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| <b>TITLE</b>                | <b>Unicef Application</b>   |
| <b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b> | Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2021 |
| <b>WARD</b>                 | None Specific;  |
| <b>LEAD OFFICER</b>         | Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss                       |

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Joining the UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities and Communities programme will provide a framework for intensifying the borough's focus on ensuring that the voice of all children and young people in the borough is heard, and that they have a real say in the development of local services and facilities for them and for their families. This will help ensure that the needs and rights of children of all backgrounds and abilities are met, enhance community wrap-around support for children and young people through improved understanding of their lived experiences, and improve community cohesiveness. It contributes to realisation of the Council's Community Vision: "A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business."

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the features of the UNICEF Child-Friendly Communities programme, progress on the application to join the programme, and the opportunities councillors will have to be involved in the programme from the outset.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

**This report provides information about the UNICEF UK "Child-Friendly Cities and Communities" programme, including how Wokingham will benefit from working with UNICEF, and why UNICEF are interested in working with us. It gives an update on the progress of Wokingham Borough Council's application to join the programme, and outlines how councillors will be able to become involved.**

## **Background**

"Child-Friendly Cities and Communities" is a 3-5 year UNICEF UK programme that works with councils to put children's rights into practice. Joining the programme will afford WBC access to a wealth of support from recognised experts in the arena of children's rights-based work to put in place a plan to ensure that all children in the borough have a say and are truly heard and valued by their communities. Success in the programme will result in an international recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly Community demonstrating the borough's commitment to young people and enhancing its reputation as a great place not only to bring up a child, but to be a child.

Children's Services have been working with UNICEF, our Executive Lead Member for Children's Services, internal partners, the Children and Young People's Partnership,

and children and young people over the past 6-8 months to craft a compelling application to join the programme. The application has been submitted to UNICEF for final comments before being formally put forward for consideration later this month.

From our initial conversations, UNICEF have been interested in working with Wokingham due to its particular demographic of being a wealthy borough but with significant pockets of deprivation resulting in wide differences in childhood experience and outcomes.

If accepted onto the programme, the work will begin swiftly to shape a plan which will engage the whole community in coming together to champion children's rights.

From the outset there will be opportunities for councillors to engage with children and young people, UNICEF colleagues, partners and the wider community to support and drive this important work.

## **Analysis of Issues**

"Child-Friendly Cities and Communities" is a UNICEF UK programme that works with councils to put children's rights into practice.

The programme aims to create communities in the UK where all children, regardless of background or ability, have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives and the lives of their families.

This is a global initiative which reaches close to 30 million children in 40 countries. UNICEF works in partnership with UK councils who are committed to working towards international recognition as a UNICEF Child-Friendly community.

During the 3-5 year programme, UNICEF supports councils to achieve measurable progress in embedding children's rights across a community using a child rights-based approach. UNICEF work in collaboration with councils, providing training, resources, and guidance throughout the journey.

The shape of the programme is developed and led by the local council working collaboratively with the wider community, including children and young people and local partners, with support from UNICEF.

Progress is measured through a mix of self-evaluation, child-led evaluation and by an independent panel of experts in human rights, child wellbeing and public services.

Currently UNICEF are working with:

- Aberdeen City Council
- Barnet Council
- Cardiff Council
- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Redbridge Council

## **Why Wokingham and Why Now?**

Putting children and young people at the heart of service development is a key priority for Children's Services and vital for the achievement of the Children's Services vision: "Wokingham is a borough in which all children and young people are safe and cared for, enjoy and achieve, are healthy and resilient, grow up ready for adulthood, and feel happy, hopeful and loved", and the Council Community Vision "A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business".

Wokingham is known as a thriving, wealthy and healthy borough, however this is not the lived experience of a small but significant proportion of children, young people and families for whom the differences in experience and life chances are stark.

Initial discussions with UNICEF in August last year focussed on these particular demographic challenges faced by Wokingham to narrow gaps in health and achievement, and how a partnership with UNICEF might support our work. UNICEF were positive about the difference our partnership could make and encouraged Wokingham to make an application to join the programme (only 2-3 councils are accepted onto the programme each year).

Children's Services in Wokingham are in a good place to engage with UNICEF and lead this high-profile partnership. An ambitious improvement programme is well underway, which will be enhanced by the support and insight UNICEF can offer. This, alongside a stable and experienced Children's Services leadership team and an increasingly stable, ambitious, and well-supported children's workforce, puts us in a perfect position to take this on now.

## **Councillor Involvement**

If accepted onto the programme the first phase will be one of discovery and planning with UNICEF's support. During this and the implementation phase, there will be many opportunities for councillors to engage in shaping plans, and in training provided by UNICEF specialists. Children and young people will, of course, be at the heart of the planning, and will work with us to co-produce the actions they want. The journey will be one of learning and innovation which will enhance Council, partner and community relationships with children and young people, and, if successful, transform the way children and young people are viewed in the borough.

## **Application Progress**

An intense period of work to shape the application to join the programme has been underway over the past 6-8 months. This has culminated in the final draft being submitted to UNICEF in the past two weeks. Once we have received final comments from UNICEF, we hope to submit the final application by the end of June and, if successful, begin work on the programme in September/October 2021.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

**The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.**

|                                   | How much will it Cost/ (Save) | Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall | Revenue or Capital? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Current Financial Year (Year 1)   | N/A                           | N/A   | N/A                 |
| Next Financial Year (Year 2)      | N/A                           | N/A   | N/A                 |
| Following Financial Year (Year 3) | N/A                           | N/A   | N/A                 |

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| <b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b> |
| None   |

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| <b>Cross-Council Implications</b> (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?) |
| N/A   |

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| <b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>   |
| Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required. |

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| <b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b> |
| N/A   |

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| <b>List of Background Papers</b> |
| N/A                              |

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