

County Council Meeting – 12 June 2012

CABINET MEMBER STATEMENT

On Monday 11 June we were proud to receive a visit from Tim Loughton, Cabinet Minister for Children. He joined us to launch Surrey's new and innovative saving scheme for our Looked after Children.

We know how important it is for all children and young people, especially those who have to overcome adversity, to have life experiences similar to their peers. Building on the basis of a stable place to live, living with people they can rely on, and consequently forming solid relationships, we want our young people to go on to live happy and productive adult lives.

We take very seriously our role as corporate parents, and want to support our young people to gain a wide range of life skills. This includes learning the value of money and the importance of saving, as well as the joy of celebration when they achieve and do well. We all share the common goal of wanting to improve the life chances of our Looked After Children. The role of Corporate Parenting is one that the Council and Members take very seriously indeed.

Tim Loughton's visit marks the beginning of the saving scheme for our children, and allows us to celebrate some of the good things that are happening through close work between the CPB and our children and young people, particularly the Children in Care Council who act as advocates on behalf of over 800 Looked after Children.

Looked After Children are amongst the most disadvantaged children and young people in the country, and this scheme will encourage sensible saving and developing personal financial skills in their planning for the future.

The Children in Care Council play a vital role in the work of the Corporate Parenting Board. Their contributions are invaluable and often very challenging.

A short while ago the Children in Care Council submitted an action card to the Corporate Parenting Board requesting support to help Looked after Children make long term savings for their future. I was very happy to champion the idea and suggested that the County Council could match fund the savings.

It required further work to identify the additional funding, as we are in a climate of budget reductions, and where efficiencies have to be made. But perseverance paid off, and with the support of the Leader, David Hodge, the funding stream was identified and the scheme secured Cabinet approval.

The savings Scheme is the first of its kind in the Country. We promise our Looked after Children that by the age of 12 we will have opened a current account or other savings account on their behalf.

- From April 2012 the Council will enhance the junior LAC ISA by matching funding savings each year up to a cap of £260 per annum.
- Likewise the Council will match funding savings made by LAC with a Child Trust Fund on the same basis as the Junior ISA.
- This will be complemented with an education support programme to be established through the Virtual School that will help teach our Looked after Children business skills and financial planning for their futures.

Additionally, I am delighted to announce that with the support of the Leader, I have secured agreement from all elected Members to donate £500 each from their local allowances to create a new Bursary and Celebration Fund. This will provide £40k per annum to be made available for the Bursary and Celebration Fund. I am very grateful to Members who have also carried forward funds from the last financial year.

Applications on behalf of our Looked after Children can be made to the Bursary fund, and we expect this to support our young people in a number of ways, e.g. purchasing specialist sports coaching, equipment, leisure activities including travel, a contribution towards the cost of driving lessons or single sponsorship events. Indeed, anything that assists in their personal development.

The Celebration Fund will also be used to support celebration events for our Looked after Children when we want to celebrate, congratulate and support our Looked after Children, as you would for your own children.

I want to thank all Members for the generosity in supporting the Bursary and Celebration Fund, and Members will be receiving invitations to events so I look forward to seeing many of you attending.

I want to thank the Children in Care Council for their very forward and intelligent thinking in asking for the Savings Scheme to be set up, and of course all the Members and officers who worked hard to make it a reality.

Mary Angell
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
12 June 2012