

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND,
ON TUESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 4.30PM

Present: -

Councillor A E Davies - Chairperson

Councillors

M E J Nott - Leader
D Sage - Deputy Leader
H J David - Cabinet Member - Resources
J C Spanswick - Cabinet Member - Communities
L C Morgan - Cabinet Member - Wellbeing

Invitees:

Councillors

M W Butcher
K S Hunt
R D Jenkins
K J Watts
M Thomas

Officers

H Anthony - Corporate Director - Children
A Phillips - Head of Property and Finance
L Harper - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
E Davies - Legal Services Manager
M A Galvin - Senior Cabinet and Committee Officer

Invitees

S Driscoll - Team Manager
V Watkins - Principal Officer Corporate Parenting
D Carter - Social Worker
C Deegan - Head of Housing Forum
Bridge

30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Officers:-

A Harris - Corporate Director - Wellbeing
M Shepherd - Head of Healthy Living

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

32 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting - Cabinet Committee dated 14 July 2009, be approved as a true and accurate record.

33 REPORT ON SAFEGUARDING REVIEWS OF:
1. BRIDGEND LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD
2. BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AS THEY AFFECT LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report which provided information to the Committee on the outcome of two national safeguarding reviews undertaken in Bridgend by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) in April 2009, where relevant to looked after children.

The Corporate Director - Children advised that whilst draft reports in respect of the reviews had now been formally received, amendments have been submitted and final reports have not been sent. Thus, they were not yet in the public domain.

In respect of the Review of Bridgend's Local Safeguarding Children Board, the report observed that the audit and evaluation sub group had had less capacity to meet in the last twelve months, due to the pressure of work that had resulted from the large number of serious case reviews generated by the number of unexplained deaths/suicides. This had inhibited progress in carrying out the work plan.

The report however added that the above crisis had brought agencies and partners closer together in working to deal with issues such as media attention and a high volume of serious case reviews.

The report also, the Corporate Director - Children added, confirmed that the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson it was considered, had a clear vision and strategy for the development of the LSCB and were realistic regarding challenges that require to be met in order to implement proposed plans.

In relation to the Review of Children's Safeguarding Arrangements in BCBC, this involved the CSSIW looking closely at the more operational services and shortcomings that the Authority were aware of, arising from the Serious Concerns Protocol.

The second paragraph of 4.3 of the report highlighted that the report was complimentary of the Council's comprehensive procedures, training provision, risk assessment and risk management and the new quality assurance framework in terms of benefiting the LAC population.

Finally, the report was praiseworthy of the establishment of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee which they deemed to be a strength, with its "ambitious programme to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, being driven by a lead Member".

The Committee commended the reports, particularly in their relation to providing more positive robustness to the support of Looked after Children.

The Chairperson concluded by giving her appreciation to the commitment and involvement of all the Committee invitees.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the information contained within the report, where it is relevant to Looked after Children.

34 RESIDENTIAL REVIEW OPTIONS PAPER

The Corporate Director - Children presented a report for discussion, in relation to the outcome of the first phase of a review of in-house residential care for looked after children, with a view to reshaping the service to meet the needs of local children within Bridgend.

The report also set out some options for consideration, and recommended that Officers undertake further analysis and feasibility work in relation to the proposed options. It would also be necessary to consider options for the future management of provision.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support referred those present to Appendix 1 of the report, which contained the Draft Residential Services Review report, which considered a number of possible options for redesigning current provision, so that it better meets the needs of our looked after children in the context of added value, both in the quality of provision and more efficient use of resources, bringing financial savings as well as creating better outcomes for children and young people within the County Borough.

Prior to examining the provisions of Appendix 1, the report advised that the previous 'Creative Exchanges' report (in 2007), outlined how the Service should realign its budget, reducing the number of children in care and re-investing in early intervention to prevent family breakdown.

The report confirmed that Bridgend currently had fourteen places in in-house residential care and sixteen children placed in residential establishments outside the Authority, which was a high total number compared to other authorities.

Some of these children also had either complex disabilities that only specialist services could provide with others having emotional and behavioural difficulties excluding them from mainstream education and being cared for from within their immediate families.

There were difficulties therefore catering for these children locally, and this was reinforced by the fact that the review revealed that the children did not want to be in placements which may be some distance from where their family home was, as opportunities for regular contact to be maintained was then limited.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support then outlined for Members the main provisions of the Draft Residential Services Review report, which covered introduction and context, the project team members, the review methodology (which covered key documents and data, interviews and discussions and completed questionnaires all undertaken as part of the Review) the review findings, details of the consultation exercise conducted as part of the review process, the options put forward for models of provision (i.e. Option Numbers 1 – 4) and the report conclusions.

Arising from the four options that had been put forward from the Review, the preferred option was Option 1, which if pursued would retain existing units but change their statements of purpose to deliver provisions for:

- A short term emergency and assessment facility
- Challenging behaviour with a dedicated education and therapeutic resource
- 16 plus transition and support

There would also be an added saving from Option 1, in that some children and young people in out of County placements could be brought back and/or not be sent there initially, should existing units be realigned and reconfigured to tend to each of their specific needs.

Members stressed the need for good assessment, as this was fundamental to all subsequent decisions. They also raised a question over whether Broadband facilities are generally made available in homes. Officers responded by stating that they would pursue this point and respond to Members accordingly.

The Cabinet Member - Resources advised that he would look into the cost for the supply of this facility, if it did not exist within Homes.

A question was also raised from the floor as to what evidence there was as to how many young people want substitute families or prefer to opt for residential care, and the impact this would have on long term placements, i.e. is there the potential to meeting long term demands.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that she would look into this point further and come back to Members accordingly.

The consensus of opinion in the meeting, was that it was acknowledged that young people wanted to stay within the Bridgend County Borough and at the moment there was difficulty in providing this, resulting in out of County placements.

The opportunity to help change this was included within Option 1 of the report and Members unanimously considered that this was the option that needed to be pursued further, whilst appreciating that Options 1, 2 and 3 would be subject to further financial analysis and investigation.

It was about, Members added, taking advantage of the staff we currently have and expanding their skills so that they are able to provide a more specialised service to allow the required changes to be realised.

- RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting:
- (1) Receive the Residential Review report shown at Appendix 1 to the covering report.
 - (2) Agree that Option 1 within the report be put forward as the preferred option for the Authority to pursue further.
 - (3) Agree to receive further reports on the detailed analysis and feasibility work on the preferred Option 1 and to consider the management arrangements for such provision.

35 PROGRESS ON DEVELOPING A CORPORATE WORK EXPERIENCE SCHEME

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report that updated the Committee on progress and provided further information in relation to corporate schemes for work experience and apprenticeships for care leavers.

The report advised that, as corporate parents, the Authority could use its resources to support care leavers to gain work experience and apprenticeships, with the Committee's Forward Work Programme placing emphasis on the need to support care leavers into further education, employment or training.

Whilst the Authority had existing schemes in place for young people at school with regard to work experience opportunities, none of these existing schemes explicitly supported looked after children and young people and care leavers.

The report then advised in Paragraph 4.1, that the Authority was currently piloting an apprenticeship scheme in Building Services, with such scheme also taking into consideration the authority's corporate parenting role, following meeting with Officers from the Aftercare Team.

The Transformation and Development Manager explained for the benefit of those present, that apprenticeships and work experience placements were entirely different, and that there was obviously a cost funding issue with introducing apprenticeships which required to be explored further at management level.

Work experience was an internal protocol which had no cost implications (Appendix 1 referred) and in relation to care leavers, representation had now been established from each Directorate to take work experience placements forward for children leaving care.

Further information regarding apprenticeship schemes would be submitted to the Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting, following a meeting between appropriate Officers and Members of this Authority and Rhondda Cynon Taff, where a scheme was already in place.

The Cabinet Member - Resources considered that Committee proactively supports looked after children in terms of work experience placement in the Authority.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting notes the progress made to date and endorse the need for further progress towards placing looked after children in years 10 and 11 at school, and care leavers, in suitable work experience situations.

(2) That applications for Looked after Children for work experience placements be prioritised in view of the Authority's role as a Corporate Parent.

36 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION AND THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2010

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report for the Committee to consider:

- Items for consideration at future meetings;

- Plans, policies and strategies for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period 1 January 2010 to 30 April 2010, to be published in accordance with the Constitution.

Appendix 1 to the report identified topics it wishes to consider at its future meetings, to be regarded as Informal Work Programme items, which are not issues such as plans, policies and strategies.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that proposals to be included within the FWP would be shared with the Committee at its next meeting.

She then expanded upon some further items that could be included in the Informal Work Programme at future meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee - Corporate Parenting:

- (1) Identify plans, policies and strategies for inclusion in its Forward Work Programme for the period 1 January 2010 to 30 April 2010, the Programme to require finalising and approval at the Committee's meeting scheduled for the 3 November 2009.
- (2) Review its Informal Forward Work Programme as referred to in Appendix 1 of the report, and identifies further topics for consideration, for example the role of the Corporate Parenting Officer; Rota Visits; Performance Information including looked after children performance indicators, feedback on the number of Social Workers employed by the Authority including their methods of training, and educational outcomes for children.

The meeting closed at 5.40pm.