

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE  
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND,  
ON TUESDAY, 22 JUNE 2010 AT 4.30PM

Present: -

Councillor A E Davies - Chairperson

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

Invitees -

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

Officers

H Anthony - Corporate Director - Children  
P Williams - Human Resources Officer  
V Watkins - Principal Officer Corporate Parenting  
V Jones - Group Manager, Service Provision  
N Echanis - Principal Officer, Accommodation  
L Mumford - Legal Officer  
C Branford - Cabinet and Committee Officer

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members for the reasons stated:

L Fradd - Annual Leave  
L Harper - Other Council business  
M Shepherd - Prior Commitment

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

54 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2009, were approved as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendment:

In minute number 51, the word 'politics' in point 3 of the resolution be amended to 'policies'.

55 RESIDENTIAL REVIEW REPORT: SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT

The Corporate Director - Children introduced a report the purpose of which was to seek approval for the implementation of the Residential Services Review as amended by the feasibility study report attached as Appendix 1.

She explained that there had been some changes since the previous report was presented to the Committee on 15 September 2009. The original intention had been to retain the three children's residential homes in the Borough but since that time it had been agreed to amend the proposal and to retain only two of the facilities. The benefits of reconfiguring residential provision in this way included increased savings which could then be invested in prevention and family support services.

The Principal Officer - Accommodation introduced herself to the Committee and explained that she had joined the Authority in January. She had been primarily involved in desktop research which had revealed that Bridgend had very good services for Looked after Children delivered for a good price which the Council could justifiably be proud of. What had also been revealed, however, was that Bridgend had an overly large residential provision for its population size.

The proposed complex needs unit could be achieved with minimal investment as staff profiling had revealed that there was already a broad skills base amongst existing residential staff which was not being fully utilised. The proposed 16 plus transition unit was a vital aspect of Bridgend's residential provision. All the research work undertaken suggested that a third residential unit was not required for a local authority the size of Bridgend.

A problem identified within Bridgend was the fact that emergency provision tended to be used as a first option. It was proposed therefore to close one unit and spot purchase emergency provision as was normal practice in the majority of local authorities.

The Corporate Director - Children added that it had not been decided which home would be closed and an analysis of advantages and disadvantages of each site relative to the proposals needed to be undertaken as well as a capital value assessment. The proposal would result in savings over the long-term and it was intended to keep out of county placements for those with complex needs to a minimum. The Group Manager, Service Provision explained that there would always be some cases where in-house provision could not fulfil the needs of a child, in cases where a child had physical disabilities for example.

The Principal Officer, Accommodation explained that BCBC was trialling a new arrangement for fostering whereby it had joined a group of ten local authorities who would work together to provide foster care. The arrangement would be less costly than using the private sector and could hopefully be extended to residential provision also.

Some Members expressed concern about the proposed closure of a home and advised that when they had recently met some young care leavers they had told them how happy they were in their residential home.

The Principal Officer - Accommodation agreed that Bridgend provided very good residential provision and would continue to do so but with reduced capacity. At present places were not filled. The Chairperson explained that the service would

not be removed and those who needed residential care would not be prevented from obtaining it. The Cabinet Member - Wellbeing explained that Members had only met a small proportion of the 290 children in the care system and the views they had expressed were not necessarily representative. The children themselves did not always appreciate what arrangements best met their needs.

The Corporate Director - Children advised that it was important to look at residential provision as part of a range of provision and appreciate the necessity for a greater focus on support and prevention. There was a small residential provision at Heronsbridge School which could be made use of. It was important that all resources available to the Council were used flexibly.

The Chairperson emphasised the importance of Bridgend providing the best service it possibly could to its looked after children with any resultant savings being seen as a bonus.

The Chairperson proposed an amendment to the recommendations which was accepted by all the Cabinet Members.

**RESOLVED:** The Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee:

- (1) Approved in principle the proposal that Bridgend's residential provision for looked after children is reconfigured to create a complex needs unit and a transition unit, with closure of a third unit, redeploying staff where appropriate to strengthen the reconfigured units and the family support service;
- (2) Determined that the matter be referred to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration following which a further report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee;
- (3) Noted that implementation will be managed as a project as part of the corporate Supporting Vulnerable Children programme.

56 **PERFORMANCE DATA FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**RESOLVED:** That Committee agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

The Chairperson thanked the Officers for answering the Committee's questions and reminded Members about the training session on Corporate Parenting taking place on 29 June to which all elected Members were invited.

The meeting closed at 5.27pm.