Title: Improving the Council’s Adoption Scorecard Performance: Draft Scrutiny Report

Report of the Commissioning Director, Education (Scrutiny Champion for the Children’s Services Select Committee)

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<th>Open Report</th>
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**Summary:**

The Children’s Services Select Committee (CSSC) has undertaken an in-depth scrutiny review of ‘Improving the Council’s Adoption Scorecard Performance’. Appended to this report is a draft scrutiny report, for members’ consideration.

Recommendations of the CSSC as an outcome of the scrutiny review are key to changes leading to improvements in the Adoption Service. The draft report contains the findings of the scrutiny review and possible recommendations, which members are asked to analyse and discuss in order to give direction to officers in producing the final version of the report.

**Recommendation(s)**

The CSSC is recommended to review the draft scrutiny report and recommendations and provide its comments on the report in order to give direction to officers in producing the final version of the report.

**Reason(s)**

The topic ‘Improving the Council’s Adoption Scorecard Performance’ relates to the Council’s priority to ‘enable social responsibility’ and the objective to ‘protect the most vulnerable, keeping adults and children healthy and safe’ and the priority to ‘encourage civic pride’ and the objective to ‘narrow the gap in attainment and realise high aspirations for every child’.
1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Every year each of the Council’s Select Committees agrees a work programme which lists the areas it wishes to scrutinise in the municipal year. As well as one-off agenda items, the work programme often includes a more-in-depth investigation into an area of concern that is relevant to the committee’s remit, which usually involves members attending sessions outside of the standard evening meetings scheduled for the year.

1.2 For 2016/17, having received an ‘options report’ providing information on the issues a scrutiny review would involve for three different areas, the CSSC agreed that Adoption would be the topic on which to undertake a scrutiny review, due to the Adoption Service’s performance, in relation to the government’s key adoption scorecard measures.

2. Proposal and Issues

2.1 The key issues that arose as part of this review are in the body of the draft scrutiny report at Appendix 1. Members are asked to consider the draft report and discuss its findings and the potential recommendations put forward. Members will wish to comment on the draft report and assess whether they are in line with their views arising from this review, and comment on whether there are any gaps which need to be addressed prior to the publication of the final version of the report. Members are asked to note that officers will continue to work on the layout, wording and overall presentation of the report between this meeting and the publication of the final version of the report towards the end of April 2017.

3. Title, Terms of Reference and Key issues explored in the report

3.1 The title of the Scrutiny Review is “Improving the Council’s Adoption Scorecard Performance” and the following four key questions form the Terms of Reference for the scrutiny review:

1. What is adoption and why is this a good outcome for some children in care?
2. Why is the Barking and Dagenham Adoption Scorecard performance off target and are officers taking the right action to address the issues?
3. How might the views and experience of those adopted and those who adopt help improve our practice?
4. How might the views and experience of others involved in the adoption process help improve our practice?

3.2 The key issues explored in the report are:

- Adoption as an outcome for children;
- The Service’s performance measured against the government’s adoption scorecard targets over the past five years;
- Processes within the service that impacted on historical performance and how the Adoption Action Plan has/is addressing these problems;
- The proportion of ‘harder to place’ children in the borough and the Service’s aim to continue family finding for children who are harder to place and the impact of this approach is having on the Service’s Adoption Scorecard performance; and
- The current cohort of children whom the Adoption Service has been notified of as potentially needing adoptive placements and how this will impact upon the Service’s future Scorecard performance.

4. **Next steps**

4.1 Officers will make changes to the scrutiny report as agreed by the Committee at the meeting and produce a final version of the report for consideration by the CSSC at its on meeting on 24 May 2017. After this, the decision maker will be asked to respond to the recommendations, develop an action plan to monitor the implementation of the recommendations, and present progress on the action plan to the Committee in approximately six months' time.

5. **Implications**

5.1 Legal and financial implications will be sought in relation to the final scrutiny report.

**Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

Final scoping report for this scrutiny review, available at:


**List of appendices:**

Appendix 1 Draft scrutiny review report on ‘Improving the Council’s Adoption Scorecard Performance’.