groups of the Corporate Fostering Panel.

3.2 Fostering and adoption panels are governed by legislation and regulations as well as internal procedures. The Adoption Panel has had 2 elected members for each panel and the Fostering Panel has had 1 elected member. Two elected members have been on each adoption panel to ensure that at least one is able to attend. It is proposed that this is reduced to one to release capacity for the fourth fostering panel. Panel members may only sit on the adoption panel they are appointed to

with substitutions not being allowed. From a good practice point of view this has been applied to fostering panels although this is not stipulated in regulation.

- 3.3 Members will be aware there are vacancies for elected members on existing panels. There are vacancies on the existing Osmonthorpe Fostering Panel and the existing Dewsbury Road Fostering Panel in addition to the new Civic panel. It should be noted that all the panels take business from all parts of the city and the names of the panels are either historical names or denote the location of the panel meeting.
- 3.4 Further to a previous report being submitted to the last Member Management Committee, this amended report is now being submitted for consideration.

#### **4.0 Main Issues**

- 4.1 Panel business requires members to read the papers before attending the meeting. Papers are relatively extensive, containing detailed information on children and families and may take approximately 1-3 hours to read. The length of the panel meetings vary but usually last at least 3 hours. A 75% attendance at panel over the year is a requirement of the internal protocol to ensure continuity and for panel members to be able to contribute to the discussions about items at panel. Since this is an internal protocol, this requirement could be waived for elected members. Each of the four panels now sub-panels meets on a monthly basis
- 4.2 Following a previous meeting when this request was considered, two models involving a pool of members were mentioned so I will address these in turn.
- 4.3 The first pooling arrangement would be comparable to the current Licensing Committee of the Council where the total membership rarely meet as a committee but frequently meet as sub-committees of three members drawn from the total membership. This option would not be suitable in this case as a number of roles, are stipulated by national regulations and only one of each should be in attendance. For the panel to be quorate, five out of the eight voting members (chair, social worker, fostering officer, team manager, health, education, foster carer, elected member) must be present .
- 4.4 The second pooling arrangement would be comparable to the current regulatory committee arrangements of the Council where the four regulatory panels are for the purposes of substitute arrangements, regarded as one panel. In order to maintain consistency of adoption panel membership, substitutions are not allowed by national regulation. This has also been applied with regard to fostering panels from a good practice perspective. However, it would be permissible by regulation to have this pooling arrangement to bring about some degree of flexibility for elected members by considering the existing panels as sub groups of the Corporate Fostering Panel. All members of the pool would need to be willing to have induction and annual training for panel members. It is proposed that Panel dates for the year would be circulated to the pool in order for members to identify their availability so that papers could be sent to them in a timely fashion before the meeting.

#### **5.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 5.1 The Appointments to Outside Bodies Procedure Rules state that where a request to make an appointment is received then determination of this will be based on one or more of the following criteria being met:

- the proposed appointment is a statutory requirement;
- the proposed appointment would be consistent with the Council's policy or strategic objectives; and/or
- the proposed appointment would add value to the Council's activities.

5.2 Where an organisation is deemed to have met one or more of these criteria, Members are requested to allocate it to one of the following categories:

- Strategic and Key Partnerships – participation contributes to the Council's strategic objectives and community leadership role
- Community and Local Engagement – not necessary to fulfil strategic or key partnership role but, nonetheless, beneficial in terms of leading, engaging and supporting the community from an area or ward perspective.

5.3 The appointing body for Strategic and Key Partnerships is the Member Management Committee. The appointing body for Community and Local Engagement is the appropriate Area Committee.

5.4 Members are asked to consider whether appointments should be made to this body and to agree that such appointments would fall into the Strategic and Key Partnerships category.

5.5 Members are also asked to consider making an appointments to the newly formed Corporate Fostering Panel.

## **6.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

6.1 Fostering Regulations 2002 and the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 outline the requirements of the panels functions and membership. Regulation 24c states that in the case of a local authority fostering service, at least 1 elected member of the local authority is required. Regulation 3c of the Adoption Agencies Regulations states that in the case of a local Authority 1 member is required. The Adoption panels have always had 2 members sitting on each of the 3 panels to ensure that one can attend. It is proposed that to release capacity for the fourth fostering panel that one elected member sits on each adoption panel

## **7.0 Recommendations**

7.1 That the Corporate Fostering Panel be designated as a Strategic and Key Partnership and appoint a member to that Panel.

7.3 That appointments to the sub panels are made from a pool of 5 or 6 elected members.

## **Background Papers**

Appointments to Outside Procedure Rules

Fostering Agencies Regulations 2002

Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005