ADOPTION WEST: AGREEMENT TO BECOME PART OF A REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY (RAA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet Date</th>
<th>29 March 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children, young people and strategic commissioning</td>
<td>Cllr Paul McLain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Decision</td>
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| Main Consultees       | • Adoptees
                        • Adopters
                        • Birth families
                        • Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), GCC staff, other participating councils, Voluntary Adoption Agency and Adoption Support Agency Staff
                        • Health service commissioners and providers
                        • Adoption panel members
                        • Education services
                        • Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
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<th>Planned Dates</th>
<th><strong>Milestone</strong></th>
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<td></td>
<td>Detailed service design and preparation for workforce change process</td>
<td>Jan – Apr 2017</td>
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<td>Councils’ formal decisions about service model, budget and organisational structure</td>
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<td>Transition and change management</td>
<td>Dec – Apr 2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Implement new delivery model</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
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<tr>
<th>Divisional Councillor</th>
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| **Officer**           | Helen Price  
Tel. no. 01452 328484  
Email address [helen.price@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.price@gloucestershire.gov.uk) |

**Purpose of Report**

To seek approval for Gloucestershire County Council to join Adoption West; the proposed new Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) made up of the following Councils: Gloucestershire, Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire.

To seek approval to delegate to nominated officers the authority to complete the work required to bring the Adoption West RAA into place by the start of the next financial year.

**Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. agree to the establishment of the Adoption West Regional Adoption Agency a joint venture Council Company Limited by Guarantee in accordance with Option 2 of this Report;

2. delegate to the Commissioning Director, Children and Families, in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Strategic Commissioning, the Director for Strategic Finance and Head of Legal Services authority to finalise and complete the Member’s Agreement (including the Constitution), any necessary business and or financial plans and other necessary documentation and to take all necessary steps to create the Adoption West RAA by April 2018;

Upon the establishment of the Adoption West RAA:

3. award to Adoption West RAA a 2 year contract for the delivery of the adoption services with an estimated value of £726.4k; with the option to extend for a further year;

4. nominate the Commissioning Director, Children and Families, to be a member of the Board of Directors for Adoption West RAA.
| Reasons for recommendations | In line with recent government policy applicable to all councils, Gloucestershire is required to be part of a Regional Adoption Agency by 2020. To this end, Gloucestershire has been working with 5 other councils (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire) and a number of voluntary adoption agencies to create a regional arrangement. This arrangement offers the best opportunity for Gloucestershire to be fully involved in setting up a required RAA as well as enabling the County Council to comply with government requirements by 2020. |
| Resource Implications | The current annual budget which is in scope to transfer to the RAA is £726.4k. This excludes any one-off funding and grants received by the service and the net income received from other councils for Gloucestershire families adopting their children. |
1. Background

**National policy and expectations**

The development of Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) proposals is part of the government’s national regionalising adoption agenda as set out in ‘Regionalising Adoption’ (July 2015), and further developed in ‘Adoption; A Vision for Change’ (March 2016). The Education and Adoption Act 2016 contains a reserved power which allows the Secretary of State to require councils to transfer adoption services into regional arrangements. Adoption is seen by the government, as the best way to offer children who are unable to live with their birth parents, lasting family relationships that will offer them secure futures.

‘Regionalising Adoption’ requires councils to establish RAAs by the end of the Parliament in 2020 and invited expressions of interest from local partnerships. The paper included an emphasis on getting adoption/permanence right for harder to place children whilst ensuring adoption support is available and accessible to adoptive families.

The government expects to see voluntary adoption agencies actively included in regional arrangements, they are ‘particularly keen to consider models that have an element of cross-sector collaboration’. Although not explicit, there is an expectation that the final regional agency organisational form will go beyond a traditional council run service.

**Local response – Adoption South West**

In July 2016, Cabinet considered proposals for ‘Adoption West’, the RAA Gloucestershire has been part of, formed from six councils (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire) and six Voluntary Adoption Agencies/ Adoption Support Agencies. South Gloucestershire Council has been leading development work on behalf of the other councils. Cabinet agreed that these proposals should be progressed and for more formal consultation to take place. The current governance structure for Adoption West RAA developments is attached at Appendix 2. Gloucestershire is represented at all levels and on all groups. Directors and Lead Cabinet Members have been part of these discussions.

Cabinet considered the three options below for delivery models that were proposed for Adoption West:

- **Option1** - Hosted by a single Council on behalf of a number of Councils (Single Council)
- **Option 2** - Joint Venture between Councils – a new public sector owned entity (e.g. Council Company Limited by Guarantee)
- **Option 3** - Creation of a new VAA – possibly a joint venture (e.g. Flexibility for public & third sector ownership)

Cabinet concurred that Option 2 was the preferred option for the following reasons:

A corporate joint venture between the participating councils created a new entity which offers a neutral platform which affords all participating councils equal status within the arrangements.

The structure allowed governance arrangements to be straightforward with all partners represented on the Board of Directors. Gloucestershire has been, and continues to be fully involved with developments from the initial start at all levels and representation at all of the work streams.
It will be easier to establish a new identity and brand distinct from the member councils, providing a better platform to engage adopters, build trust and innovate while maintaining effective connections with council children services teams.

The procurement position was more favourable as certain exemptions are afforded if the RAA is council controlled and the RAA is wholly owned by the participating councils.

Innovation and growth would be better facilitated by this model. This may range from experimenting with new practice methodologies and trialling alternative evidence based practice models and programmes, through to embracing new technology and improving working practices.

Consultation

Cabinet agreed further consultation with key stakeholders in July 2016. Engagement and feedback from a broad range of stakeholders has shaped the design of Adoption West RAA. Survey responses from over 350 adoptive families have been considered, over 20 adopters have provided detailed input through face to face forums and working groups, 8 birth families have provided feedback. 154 Adopters continue to be involved through the Adopter voice programme.

Key focus areas for adopters include clarity of process and information sharing. Adopters consistently highlight the importance of support services to meet the needs of adoptive families and sustain placements. They identify possible benefits of regionally delivered adoption support services including greater flexibility and accessibility for services, learning and experience sharing, strengthened peer to peer support, and a range of more efficient delivery options. Adopters also highlighted that regionalisation could offer opportunities for increased adopter involvement in the assessment process, improved availability of training and a focus on adopter choice.

The ‘Adoptables’ peer network of adopted young people has engaged a small group to gather views on what works, what doesn’t work so well and how decision-makers can improve service, including how best to support adopted young people at school. This work will continue throughout the development stage of Adoption West RAA.

Birth families have highlighted barriers to accessing services, issues around contact, life story work and information sharing and potential opportunities for improved support for birth families.

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed this issue at its meeting on 9 March 2017. Committee members were pleased to note that the proposed governance structure of Adoption West retained the local connection and that the role of the elected member on the Adoption Panel remained. It was agreed that this approach did enable greater flexibility in the adoption process. However, members are concerned that the transition period did present a degree of risk, in particular related to the potential for delays in the adoption process.

National oversight by DFE

The Adoption West RAA plans were submitted to DfE in September 2015. Funding was agreed for resources to support the project. DfE continue to provide independent support and challenge to all plans and proposals, they release funding on a phased basis. The project is required to provide progress reports to the DfE on milestone delivery and
spending, subsequent phases of funding are contingent upon meeting DfE reporting and project gateway requirements. To date, Adoption West has met all DfE progress and milestone requirements.

2. Proposals for Adoption West

Governance arrangements

The participating councils will enter into a Members’ Agreement (Head of Terms attached at Appendix 4) which clearly sets out the purpose of the collaboration and assigns roles, liabilities and responsibilities to each of the participating councils. It will deal with governance and issues such as dispute resolution. In addition to the Members’ Agreement each of the participating councils will need to commission services from the RAA and this will require a further Commissioning Agreement to be entered into jointly between the participating councils and the corporate RAA or singularly between each participating council and the corporate RAA.

Each of the participating councils will have a role to play in the Board of Directors of the Corporate RAA. Statutory company directors are required to have the necessary skills and experience to carry out their duties effectively and to do so in good faith and in a way that would be most likely to promote the success of the Corporate RAA for the benefit of its members as a whole. Officers acting as statutory directors will receive detailed and appropriate training and support. (Diagram of proposed governance arrangements attached at Appendix 2).

Financial implications

Funding for the new RAA will be provided by the partner councils. The total budget based on amalgamated budgets for all councils is £2.6m. This overall total spend will remain the same. The budget in scope within Gloucestershire is £726.4k. Adoption West will take forward current service net income targets, income is generated by councils’ charging fees should another council or agency place children with their adopters. The national market for inter-agency placements could be unpredictable and may have been skewed in recent years by grant funding and other incentives potentially affecting performance. As such inter-agency placement income and expenditure will be monitored during 2017/18 to ensure the projected levels for future years remain realistic.

The commitment over the initial 2 year period will be £1.45 million. Over time the participating councils will move towards a more needs led formula to determine financial future contributions to Adoption West. When established, a regional arrangement will offer opportunities to deliver efficiencies alongside service improvements.

Budget and service delivery performance will be regularly reported to member councils as set out in the commissioning contract and reviewed with regard to council demand requirements. The level of risk related to demand fluctuations and operational performance is broadly comparable to the current level of risk for each member council. To mitigate potential exposure to demand fluctuations in other councils, tolerances will be defined within the Members’ Agreement and commissioning contract and reviewed as part of delivery performance.

Tax advice received suggests the new agency will benefit from similar VAT exemptions to councils due to being public sector controlled. VAT may be payable on procured organisational support service costs depending on the mechanism for securing these services and budget contingency has been identified to cover this potential additional cost.
Following analysis of service volumes and feedback from stakeholders Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Bristol have agreed to provide the regional hub office accommodation at no additional charge. This agreement is subject to the required space being limited to the existing footprint utilised by adoption services and reciprocal arrangements with councils that are not providing hub accommodation to allow staff to access office space on a flexible basis.

The level of working capital and terms under which it may be accessed will be defined in the agreement for approval by member councils’ heads of finance. Insurances will be subject to further specialist advice and will be confirmed in finalising the regional adoption agency budget.

Any potential redundancy liabilities as a result of moving to the new service will be estimated and considered with councils and proportionately shared as set out in the Members’ Agreement so as not to expose the new entity to an unaffordable level of risk.

**Proposed operational organisational and management arrangements**

The proposed organisation structure operating model has been developed in collaboration with current employees and stakeholders during the engagement and development phase. The model proposes 3 geographic hubs in Gloucester, Bristol and Trowbridge based on the current office locations of the largest adoption services within the region. (RAA organisational design diagram attached at Appendix 1) The hubs will be supplemented by home working and flexible access to office accommodation in the other councils to enable locality working and avoid unnecessary travel.

The management of the RAA will be headed by an executive director with overall responsibility for operations and strategic leadership and will be supported by hub managers that each hold responsibility for the consistent and effective embedding of a specific area of practice excellence. (Proposed organisational structure at Appendix 3).

**Human resource implications**

41 staff have been identified as affected by the establishment of the RAA. These are spread across the age bands; 83% are female and 17% male and none have declared a disability.

Initial advice has been taken regarding staffing implications relating to staff transfer and pensions. HR advisers from all councils meet regularly to consider staffing implications and will enact the detailed workforce change plans subject to councils approving proposals. A project officer will be appointed to support the collation of HR data and processes.

Those employees assigned to the relevant functions will transfer to the new agency under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) Regulations 2006 to the RAA as responsibility for the delivery of all aspects of the Adoption Services are transferred. A due diligence review of the T&Cs which currently apply to employees has been undertaken to identify what T&Cs the RAA would inherit on any TUPE transfer. The RAA will consider how the variety of terms would fit in with its structure of T&Cs and identify potential issues and/or conflicts which may arise.

**Pension arrangements**

The transferring employees who would transfer under TUPE from the council to the council owned agency are likely to be members of or entitled to join the LGPS. The council will be obliged to ensure that when their employment transfers to the council owned agency, appropriate 'pension protection' is provided for them. Discussions have started with each of
the three applicable LGPS Pension Funds (Avon Pension Fund, Gloucestershire Pension Fund and Wiltshire Pension Fund) regarding the RAA also participating in the LGPS to allow the transferring employees to continue with their membership or entitlement to join following the transfer. The actuaries of the applicable LGPS Pension Funds will continue to be consulted as to the basis of any such transfers.

Adoption Panel Arrangements
All the councils recognise that adoption panels are an important part of the adoption process. Outline proposals have been agreed to rationalise existing panel arrangements to ensure the process is as efficient as possible and resources are used most effectively on a regional basis. This involves changes to council and voluntary agency panels to combine resources and ensure administration, structures and timing reflect and support the outcomes to be achieved by regionalising adoption and permanence services. All existing panel members will be offered the opportunity to join proposed regional panels.

Special Guardianship
There are clear benefits to children and families in Adoption West providing functions relating to special guardianship. Special Guardianship enable wider family members to permanently care for children who are unable to remain with their birth parent. Government has strengthened policy in this area, seeking to ensure special guardians and the children they care for have similar support and services to adopters. Following thorough consideration of the scope and phasing of the services proposed to transfer, a number of risks and further considerations relating to special guardianship services have been identified. Consequently it is proposed that transfer of special guardianship services follow further analysis and collaborative work with a view to transfer services from 2019.

Health advice and provision
Initial engagement with NHS commissioners from the 6 Clinical Commissioning Groups has identified opportunities for more joined up working and also some challenges in terms of how the NHS arrangements will need to adapt to the changes. However, current commissioning cycles and the complexity of disaggregating adoption and permanence related health services from wider children’s services health provision may limit the potential for regional commissioning. Options are being discussed collaboratively to enable greater consistency of health provision across the region and to address the challenges identified. Processes will also be established to coordinate demand, and manage the administrative and financial implications of the changes for the health services.

Education services
Links have been established with the Virtual Schools in each council to include them in the planning process for the RAA. Virtual School head teachers are keenly aware of their responsibilities to children who are adopted, which is a recent increase in workload and expectations for their services. As with health provision there are potential opportunities for joined up working which could provide better co-ordinated and more timely education services to adopted children. Initial work is now underway to collate information across the six council Virtual Schools to better understand the current picture of educational provision and to identify opportunities to work together and develop joint processes. It is anticipated that there will be some cross council collaboration between the Virtual Schools, including the RAA, that will ensure more consistent services to children and adoptive parents, and make more effective use of available resources.
3. Options

**Option 1. To do nothing:** Gloucestershire is required by government to work towards becoming part of a RAA. The government position is clear, if councils do not participate in regional arrangements they may be directed to join existing or developing RAAs. The expectation that RAA’s are in place by 2020 means that doing nothing is not an option.

**Option 2. To proceed with the Adoption West plans as detailed and to consult on the proposals:** The work so far in developing the Adoption West RAA has accorded with government expectations. Officers from Gloucestershire have been fully involved in designing and developing arrangements. The proposals offer opportunities to improve adoption services for children and adopters in Gloucestershire.

**Option 3. To pursue an alternative regional adoption arrangement:** The arrangements for Adoption West make sense geographically, for children and prospective adopters. Other councils in parallel with the Adoption West councils have been developing their own regional arrangements; Gloucestershire has not been involved with these developments and so would be joining any arrangements at a late stage. This could mean that arrangements will not reflect Gloucestershire’s requirements or offer the same level of opportunity. Near neighbours include the West Midlands or Welsh councils. Wales has its own regional adoption arrangements which are already operational.

4. Risk Assessment

There are five main risks identified:

1. **Risk:** Gloucestershire currently has direct control over its adoption service; regionalisation has the potential to dilute this. **Mitigation:** Being closely involved in developing Adoption West offers some mitigation to this risk, joining other arrangements at a later date could compound this risk.

2. **Risk:** The development of an RAA separates adoption services from the social work teams which work with children. Services may become fragmented leading to delay for children. **Mitigation:** All participating councils are aware of this risk; engagement of social work teams for children is planned. Close monitoring of adoption delay and rates of adoption is now in place at national, regional and council level to closely track any changes. A hub will be located in Gloucester offering opportunities for continued, good communication with children and families services.

3. **Risk:** Disruption during the period of transition and managers/staff becoming focussed on the change process rather than service delivery may lead to delays in plans for children. Any change (including regionalisation) to the service risks a dip in performance. **Mitigation:** This risk can be managed by careful transition planning which enables staff to continue to focus on local priorities, adopters and children.

4. **Risk:** Adopters may lose confidence during the change process resulting in the potential for fractured relationships and breakdown in service delivery. **Mitigation:** Communications planning and involvement of adopters throughout the process using existing communication routes such as Adopter forums and newsletters. Service monitoring during transition to ensure no impact on service delivery.
5. **Risk:** Set up and running costs may be underestimated leading to unforeseen liabilities or deficits for partners and/or the new RAA. This is especially pertinent in relation to the current levels of income all participating adoption services currently generate by selling their services to other councils across the country. **Mitigation:** Financial analysis and modelling involving expert advice is included in the financial and transition plans. Sufficient time will be allocated to these activities and engagement of all partners in agreeing proposals to ensure estimates are understood by all and are as accurate as possible. Income targets for the RAA are in place and will be closely monitored to offer early warning of any issues.

5. **Officer Advice**

Officers advise proceeding with Option 2. Gloucestershire is required by recent government policy to be part of an RAA by 2020. This option offers the best opportunity to be fully involved with the development of an RAA. Gloucestershire officers have been fully involved in developments to-date at all levels and have shaped the options proposed. The location of a hub in Gloucester will support continued, good communication with local children and families services and high quality practice standards. Doing nothing is not an option. By not proceeding with Option 2, Gloucestershire risks being directed into arrangements over which it has had no influence or involvement. This could result in unforeseen liabilities and realisation of some of the risks described above.

6. **Equalities considerations**

The due regard statement indicates that Adoption West RAA could offer some opportunities to impact positively on some protected characteristics. The arrangements for TUPE transfer will need to take account of the predominately female workforce who are statistically more likely to have additional caring responsibilities. Likewise sensitivity in arrangements and future consultation methods will be required to engage the full range of adopters and adopted children and young people.

In Gloucestershire, the largest proportion of adopters are from the 30-40 age group and the majority of adopted children are aged 5 and under. Adoption West will seek to build on the good Gloucestershire practice which finds a larger number of older children adoptive families. Slightly more boys are adopted than girls which accords with national rates of adopted children and those in care.

The implementation plans specifically aim to ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are complied with and all public bodies involved in the project are subject to the public sector equality duties, as will the new organisation. The project will continue to consider how the equality duties will be actioned by the new organisation.

Overall, this work has the potential to significantly progress equality of opportunity and advance equality for all groups of vulnerable young people across the region through the identification of inequalities and clear action planning to address these, thus advancing equality of opportunity for all.
7. Timescales

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8. Performance follow up

The performance of the adoption service in Gloucestershire during the transitional period will be closely monitored. Adoption West RAA will be carefully monitored through regular contract monitoring once it is established. The arrangements, including frequency and areas of particular focus, for contract monitoring will be established by the participating councils and detailed in the contract with Adoption West and overseen by the Board. Implementation progress will continue to be monitored through the current governance arrangements.
Appendix 1 - Proposed RAA organisation design

Appendix 2 - Proposed RAA governance arrangements
Appendix 3 - Outline organisational structure

Appendix 4 – Heads of Terms

Adoption West Regional Adoption Agency

Heads of Terms

v.4 22.02.2017

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The parties to the proposed Adoption West Regional Adoption Agency ("RAA") are proposing a corporate joint venture between the local authorities which will operate as the RAA.

1.2 These heads of terms represent the key commercial terms for the RAA structure. The intention is that once agreed the Heads of Terms provide an agreed common basis for the detailed documentation to be prepared. These heads of terms are not exhaustive or intended to be legally binding and the parties only intend to be legally bound to one another when they enter into formal contracts for that purpose.

2 DOCUMENTATION

2.1 The RAA will be based around the following principal documentation:

   2.1.1 members' agreement;
   2.1.2 articles of association;
   2.1.3 commissioning agreement;
2.1.4 support services agreements;
2.1.5 facility agreement for working capital;
2.1.6 licences for access to premises.

3 MEMBERS’ AGREEMENT

3.1 The members’ agreement will set the rights of the authorities as members of the company and the obligations of the company to the authorities in their member capacity.

3.2 Each local authority member and the RAA will be required to sign up to the Members Agreement.1.

3.3 Any new member will be required to enter a deed of adherence agreeing to be subject to the Member’s Agreement)

3.4 The main terms will include:

3.4.1 **Board Composition** – the board will have a minimum number of [6] and a maximum of [12], including:

   (a) Each authority will have a right to appoint [1] director with the potential for multiple authorities to be represented by a single individual where agreed by all parties. Appointees from the authorities will be officers;

   (b) [1] VAA representative(s) appointed to the board;

   (c) [2] be executive directors on the board;

   (d) [1] front line staff representatives;

3.4.2 **Quorum** - The quorum for meetings will be [4] including all of the authority representatives.

3.4.3 **Remit of the Board** – the board will have the remit of implementing the business plan as approved by the owner authorities on an [annual basis] and will be required to refer any "reserved matter" back to the owner authorities for approval. Reserved matters will be articulated in the members’ agreement.

3.4.4 **Funding** – the financial requirements of the company will be met by the payments to the company under the commissioning agreement. The owning authorities will not be required to invest any equity into the company.

3.4.5 **Surplus** – any surplus generated will be retained within the company and invested into future services [or to reduce subsequent charges paid by the authorities to commission the services]. There is no scope for profit distribution from the company.

3.4.6 **Term and termination** – the members' agreement will be co-terminus with the commissioning agreement for each authority.

3.4.7 **Dispute Resolution** – in the event of a dispute on the terms of the members' agreement the dispute will be referred to the following escalation tiers:

   (a) Board of directors

   (b) Directors of Children Services of all authorities as representatives of the members

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1 It is not proposed that any VAA has a role as a member, i.e. owner of the company.
In the event the dispute is still not resolved it could be referred to mediation with agreement.

4 ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

4.1 The company will be a company limited by guarantee.

4.2 The articles will dovetail with the members’ agreement and be a document of public record. The presence of the members’ agreement means there will be less emphasis / importance associated with the articles.

5 COMMISSIONING AGREEMENT

5.1 Each of the six member local authorities will enter into a Commissioning Agreement with the RAA detailing the services commissioned to be delivered.

5.2 The main terms will include:

5.2.1 Services – the RAA will provide the services [as set out in a specification in the agreement] [and updated on an annual basis through the business plan]. [There will be no payment mechanism based on certain Key Performance Indicators].

Payment – each commissioning authority will pay for the provision of the services during the Term in advance in the following percentages set out in the Table below. These financial contributions will be in proportion to current spending on the services [as set out in a specification in the agreement]. Proportional contributions toward future costs based on current spend will be as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Bath &amp; North East Somerset</th>
<th>Bristol</th>
<th>Gloucestershire</th>
<th>North Somerset</th>
<th>South Gloucestershire</th>
<th>Wiltshire</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.73%</td>
<td>33.08%</td>
<td>19.47%</td>
<td>13.54%</td>
<td>6.42%</td>
<td>22.75%</td>
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5.2.2 Performance Monitoring – the RAA will report [monthly] [quarterly] against agreed information. [Key Performance Indicators will be monitored and reported against]. In the event of agreed level of non-performance the commissioning authority will be entitled to require a remediation plan by the RAA to address the non-performance.

5.2.3 Term and Termination – the agreement will be for an initial period of [3] years. There will be no option of voluntary termination within that period. There will be the right to terminate in the event of a material breach including failure to rectify non-performance within agreed parameters.

5.2.4 Employment and Pensions – staff will TUPE transfer as a result of the commissioning contract with LGPS pensions continuing. The RAA will agree to be an [admitted body] to the [3] pension fund[s] - Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire pension fund – for the purpose of allowing on-going membership of the LGPS. The legacy authorities will retain liability for all pension risk associated with individuals they employed up to the point of transfer.

5.2.5 Assets and Contracts – contracts related to the service [will be required to novate to the RAA].

5.2.6 Dispute Resolution – the same dispute resolution applicable to the members’ agreement will apply (see 3.4.7 above).

6 SUPPORT SERVICES
6.1 The following services will be provided to the RAA by the following authorities on a [cost recovery basis]:

6.1.1 ICT by [ ]
6.1.2 HR [and payroll] by [ ]
6.1.3 Finance by [ ]
6.1.4 Legal by [ ]

[...]

Signed for and on behalf of South Gloucestershire Council Date

Signed for and on behalf of Bath and North East Somerset Council Date

Signed for and on behalf of North Somerset Council Date

Signed for and on behalf of Bristol City Council Date

Signed for and on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council Date

Signed for and on behalf of Wiltshire Council Date
<table>
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<th>Report Title</th>
<th>Adoption West: Agreement to become part of a regional adoption agency (RAA)</th>
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| Statutory Authority | The Education and Adoption Act 2016  
Adoption and Children Act 2002 |
| Relevant County Council policy | Council Strategy priorities (2015-18):  
- Making a difference for the most vulnerable children, young people and adults.  
- Finding the best, most efficient way of delivering services.  
- Being there when needed most - reducing the length of episodes in are by helping children to find safe, secure homes through adoption, when they cannot be cared for by their birth families. |
| Resource Implications | The current budget which is in scope to transfer to the RAA is £726.4k. This excludes any one-off funding and grants received by the service and the net income received from other Local Authorities for Gloucestershire families adopting their children. |

**Sustainability checklist:**

<p>| Partnerships | This proposal seeks to develop a regional adoption agency through partnership working with the six councils. All relevant partners are included in consultation proposals. Some key partners such as the NHS are already part of arrangements |
| Decision Making and Involvement | Adopters are represented as part of the governance arrangements for Adoption West. The planned consultation seeks to involve a wider cohort of adopters and adopted children |
| Economy and Employment | Whilst there are no direct economic implications arising from this report or its recommendation, a thriving local market of voluntary adoption service providers is central to the development of the regional adoption agency and improved outcomes for service users. |
| Caring for people | Proposals accord with the council’s strategy priorities relating to caring for people. Specifically ‘Being there when needed most’ - reducing the length of episodes in are by helping children to find safe, secure homes through adoption, when they cannot be cared for by their birth families. |
| Social Value | Adopters provide safe, secure homes to children who need them. This long term commitment to becoming a family and providing lifelong support are reported to have significant |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Built Environment</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Environment’ including Ecology</td>
<td>The proposals are intended to provide sustainable long term solutions and environmental considerations will be factored into specific proposals relating to service delivery changes. There are no perceived explicitly environmental implications arising directly from this report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Biodiversity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Information</td>
<td>No immediate impact, some long term evidence in relation to children achieving better in education and employment in later life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling Climate Change</td>
<td>Carbon Emissions Implications? Positive/ Neutral/ Negative Vulnerable to climate change? Yes/ No/ Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Regard Statement</td>
<td>Has a Due Regard Statement been completed? Yes Yes - considerations included in main body of report. A copy of the full Due Regard Statement can be accessed on GLOSTEXT via <a href="http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1">http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1</a> Alternatively a hard copy is available for inspection from Jo Moore, Democratic Services Unit, e-mail: <a href="mailto:jo.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk">jo.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights Implications</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation Arrangements</td>
<td>As detailed in report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>