

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022**

### **Response to Council referral on 18th July regarding**

### **UNICEF child friendly status and No Child Left Behind**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1 At full council on 18 July, Cllr Wendy Flynn [introduced a motion](#) (see full wording of the motion in appendix 1) that would commit the council to working towards achieving UNICEF child friendly status for Cheltenham.
- 1.2 Cllr Flo Clucas tabled an amendment to the motion that raised a concern about the timescale and the amount of work that might be required to achieve child friendly status.
- 1.3 Council agreed to refer the Motion to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at the situation, the proposal and its implications and then report back to Council for a decision to be taken.
- 1.4 In proposing the amendment, Cllr Flo Clucas described the work and successes of the No Child Left Behind initiative which included debates with children and significant partnership working.

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

- 2.1 The issues for discussion by O&S are as follows:
- 2.2 What is UNICEF child-friendly status and how does this compare with No Child Left Behind?
- 2.3 Given current council priorities, would working towards UNICEF child-friendly status add value to our work?
- 2.4 Is it realistic, given current workloads for the council to lead the work to achieve child-friendly status alongside its existing priorities and its commitment to No Child Left Behind?

#### **3. What is UNICEF child-friendly status and how does this compare with No Child Left Behind?**

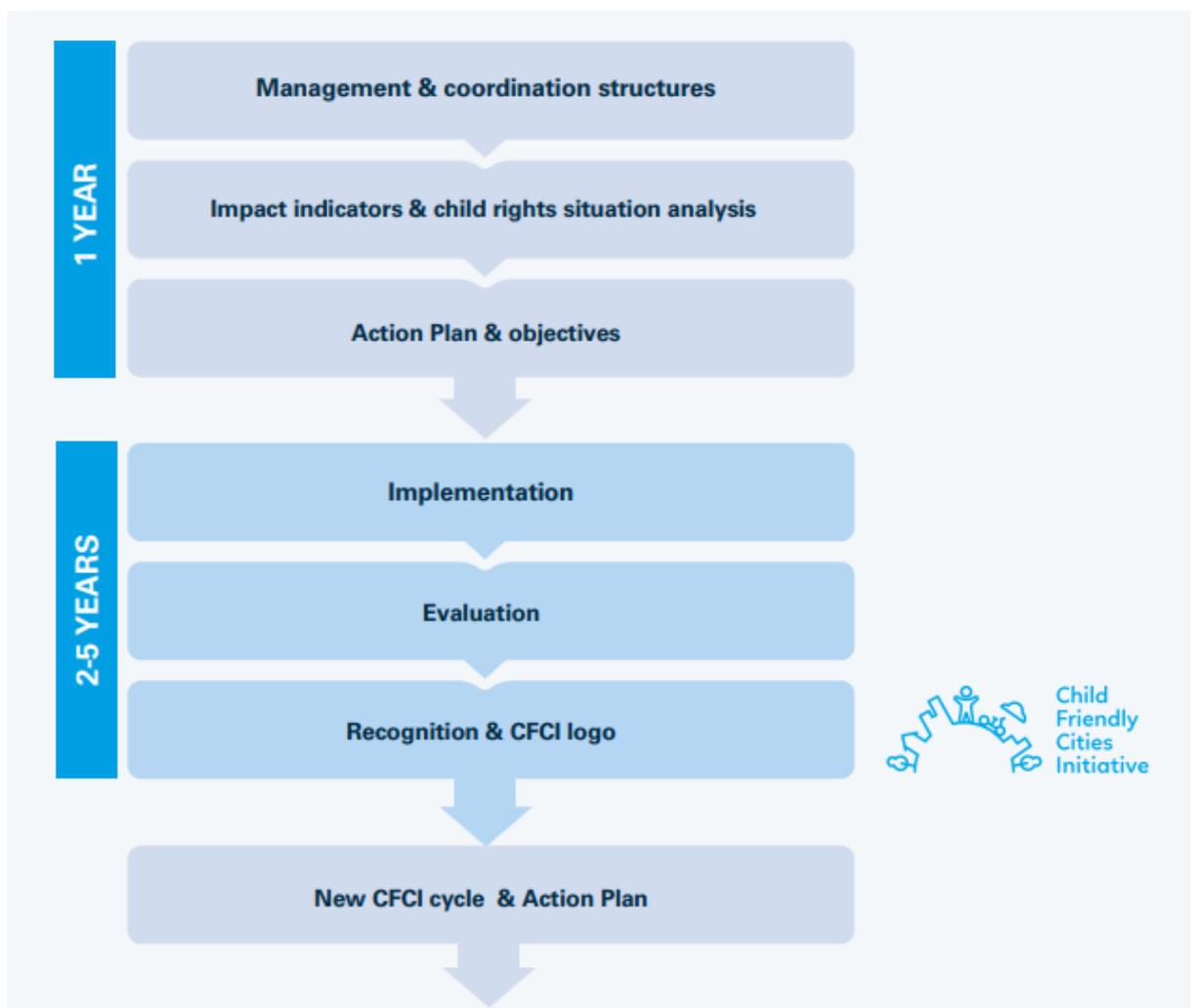
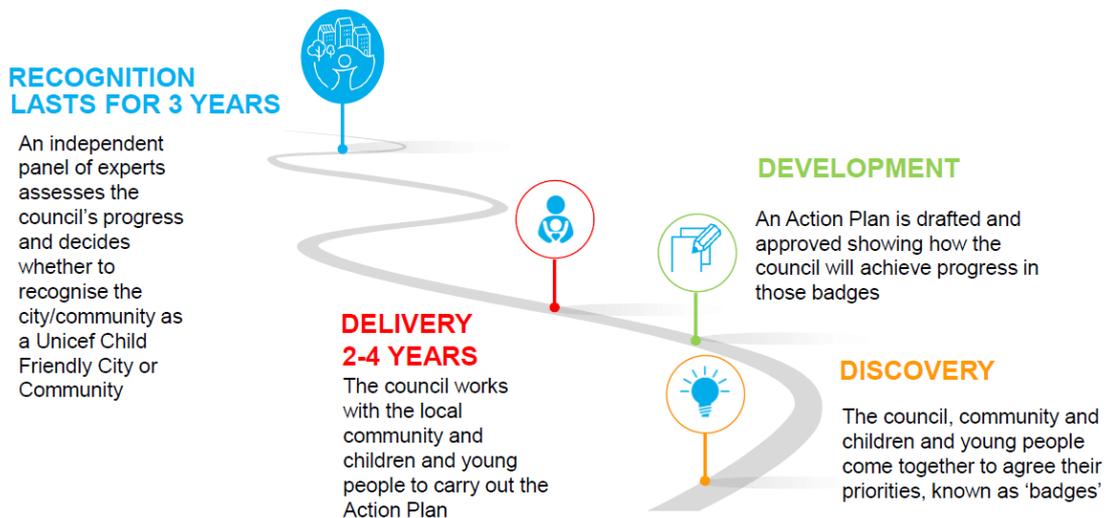
- 3.1 The [Child Friendly Cities Initiative](#) (CFCI) is a UNICEF-led initiative that supports councils across the world in realising the rights of children at the local level using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as its foundation.
- 3.2 The initiative was launched in 1996 by UNICEF and UN-Habitat to act on the

resolution passed during a United Nations Conference on Human Settlements to make cities liveable places for all. The UN Conference declared that the wellbeing of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and of good governance.

- 3.3** A child-friendly city (CFC) is a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realizing their rights as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 3.4** In practice, it is a city, town or community in which the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions and where children:
- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse;
  - Have a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for;
  - Have access to quality social services;
  - Experience quality, inclusive and participatory education and skills development;
  - Express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them;
  - Participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life;
  - Live in a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces;
  - Meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves;
  - Have a fair chance in life regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability.
- 3.5** While the primary responsibility for ensuring that children’s rights are realised lies with governments, other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and the media, as well as children themselves, also have an important role to play in building child-friendly cities.
- 3.6** Within the UK, the child friendly programme, aims to create cities and communities in the UK where all children – whether they are living in care, using a children’s centre, or simply visiting their local library – have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.
- 3.7** In the UK, there are currently 9 cities with (or working towards) child friendly status:
- Aberdeen
  - Cardiff
  - Derry City & Strabane District
  - Lambeth (London)
  - Liverpool
  - Nottingham
  - Redbridge
  - Southampton
  - Wokingham

### **What are the key phases in the Child Friendly City programme?**

- 3.8** It is generally recognised that attaining child friendly city status is a 3 to 5 year long programme that is split into 4 key phases starting with the “Discovery Phase”. This first phase takes from 6 months to a year. The two charts overleaf show the process that is normally followed.



**3.9** The [process](#) is quite tightly prescribed with set methodologies for each step of the process. Given the multi-agency dynamic of the child friendly framework the guidance suggests establishing a local coordinating unit to lead, facilitate and coordinate the development and implementation of the Action Plan.

- 3.10** It is also suggested that any staff appointed to coordinate the process within the local authority should have sound knowledge of child rights, and need to be in a strategic position in relation to the local administration.
- 3.11** The guidance also makes it clear that the child friendly process requires a budget with clear allocations for each activity to ensure adequate resource commitment. Hence before launching and deciding on the scope of the child friendly process, the guidance makes it clear how important it is to consider available financial and human resources.
- 3.12** As the process extends beyond the remit of Cheltenham Borough Council and into the remit of Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire NHS, Gloucestershire Constabulary among others, it would be critical that these partners are fully on-board to supporting the journey.
- 3.13** In dialogue with Dame Janet Trotter, chair of Gloucestershire Childrens Coalition – she confirmed that some 2 or 3 years ago, when the Coalition was in its early stages they did think about joining the UNICEF scheme.
- 3.14** They subsequently decided not to pursue child friendly city status due to the cost and the nature of Gloucestershire. They noted that all of the other successful areas which had signed up were unitary authorities which had more control over the running and organisation of services to ensure integration and more effective cross-sector working.
- 3.15** Dame Janet did go onto say that the Coalition is now gaining traction and is playing a major role in ensuring cross-organisational working and locality planning at a district level, involving voluntary and community sector partners.
- 3.16** It is therefore clear that undertaking the journey to become a child friendly city requires:
- Dedicated staffing resources
  - Sufficient budget for not only staff but also to undertake the supporting methodologies.
  - Willing partners from across the public, private and VCS who are willing to commit to the process.

### **What is No Child Left Behind**

- 3.17** No Child Left Behind is a local partnership that is working to:
- Raise awareness of the issue of child poverty;
  - Address the inequality gap through events and activities; and
  - Work together to make transformational change over the longer-term.
- 3.18** In 2018, local partners commissioned a children’s needs assessment that set out that there were 4,300 children and young people growing up in poverty. And that those children, when compared to their more affluent peers were then facing significant challenges.
- 3.19** The statistics were particularly worrying given Cheltenham’s reputation as an affluent town that prides itself on the quality of its regency architecture. its festivals and its green spaces. Partners responded by delivering a year of action on child poverty called No Child Left Behind in 2019.

### **No Child Left Behind Community Agreement**

- 3.20** The Community Agreement arose from a collective understanding that the offer for children and young people – in terms of early years’ provision, education, family support, social care support and youth support did not work well for some of our

children. Across a range of partners there was a collective ambition to do more, and to commit to placing kindness, empathy and understanding at the heart of everything we do.

- 3.21** To date 24 schools have signed up alongside 57 organisations including 16 businesses.
- 3.22** NCLB has supported partners through a range of learning events for signatories such as two virtual leadership summits and training courses for front-line staff with 163 attendances.
- 3.23** On 9 March this year, NCLB held its annual awards event to celebrate local projects that have supported families throughout the pandemic. This event was held in partnership with Punchline (an online business publication) who have helped raise £6,000 from 12 business.
- 3.24** The community agreement is delivering the aim of transforming how we address child poverty through changing the narrative and our organisation cultures.
- 3.25** The No Child Left Behind Partnership remains strong. It has a built a town-wide coalition of like-minded partners who are determined to take action so that local children have the opportunity to thrive.

**Comparison between two**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Child Friendly</b>	<b>No Child Left Behind</b>
<b>Recognition</b>	Internationally recognised	Local recognition – Cheltenham and within Gloucestershire
<b>Values framework</b>	Based on UN conventions on the rights of the child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-discrimination</li> <li>• Best interests of the child</li> <li>• The inherent right to life, survival and development</li> <li>• Respect for the views of the child</li> </ul>	The Community Agreement asks signatories to commit to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working hand in hand with families</li> <li>• Understand the effects of poverty and trauma</li> <li>• Being compassionate and strengths-based</li> </ul>
<b>Focus</b>	Strategic – getting the right policies and procedures in place within the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laws and policies</li> <li>• Advocacy &amp; awareness raising</li> <li>• City-wide plan</li> <li>• Budget allocation</li> <li>• Child / youth participation</li> <li>• Coordination and partnerships</li> <li>• Data collection and monitoring progress</li> </ul>	Strategic: working to change the narrative around child poverty and working to avoid stigma  Tactical: getting the right organisational culture in place:  Operational: Delivery of projects such as holiday schemes and summer of play
<b>Process for sign-up</b>	Via embarking on the defined process – 3-5 years	Via signing the community agreement

<b>CBC resources required</b>	Probably 2 FTE minimum, plus managerial support  Southampton have suggested that the total cost of their investment to achieve CFC status is £84.3k pa for 5 years = £421,500	1 FTE No Child Left Behind Officer, in base budgets plus managerial support.  No base budget
<b>Partner resources required</b>	Would require significant input from partners particularly GCC Childrens Services, NHS Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Constabulary, local schools.  There is not an option for Cheltenham BC to deliver the framework by ourselves.  This report has not tested the appetite of partners to commit to the framework	Significant number of partners are already committed to NCLB

#### 4. Given current council priorities, would working towards UNICEF child-friendly status add value to our work?

4.1 There is no doubt that successfully gaining Unicef Child Friendly designation for Cheltenham would be a significant achievement which would place us alongside the other 9 cities within the UK and also attract International acclaim.

4.2 The attached table shows the potential added value across both CFC and NCLB.

Priority	Possible added value from Unicef CFC	Possible added value from NCLB
Golden Valley and wider inward investment	Will ensure that local children and young people's are involved in the design and development process.  Children will benefit from inclusive and participatory education and skills development	NCLB is already captured within the emerging social value framework to ensure the GV development levers in resources and support for children and young people  Via the Large Enterprise Action Group, NCLB wishes to develop more defined careers and skills pathways in conjunction with local schools and employers
Climate Emergency	Will provide a more robust framework to ensure that local children are given the opportunities to express their opinions and influence	NCLB has made the climate emergency one of its themes and this includes climate related activities at the children festival and

Priority	Possible added value from Unicef CFC	Possible added value from NCLB
	<p>decisions about how we reach the Chelt Zero target in 2030</p>	<p>celebrating climate achievements via one of the NCLB awards.</p> <p>Via Chelt Education Partnership, there has been a dedicated programme of work around the climate emergency called <a href="#">CEP change-makers</a></p> <p>NCLB plans to relaunch an engagement programme with local children to find out more about their views. This will feature climate change</p>
Town centre	<p>Provides a robust rights-based framework to ensure that children can enjoy a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces</p>	<p>Through the wider NCLB network, partners are funding a detached youth work project that works in the town centre amongst other areas.</p> <p>NCLB is involved in discussions with enforcement colleagues about how we work to manage anti-social behaviour in the town centre. NCLB is keen to ensure that the voices of young people are heard in the development of response plans.</p>
Housing investment	<p>Provides a robust rights-based framework to ensure that local children get a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for and live in a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces</p>	<p>CBH is a key partner in NCLB and is delivering events and projects that benefit local children. They also fund ACE / trauma informed programmes supporting young people to resilience</p> <p>NCLB will play a role in advocating for quality youth work and children facilities as part of the strategic housing developments.</p>
Culture and wellbeing	<p>Provides a robust rights-based framework around children having rights to</p>	<p>Via No Child Left Behind, the draft culture strategy places a specific focus on</p>

Priority	Possible added value from Unicef CFC	Possible added value from NCLB
	meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves.	children with the emphasis being on giving them greater ownership of their creative and cultural expression, with the aim of empowering them

**5. Is it realistic, given current workloads for the council to lead the work to achieve child-friendly status alongside its existing priorities and its commitment to No Child Left Behind?**

- 5.1 Given current workloads and budget restraints, the council will need to review whether it is currently realistic to expect the council to lead the work to achieve Child Friendly City status. There is also a significant note of caution over the involvement of partners such as GCC Childrens Services, NHS Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Constabulary, local schools and other partners.
- 5.2 But it is up to members on Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss whether they feel the Child Friendly City process should be made a priority.
- 5.3 If members of Overview and Scrutiny committee were to recommend that CFC be made a priority, it would be realistic to expect that the council would have to re-prioritise its collective workloads to free up officer capacity and to identify budgets.
- 5.4 Members are also encouraged to discuss how our current No Child Left Behind programme could be used to meet some of the Child friendly city ambitions – particularly in how we hear children’s voices in our most significant decisions

**6. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider, e.g. potential witnesses, further report, site visit etc.**

- 6.1 It is for Members on Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine the next steps and report back to Council for a decision to be taken.

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**Background Links**

<https://childfriendlycities.org/>

<https://nclbcheltenham.org.uk/>

**Contact Officer**

Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing & Partnerships

**Accountability**

Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member Safety and Communities

## **APPENDIX 1 - Full wording of motion**

Council notes that to achieve UNICEF's child-friendly status, Cheltenham Borough Council will have to show that it is a place where more children feel safe, heard, cared-for, and able to flourish. Council believes that members of our communities and town will only benefit through the principles of child friendly city/community status being adopted. These include:

- Non-discrimination
- Best interests of the child
- The inherent right to life, survival and development
- Respect for the views of the child
- Equity and inclusion
- Accountability and transparency
- Public Participation
- Effectiveness and responsiveness
- Adaptability and sustainability

Council believes that the adoption of these principles will allow all sectors of the council structure to deliver more play space, safer roads, cleaner and greener neighbourhoods, cycle infrastructure, better education, child safety – all areas which will benefit families and communities and allow Cheltenham to become an even better place to live and work.

Council recognises that there is an inter-dependence on the County Council, NHS, schools and police to deliver aspects of the framework – particularly in relation to social care, health, education and safety. It further recognises the great work done by No Child Left Behind in creating a foundation of child-centred partnership working that can be built on to achieve UNICEF child friendly status. UNICEF's child rights-based approach to public services has consultation with children and young people at its core.

Council believes that consultation is vital to developing our communities, where children and young people can:

- Have a say about decisions that affect them.
- Express their views freely and are encouraged and supported to do that.
- Access good health, education, transport, and other service.
- Feel safe, prioritised, and protected from discrimination and harm.
- Enjoy public spaces and meet other children and young people freely

Council resolves to:

- Promote the benefits of the UNICEF Child Friendly city/community status to partner organisations.
- Work with partners to agree a timetable for signing up to the UNICEF programme and begin the process to become a recognised Child Friendly city/community.
- To implement/ improve the principles of the UNICEF status, within this motion, as soon as possible
- To develop a consultation strategy which includes the principles of young people inclusion as stated above.

**ENDS**