1. Purpose of report

1.1 To invite Panel to endorse the refreshed Hertfordshire Children Looked After Strategy for 2019-2022, attached as Appendix A to this report, following which it will be published on the Hertfordshire County Council external website.

2. Summary

2.1 The previous Hertfordshire’s Children Looked After Strategy (the Strategy) expired this year and as such as a refresh for the period 2019-2022 has been completed.

2.2 The Strategy presents a high-level strategic overview of the policies, projects and pieces of work underway across Children’s Services which all contribute to ensuring that the children that come into our care feel settled in their placements and supported to leave care when they are ready. For those children and young people who remain in long-term care we want to create a sense of belonging, emotional security and ambition to succeed.

2.3 The priorities in the Strategy are a response to what children and young people who are looked after by Hertfordshire have stated is important to them, as they are the best experts and Children’s Services value their experiences. All activities are aligned with Children’s Services Outcome Bees which provide a single-vision framework which allows us to measure our progress and see how well we are performing.
2.4 Alongside the Strategy is an internal-facing document which outlines the key performance measures and their source in to undertake an annual assessment of performance, if desired.

3. Recommendation

3.1 That the Cabinet Panel is asked to note, comment upon and endorse the content of Hertfordshire’s Children Looked After Strategy 2019-2022.

4. Background

4.1 The Strategy outlines our vision, priorities and work streams to support our looked after children and young people. The Strategy also outlines key pieces of work we are doing to ensure our looked after children and young people have the best possible chances in life, experience safe and positive parenting and are given every opportunity to achieve their potential.

4.2 The priorities in the Strategy are a response to what children and young people who are looked after have told Children’s Services is important to them. All activities are aligned with our Outcome Bees, developed in consultation with young people, facilitated by the Participation Team and Children in Care Council (CHICC) and Children’s Social Care Board, all of whom have expressed agreement and support for the refreshed strategy. The Strategy seeks to provide a single-vision framework which allows us to measure our progress and see how well we are meeting our targets.

4.3 Our vision is underpinned by the Children’s Services Strategic Plan 2018-2021 to give every child, young person and their family the opportunity to live happy and fulfilling lives. It also reflects the four ambitions of the Hertfordshire County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2025 which shapes the work of the whole County Council; Opportunity to live in thriving places; Opportunity to share in Hertfordshire’s prosperity; Opportunity for everyone to achieve their potential; and Opportunity to enjoy healthy and safe lives. Link to HCC Corporate Plan 2019-2025.

4.4 Children’s Services priorities are shaped by an understanding of our local needs in Hertfordshire and by national priorities. This understanding has helped to identify what the department’s key challenges are and will be, so that we can set out to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children looked after and care leavers. Some of the challenges currently faced in improving outcomes children looked after and care leavers include the recruitment of Foster Carers and the provision of placement choice.
5. Equality Implications

5.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.

5.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

5.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The ethnic profile of Hertfordshire children and young people March 2018

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<td>Pop. (all ages 0-17) Census 2011</td>
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<td>School Census (Jan 18)</td>
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<td>Referrals 2017-18</td>
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<td>Children in Need at 31 Mar 2018</td>
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<td>Children in care on 31 Mar 2018</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
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5.4 Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BME) account for around 17.2% of the total under 18 population in Hertfordshire and 21.9% of the school aged population (a 1.5 percentage point increase on March 2017 at
20.4%). This will be updated in August 2019 with 2018/19 data.

BME groups also account for:

- **28.4%** of referrals to social care *(an increase from 25.7% at March 2017)*;

- **28.1%** of Children in Need *(3.1 percentage points higher than March 2017 (25%))*;

- **22.6%** of children subject to child protection plans *(2 percentage points lower than March 2017 (24.6%)); and*

- **27%** of Children Looked After *(1.1 percentage points lower than in 2017 (28.1%)).*

5.5 More detailed information about the diversity profile of Hertfordshire is available through our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Community Profiles which can be found at [www.hertslis.org](http://www.hertslis.org).

5.6 The Strategy has been developed with consideration for the range of equality and diversity needs of all children looked after. Individual pieces of work and projects outlined within the Strategy will undertake EqIA as appropriate. Furthermore, the range of equality and diversity needs of all CLA are considered within all parts of Children’s Services.

5.7 There is no EqIA related to this report.

### 6 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no anticipated financial implications directly associated with publication of the strategy.

6.2 The latest approved 2019/20 budget for Children Looked After (CLA) is £46.7m. At Quarter one the forecast outturn expenditure is £51.2m, representing a £4.5m overspend.

6.3 During 2018/19 there was a £4.2m overspend against a latest approved budget of £44.5m.

6.4 In recent years the number of CLA in Hertfordshire has reduced significantly against an increase both nationally and with statistical neighbours. During the last five years the number of CLA in Hertfordshire under 10 has reduced by 157 whilst the number over 10 has increased by 52.

6.5 One outcome of the changing age profile of CLA has been an increased reliance on the use of more costly external placements in
order to meet more complex and acute needs. This is a significant factor in the overspend noted above.

6.6 A number of actions are underway to address this in parallel with the CLA Strategy, including reviewing options to increase sufficiency of local placements.

Background information

Appendix A – Hertfordshire Children Looked After Strategy 2019-2022
Children’s Services Strategic Plan 2018-2021
HCC Corporate Plan 2019-2025
www.hertslis.org