Report considered by Business Management Group – 2 June 2005

DEPENDENT CARERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

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1 Purpose

1.1 To consider amending the above scheme to include specific recommendations on the provision of childcare services.

1.2 To consider whether the level of the allowance paid should be increased to cover the true economic cost of professional childcare costs.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the wording of the Scheme be amended in accordance with best practice on childcare issues and that the current allowance be increased to match the current going rate for childcare in Milton Keynes – see Annex A.

2.2 That the Council be recommended that the 2005/06 Scheme of Allowances for Members (Annex B) also be amended to reflect these changes.

3 Issues and Choices

3.1 The current Dependent Carers' Allowance Scheme is based on the one used by the Local Government Association.

3.2 The Dependent Carers' Allowance Scheme was considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel as part of the 2003 review of allowances. The only recommendation made by the Panel was that the allowance should cover travel time to and from 'Approved Duties' as well as time spent undertaking the 'Approved Duty'.

3.3 Following representations from a Member of the Council about the legality of the current Scheme based on the fact that it did not specify that child carers should be registered, an investigation into the matter was undertaken.

3.3 Having discussed the matter with both the Council's Childcare Information Service and the Local Government Association, the conclusion is that although the scheme is not illegal as it stands (ultimately it is up to parents to make informed decisions about their childcare provision) as an example of best practice the scheme should make reference to qualified child carers.
4 Implications

4.1 Policy
None

4.2 Resources
The cost of childcare in Milton Keynes currently varies from £2.50 to £5.00 per hour. The 2005/06 Scheme of Allowances currently pays up to £4.96 per hour for Dependent Carers. The cost of increasing the allowance to £5.00 per hour would be negligible, but would be seen as a more realistic sum and in line with current charges in the Milton Keynes area.

4.3 Legal
None

Background Papers: Dependent Carers' Allowance Scheme
Scheme of Members' Allowances 2005/06