Cheltenham Borough Council

Council – 12th December 2022

O&S Referral – Council motion on UNICEF child-friendly city status and No Child Left Behind (18th July)

Accountable member:

Cllr. John Payne, Chair of Overview & Scrutiny

Accountable officer:

Darren Knight, Executive Director Place and Communities

Accountable scrutiny committee:

Overview & Scrutiny

Ward(s) affected:

N/A

Key/Significant Decision:

No

Executive summary:

This report summarises the response of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (O&S) to the Council referral on 18th July concerning UNICEF child-friendly status and No Child Left Behind. A motion calling on the council to pursue status as a child-friendly city was proposed by Cllr. Flynn, before an amendment from Cllr. Clucas requested that the matter be referred to O&S for further investigation of the situation, proposal and implications. The amended motion was carried, and the matter was referred to O&S, with a report to be brought back to Council as soon as practicable.

Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships) was assigned to produce a discussion paper looking at the key questions, namely:

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

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

The discussion paper is attached in full at Appendix 2. Members discussed the paper in detail and put questions to the officer before determining the committee's recommendations to Council.

Recommendations:

1. **To note the recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee;**
2. **To agree that No Child Left Behind be ring-fenced, and not changed or diluted by pursuit of the UNICEF child-friendly approach;**
3. **To determine not to pursue an application to join the UNICEF initiative, but requests that the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny writes to the County Council to establish whether a cross-county approach can be developed with relation to the child-friendly framework, including greater involvement of children in the decisions that affect them.**

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1. Implications

1.1. Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets and Deputy S151 Officer, Gemma.Bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2. Legal implications

There is no statutory requirement on the Authority to participate in this initiative.

Signed off by: One Legal, legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

1.3. HR implications

There are no HR implications or recommendations.

Signed off by: Clare Jones, HR Business Partner, clare.jones@publicagroup.uk

1.4. Environmental and climate change implications

There are no direct environmental or climate change implications arising from this report.

Signed off by: Laura Tapping, Climate Emergency Programme Officer, Laura.Tapping@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.5. Property/asset implications

There are no direct property or asset implications arising from this report.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets and Deputy S151 Officer, Gemma.Bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.6. Corporate policy framework implications

There are no direct corporate policy framework implications arising from this report.

Signed off by: Ann Wolstencroft, Program Manager, Ann.Wolstencroft@cheltenham.gov.uk

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2. Promoting equality and reducing discrimination

N/A

3. Performance management – monitoring and review

N/A

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4. Background

4.1. At the Full Council meeting on 18th July 2022, Cllr. Wendy Flynn proposed a motion that would commit the council to working towards achieving UNICEF child-friendly status, a rights-based framework that makes children an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions.

4.2. Cllr. Flo Clucas proposed an amendment to the motion which raised concerns about the timescale and workload required to achieve this. In proposing the amendment, she highlighted the success of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) since 2018, and suggested referring the matter to Overview & Scrutiny for further investigation.

4.3. Council resolved to refer the matter to O&S for a closer look at the situation, proposal and implications, with a report subsequently coming back to Council for a decision to be made.

4.4. The Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships (Richard Gibson) produced a detailed discussion paper comparing child-friendly status to the current NCLB offer and assessing the possible benefits and risks of pursuing the UNICEF framework.

4.5. This discussion paper was considered by O&S at the 31st October meeting, and following Q&As with the officer and Member debate, the committee resolved to make two recommendations to Council:

- **No Child Left Behind be ring-fenced, and not changed or diluted by pursuit of the UNICEF child-friendly approach;**
- **County council colleagues be consulted to see if a cross-county approach can be developed with relation to the child-friendly framework, including greater involvement of children in the decisions that affect them.**

5. Reasons for recommendations

5.1. Following the Member debate, the Chair of O&S summarised the view of the committee. While Members felt that the principles of the UNICEF framework were needed, the difficulties in

pursuing child-friendly status were clear.

5.2. It was agreed that CBC did not currently have the resources to do so without diluting the NCLB offer, and county-wide cooperation would be essential if they were to pursue it further.

5.3. Throughout the debate, Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that children were involved in the decisions that affected them, and it was suggested that colleagues at GCC be consulted to find out if a cross-county approach could be developed.

6. Alternative options considered

6.1. At both the Council meeting on 18th July and the O&S Committee on 31st October, Members considered a number of different options for how to proceed. The full minutes of both items are available in the background information.

7. Consultation and feedback

7.1. O&S meeting on 31st October, and further discussion with the Chair of O&S, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships, and Monitoring Officer.

8. Key risks

8.1. If scrutiny arrangements are not supported by Members and officers, they may not be successful in delivering the outcomes required.

8.2. If scrutiny is not carrying out the full extent of its role (i.e. pre- and post-decision scrutiny and overview), there is a risk of a democratic deficit.

8.3. If the council dilutes resources across key priorities regarding children then initiatives may fail.

Report author:

Harry Mayo, Democracy Officer, harry.mayo@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

i. Risk Assessment

ii. Discussion paper from 31st October O&S meeting

Background information:

i. Minutes of 18th July Council meeting (agenda item 12: *Notices of Motion*)

ii. Minutes of 31st October O&S meeting (agenda item 10: *Response to Council referral on 18th July regarding UNICEF child friendly status and No Child Left Behind*)

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If scrutiny arrangements are not supported by Members and officers, they may not be successful in delivering the outcomes required.	Democratic Services	2	3	6	Reduce	Continue to regularly review the effectiveness of scrutiny arrangements.	Democratic Services, O&S Committee	Ongoing
	If scrutiny is not carrying out the full extent of its role (i.e. pre- and post-decision scrutiny and overview), there is a risk of a democratic deficit.	Democratic Services	2	3	6	Reduce	Continue to regularly review the effectiveness of scrutiny arrangements.	Democratic Services, O&S Committee	Ongoing
	If the council dilutes resources across key priorities regarding children then initiatives may fail.	Richard Gibson	4	3	12	Reduce	Continue to prioritise work and ensure adequate resource allocated.	Richard Gibson	Ongoing