

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET

14 MARCH 2023

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR, AND CORPORATE POLICY

#### FOSTERING FRIENDLY EMPLOYER POLICY

#### 1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of a new Fostering Friendly Employer Policy.

#### 2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy, and independent lives.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human, and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Fostering Network is the UK's leading fostering charity that champion fostering and seek to create vital change so that foster care is the very best it can be. As part of that, the Fostering Friendly programme has been developed to encourage employers to support fostering, and in particular, foster carers.
- 3.2 The Fostering Network has called for employers to become more fostering friendly and be recognised as a "Fostering Friendly Employer", to address national challenges around fostering, highlighted by Welsh Government through the Foster Wales work stream.

#### 4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The ambition of Foster Wales, the collaborative of all 22 local authority fostering services, is to increase the number of foster carers across Wales and encourage all local current and prospective foster carers to consider fostering with their local

authority team. This also supports the objective of encouraging more working people to become foster carers.

- 4.2 The Foster Friendly Policy, at **Appendix 1** supports this ambition and will help to “bust the myth” that individuals are not allowed to work if they become a foster carer. It will also support the council to become a fostering friendly employer, recognised for helping employees who are foster carers or who want to become foster carers.
- 4.3 The aim of this policy is to offer employees the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job, support employees who are already registered foster carers, and to encourage those who may be considering becoming a foster carer to take that step. By doing so, they will be supporting children and young people who are care experienced in their local communities, providing positive working role models, a stable and caring home and widening the pool of available foster carers.
- 4.4 The policy provisions include up to 5 days “foster carer” leave, which is in addition to other leave provisions, to support employees with the requirements that their role as foster carers can sometimes bring.
- 4.5 The approval of this policy will support the council to be recognised as a Fostering Friendly employer, and in that capacity can encourage other public sector employers and local businesses to do so.
- 4.6 Developed with the support of the Regional Development Manager for fostering across the Cwm Taf Region, this new policy also has the full support of recognised trade unions.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

- 5.1 The annual leave policy will be amended to reflect the leave entitlement within this policy.

## **6. Equality Act 2010 implications**

- 6.1 An initial EIA screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

## **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications**

- 7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver well-being outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

- **Long Term** – Becoming a fostering friendly employer will support current and prospective foster carers who work for the council to maintain employment alongside their caring responsibilities. This is intended over time to encourage

individuals to foster and to support the council's ambition to be an employer of choice

- **Prevention** – As stated above this policy will support the recruitment of foster carers by providing greater flexibility in employment. In addition, an increase in foster carers will promote greater placement stability and support them to live closer to home.
- **Integration** – The approval of this policy will support the council to be recognised as a Fostering Friendly employer. Further work will then be undertaken with other public sector employers and local businesses to encourage them to become foster friendly employers.
- **Collaboration** – This policy has been developed through collaboration between the Regional Development Manager for fostering across the Cwm Taf Region, and officers in Human Resources and Children's Services. Recognised trade union representatives have also contributed to the development of this new policy.
- **Involvement** – The foster friendly initiative has been developed by the Fostering Network and Foster Wales is supporting this approach across the 22 local authorities in Wales. Foster carers will be consulted on this at the forthcoming Information, Consultation and Engagement event.

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1 It is not possible to assess the financial impact as information is not available about the numbers of employees who are foster carers. There may be backfill costs for leave taken under this policy, in those service areas where working hours lost, such as for leave purposes, must be covered. This will need to be met from existing budgets but will be monitored.

## 9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- Approves the Fostering Friendly Employer Policy
  - Supports the council becoming a recognised Fostering Friendly employer.

**Kelly Watson**

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**Background documents:**

None