

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND,
ON TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2011 AT 4.40PM.

Present:

Councillor L C Morgan – In the Chair

Councillor M E J Nott - Leader
Councillor H J David - Cabinet Member - Resources
Councillor J C Spanswick - Cabinet Member - Communities

Invitees:

Councillor K R T Deere
Councillor K S Hunt
Councillor M Thomas

Officers:

H Anthony - Corporate Director - Children
C Turner - Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
A Phillips - Section 151 Officer
S Pryce - Head of Regeneration and Development
K Williams - Team Manager – Adoption
S Hughes - Legal Officer
C Branford - Democratic Services Officer - Committees

81 ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

Councillor L C Morgan was elected as Chairperson for this meeting.

82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Councillor A E Davies (Chairperson) - Personal reasons
Councillor D Sage - Personal reasons
Councillor K Watts - Prior Engagement

83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

84 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2010
be approved as a true and accurate record.

85 SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
RESIDENTIAL RE-DESIGN

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support introduced a report the purpose of which was to update the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee on the progress of the residential re-design project.

He explained that the independent report commissioned in May 2007 had recommended that residential provision for children be reviewed, and that consideration be given to re-aligning services and resources to increase family support services as part of the prevention and early intervention agenda.

In June 2010 the Cabinet Committee had accepted the findings of a feasibility study which concluded that the emergency/assessment facility originally proposed was not needed but that it was necessary to re-design the current residential provision to provide a complex needs unit and a transition unit.

The proposal to decommission the Children's Home at Maesteg had been approved by Cabinet in January 2011. Although staff were aware of the need to reduce the number of homes from 3 to 2 it was unfortunate that final proposals on location had not been properly communicated to the staff until after the Cabinet meeting. In order to rectify this error, he had met with the Managers in order to brief them, and had then met with the whole staff group. He apologised to the Cabinet Committee for this situation. He emphasised that the decision to decommission the home would not involve redundancies but instead the staff would be re-deployed to the two new units or could apply for other vacancies within the service area. The staff involved had been in agreement with the changes that Cabinet had decided to make to children's residential provision but had had concerns about the way in which the decision was communicated to them. Steps had been taken to ensure that the communication failure was not repeated.

He emphasised that the welfare of Looked After Children was paramount in any decision made. There were currently three children in the Maesteg Children's Home, one of whom was signed up to take nine GCSEs which was a significant achievement for that person. As would be normal practice, plans would be drawn up, in consultation with each of the young people, to help them move forwards and towards independence when appropriate.

Regular meetings of the cross-directorate project team chaired by the Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support had been held since its establishment in September 2010. The team had input from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS).

Members sought assurance that the savings referred to in the report could be achieved within the target period.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised the Cabinet Committee that he was confident that the savings would be achieved.

Members asked if an alternative use for the Maesteg Children's Home had been explored such as the provision of accommodation for homeless people.

The Corporate Director - Children explained that once an asset belonging to the Council had been declared surplus to requirements it would automatically be allocated to the Property Department who would consider other possible uses for the site. In the case of the Maesteg property, BCBC also owned the adjacent piece of land so making it an attractive proposition for buyers. The home at

Maesteg was also small in comparison with Pant Morfa in Porthcawl and Cartrefle in Bridgend.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that discussions would be held with the Head of Regeneration and Development on the possibility of using of the decommissioned home as accommodation for homeless people.

Members welcomed the decision to retain the Pant Morfa Children's Home in Porthcawl as it was well run and had good relations with the local PCSOs and Police.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet-Committee:

 Noted the progress with the residential re-design project;

 Considered the draft service specifications attached as appendices 1 and 2.

86 STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE FOR FOSTERING, ADOPTION AND CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report the purpose of which was to seek approval of the reviewed Statements of Purpose for the following service areas:

- Cartrefle Children's Home
- Maesteg Community Home
- Pant Morfa Children's Home
- Baker's Way Short Break Service
- Adoption Services
- Fostering Services

He explained that the service was required by regulations to produce annual Statements of Purpose for the Cabinet Committee to ratify. Six up to date Statements were attached for the Committee to approve today, and these included information on staffing ratios, qualifications and credentials.

With reference to Cartrefle Children's Home, the Cabinet Member - Communities asked if it was possible to provide wireless internet access in the children's rooms.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that wireless internet access was not provided because although BCBC wanted to promote the use of new technology by Looked After Children they also needed to restrict their access to it to ensure that they did not develop an addiction to the internet or view inappropriate content. The possibility of providing training for the young people on internet safety skills was being explored.

The Cabinet Member - Resources asked if there were any plans to refurbish the facilities which the Council intended to retain.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that despite the financial restraints on the service some improvements, such as renewing the decor would be undertaken in the homes. The children themselves would be

encouraged to have an input in the decisions made such as choosing a paint colour for example.

RESOLVED: The Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee approved the revised individual 'Statement of Purpose' for the named service areas referred to, as appended to the report.

87 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORK PLACEMENTS AND TRAINEESHIP ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER OR WERE FORMERLY LOOKED AFTER

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support introduced a report the purpose of which was to provide a progress report on the Council's work placement, traineeship and apprenticeship schemes. He welcomed the Adoption Services Manager to the meeting and explained that she had recently accepted additional responsibility for corporate parenting and had been tasked with facilitating schemes in relation to work experience, training and apprenticeships for Looked After Children. He advised that in her role as Adoption Services Manager she had always worked diligently to secure the best outcomes for Looked After Children by ensuring permanency planning was in place for each child, and he was sure that she would bring the same diligence to her new corporate parenting role.

The Chairperson welcomed the Adoption Manager to the meeting and echoed the comments of the Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support.

The Adoption Services Manager thanked the Cabinet Committee for allowing her the opportunity to present an update report on the progress of the Council's work placement, traineeship and apprenticeship schemes. She explained that there had been some difficulties in progressing the schemes in the last twelve months due to the limitations of the management information system. However, the new management information system had been used to screen all potentially eligible young people (115) for suitability, and when those already in employment, education and training were removed 48 remained. The fact that 60% were already in education or training was very positive. The remaining 48 were further screened to remove anyone not able to engage at the time for various reasons such as being a full time parent, drug dependent or in custody.

Last August, the Council had successfully bid for a further opportunity for young people; the Best Chance Programme was a structured holistic activity which would operate alongside the local authority to identify young people suitable for placement with local businesses. Following completion of the two week programme the young people would then be considered for one of the three local authority schemes. Six young people had been deemed eligible for the Best Chance Programme.

One young person had been successful in securing the traineeship position and had commenced her post in January. Three young people had successfully engaged in work experience placements following which they had been considered for other opportunities. Work experience opportunities were still available but young peoples' skills needed to be matched to these opportunities. One apprenticeship was still available within the Parks and Leisure Section and it was hoped that the placement could be filled by someone already engaged on a work experience opportunity.

The Cabinet Member - Communities questioned why the apprenticeship opportunity was limited to one placement.

The Adoption Manager advised that one placement would be trialled initially and if any issues were highlighted these could be dealt with before further apprenticeships were offered. She added that it had taken some months to arrange the apprenticeship opportunity and unfortunately the young person who had commenced the apprenticeship had had to withdraw.

The Head of Regeneration and Development expressed concern that some of the young people had been deemed unable to engage at this time for a number of possible reasons including drug dependency. She suggested that any such problems should have been addressed whilst the young person was looked after by the local authority.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that pathway plans were now in place for all Looked After Children, and the local authorities had a duty to support Looked After Children through education up to the age of 21. An aftercare team of skilled workers had been established, and performance indicators were reported to Cabinet on how the service was engaging with its former Looked After Children. A co-ordinated inter-agency response was necessary to resolve problems such as drug dependency.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee noted the report and the progress made with regard to the creation of work placement opportunities within the Local Authority for young people who are, or have been in the care of this Authority.

88 INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report the purpose of which was to seek approval for the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme for the period February 2011 - April 2011.

The Cabinet Member - Resources sought clarification that an item on housing opportunities for care leavers had been included on the Informal Forward Work Programme.

The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that this was included within Item 5, Care Leavers and Post 16 Arrangements including Housing.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee:

- (i) Approved the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme;
- (ii) Considered whether it wished to propose any other items for inclusion in the proposed Informal Forward Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 5.20pm.

