

**AGENDA ITEM: 6**      Page nos.13 – 15

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Meeting                                      Cabinet Resources Committee  
Date    10<sup>th</sup> February 2005  
**Subject**                                      **Capital Spend: Computers for Looked After Children**  
Report of                                        Cabinet Member for Children  
Summary                                        Request to release £63,000 from Capital Budget for purchase of computers for Looked After Children

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Officer Contributors                        Phil Morris, Divisional Manager, Listening to Children  
Status (public or exempt)                Public  
Wards affected                                N/A  
Enclosures                                    None  
For decision by                                The Committee  
Function of                                      Executive  
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in (if appropriate)                N/A

Contact for further information: Phil Morris (020 8359 4532)

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 That £63,000 be made available from the Capital budget 2004/5 for the purchase of computers for Looked After Children.**

## **2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

- 2.1 None.

## **3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1.1 The improvement of educational outcomes for Looked After Children is an objective within the Corporate Plan in supporting the vulnerable within our community.
- 3.1.2 The education of looked after children is a government priority – the new Children Act places a new legal duty on the Council to promote the educational achievement of Looked After children. As Corporate Parents, this is a high priority within this Council.
- 3.1.3 Improved Educational outcomes for Looked After Children are incorporated into current LPSA targets and are a high priority within the Children and Families and Education Services and comprise specific objectives within our Performance Management Plan.

## **4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 4.1.1 Looked After children have often had considerable disruption to their education, which entails them catching up once they are settled in stable placements. The provision of home computers and associated soft ware to these young people in their placements is an essential element in helping them regain ground educationally.
- 4.1.2 Failure to provide this support will result in lower educational achievement for the young people and also failure to meet our targets (including LPSAs) in respect of outcomes for Looked After Children.

## **5. FINANCIAL, STAFFING, ICT AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Following the introduction of the new capital finance regime from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has changed the way that Councils receive support for capital expenditure. Under the new system Barnet has been notified that it will receive Revenue Support Grant to finance the borrowing of £71,000 for Children's Services. This capital allocation is classified as "single capital pot" monies, so although the amount awarded is distributed using a similar basis to children's revenue funding and the guidance notes refer to this as the children's element of the single capital pot it is not ring fenced to Children's Services. (Notification was received via LASSL (2003) 9

## **6. LEGAL ISSUES**

- 6.1 None.

## **7. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS**

- 7.1 Constitution, Part 3, Section 3.6: Powers of cabinet Resources Committee – Capital and Revenue Finance.

## **8 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 8.1 Looked after children are children who are the subjects of legal orders or are accommodated by the Council.
- 8.2 Funding for computers for Looked After children was introduced as part of the Quality Protects initiative, which commenced in 1999. Separate funding through Quality Protects was provided to enable Local Authorities to purchase computers for Looked After Children to assist them with their homework as part of the overall objective to improve their educational outcomes.
- 8.3 Quality Protects funding ceased to be ring fenced on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004 after which the funding was incorporated into Local Authority mainstream budgets.
- 8.4 £71,000 Information and Communication Technology funding, intended for the purchase of computers and associated software for Looked After children in 2004/5 was incorporated into the Council Capital budget, although in previous years, this money had not been included in the capital programme as the funding was specific and ring-fenced.
- 8.5 From this budget in 2002 to 2003, we spent: £25,000 on computers (mostly laptops) for Care Leavers, and £25,000 on PC packages for young people still Looked After and/or foster placements. The standard PC package we purchase from Elonex costs £1,037 ex VAT. We spent just over £15,000 on CareZone, a soft ware package specifically designed for Looked After Children providing a range of on-line services to help them reach their potential. The remaining money was spent on miscellaneous items such as security equipment for the machines in the residential units, specialist software and/or peripherals (e.g. a MIDI interface for a young man with a particular interest in music), and additional service/upgrade costs for machines already installed. The machines do come with a three-year service contract and guarantee, but there have been instances where work has been
- 8.6 The cost breakdown for this year is roughly similar. Thus far, £48,000 has been committed. A further £15,000 is required to meet outstanding requests for computers and software for this year. A total of £63,000 is therefore requested for release this financial year.

## **9 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 None.

BS: PD  
BT: HG