

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND,
ON TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2009 AT 3.55PM

Present: -

Councillor A E Davies - Chairperson

Councillors

M E J Nott - 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
M Thomas
K J Watts

Officers

L Harper - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
M Shepherd - Head of Healthy Living
L Mumford - Legal Officer
P Williams - Human Resources
V Watkins - Principal Officer Corporate Parenting
M A Galvin - Senior Cabinet and Committee Officer

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members/Officers:-

Councillor D Sage - Other Council Business
S Pryce - Other Council Business
H Anthony - Annual Leave
S Kingsbury - Other Council business

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

39 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting -
Cabinet Committee held on 15 September 2009, be
approved as a true and accurate record.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, referred Members to Minute 33 of
the last meeting, and advised the Committee that both the National Safeguarding

reviews and the one in respect of each individual local authority had recently been concluded and published.

In relation to Minute 34 of the meeting, the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that Broadband facilities were available in all care homes with the exception of Cartrefle. She advised that the facility would soon be made available at this home also, at a cost of £150.00.

40 ROLE OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING OFFICER - CORPORATE PARENTING TRAINING

The Corporate Director - Children submitted a report, which informed of the role of the Corporate Parenting Principal Officer, as well as seeking agreement for Bridgend County Borough Council's corporate parenting training programme to be delivered to the said Committee.

The report advised of the statutory duty for all eleven authorities to ensure that every child and young person in their care are provided with opportunities to reach their full potential, under various areas of legislation outlined in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

The report advised that WAG and partnership within WLGA, had recently updated and published 'If this were my Child'. A requirement of this, was that Members and relevant officers be supported through training, in order that they have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities in order that they can effectively exercise their role as corporate parents. To assist in supporting the above, a post of Principal Officer Corporate Parenting had been created in the Children's Directorate and the main responsibilities and activities of this post were shown in Paragraph 3.5 of the report.

To assist in driving this forward, the WLGA had drafted a training programme to provide practical guidance on how Members should discharge their duties and responsibilities as Corporate Parents, and devise thoughts and ideas for future development in this area which would cascade through all Members, particularly Scrutiny and the Executive, rather than only the Members that support the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee.

The Principal Officer Corporate Parenting advised that she would undertake the training together with an Officer from the WLGA so as to finalise the training module.

Thereafter, the Principal Officer Corporate Parenting would give refresher training annually to keep Members up to speed with legislation, regulations and practice regarding supporting the needs of Looked After Children.

The training initiative would cover categories such as,

- (a) What all Councillors should know
- (b) Key responsibilities for a corporate parent, and
- (c) Key questions for Scrutiny

A question was raised as to whether bullet point four of Paragraph 3.5, 'developing and overseeing an independent visitor's scheme related to Members visits.

The Principal Officer Cabinet Committee confirmed that this was not a Member function.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support clarified that the bullet points outlined in Paragraph 3.5 were the areas that the Principal Officer Cabinet Committee would cover with the aid of partnership working with key organisations such as the WLGA and other associated partners.

She added that her role would be to support Members and appropriate staff in providing quality and performance as well as development and practice in the provision of Corporate Parenting.

Members considered that the training session should cover two different days, and at alternative times of the day, in order that all Councillors had the opportunity to attend, including those who were in employment.

It was added that input from and engagement with Looked after Children and other Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee invitees would be advantageous as support to the training.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that the Chairperson of the Committee had recently been engaging with Looked After Children young people on a number of issues and the findings from these types of meetings could be fed back to the Committee.

Support and the flow of relevant information would also be provided from a working group of the After Care Team.

Members then paid tribute to the recent events held in the Council Chamber in respect of the Looked After Children Education Awards and the launch of the Corporate Parenting Policy Statement, where initiatives such as work experience and apprenticeships were in the process of being developed by the Authority, to include one apprenticeship every two years for care leavers after an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

The Corporate Parenting Principal Officer advised that she would be engaging with officers from Rhondda Cynon Taff who recently gave a presentation at the launch of the Corporate Parenting Policy Statement, so as to obtain knowledge in relation to the promotion of key issues surrounding Looked After Children and in turn then link with Human Resources and this Committee in a bid to take issues such as apprenticeships further forward.

Invitees of the Committee also advised that information emanating from the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee was being shared with Overview and Scrutiny Committees in an attempt to secure the engagement of all Members in the support of Corporate Parenting.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support concluded by stating that though other neighbourhood authorities had Advisory Boards in place, very few authorities had up to now formed a Corporate Parenting Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the role of the Corporate Parenting Principal Officer and agrees the proposal for the committee Members' training as part of a pilot programme

with the WLGA and thereafter for such training to take place on an annual basis in house.

41 QUALIFICATIONS ACHIEVED BY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2008/2009

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report, which informed the Committee as to the progress made over the last three years in relation to qualifications achieved by looked after children who have reached the age of 16 years, with particular reference to year 2008/09.

The report advised that it was important that looked after children are encouraged in terms of educational attainment, and that in Bridgend, the LACE (Looked After Children in Education) team supports schools to maintain looked after children in the most appropriate setting, and also works with school staff to target support to looked after children through personal education plans (PEP's).

Appendix 1 to the report outlined GCSE grades, together with attainments from other qualifications/courses by looked after children for 2008/09, and Paragraph 4.1 of the report gave details of comparable information in relation to this in recent years.

Appendix 2 of the report confirmed that looked after young people in Bridgend leaving school without qualifications amounted to 14% in the current year, compared with 29% in 2008 and 57% in 2007.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, advised that there were a range of other qualifications that looked after children had obtained outside the vocational category illustrated in the report.

The Principal Officer Corporate Parenting updated the Committee by confirming that the one young person identified as having left school with no qualifications of any kind this year, did not in fact sit the examinations for medical reasons, however, this individual would be taking these now in November 2009.

The report advised that the improved outcomes so detailed may partly be attributed to the additional RAISE (who develop literacy improvement in young people) WAG grant and the work of the RAISE Co-ordinator, who supported Key Stage 4 looked after children in a bid for them to achieve greater educational outcomes.

She added that whilst there were currently resources inclusive of grant aid, to support these young people in attaining vocational qualifications, the funding of these would become exhausted by September 2011, by which time it was hoped to secure such funding via alternative methods.

The Principal Officer Corporate Parenting confirmed that a recent Wales Audit Office study on educational outcomes for looked after children, had concluded that Bridgend's self assessment was accurate across all dimensions, and that notwithstanding this, an Action Plan would still be developed to progress areas of practice that require improvement.

The report on the study as well as the Action Plan would be presented to the Committee when they were finalised.

Members considered that it may be a good suggestion to compare the information outlined in the report with other local authorities for benchmarking purposes.

An Invitee of the Committee advised that the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, had recently formed a School Performance in Secondary Schools Research and Evaluation Panel, whose work among others would be arranging for meetings with Governors and Head Teachers to investigate and discuss issues subject of the report.

Members and Invitees were very pleased with the encouraging qualifications the looked after children had attained, particularly in light of difficulties of past events they may have experienced which could have interfered with their education.

The Committee also felt that looked after children could be encouraged to broaden their curriculum subjects into areas, for example, such as Arts and Drama.

The Committee concluded by commending the report.

RESOLVED: That the report on educational attainment for looked after children in 2008/09, be noted.

42 **REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE'S INFORMAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support presented a report, to review the Committee's Informal Forward Work Programme, to include the proposal of additional items for inclusion on the IFWP.

Attached to the report of Appendix 1, were details of the IFWP items that were either currently ongoing or had been completed.

The three items that were proposed as additions for inclusion on the Committee's IFWP were:-

- Twice yearly reports on findings from Members' rota visits, to include number of visits undertaken;
- Twice yearly performance information in relation to Looked After Children, with reference to the Member's guide "If it were my Child" (WAG 2009); and
- Young people's session, with the content, format and venue to be determined by the young people themselves.

Update reports would be submitted on:-

- Wales Audit Officer study report on education of Looked After Children
- Residential Review; and
- Work experience/apprenticeship scheme for Bridgend County Borough Council.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee:-

- (1) Considers and approves the inclusion of the proposed topics set out at paragraph 4.1 of the report in its Informal Forward Work Programme.

- (2) Identifies further topics for inclusion in its IFWP as appropriate, at future meetings.

43 REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE'S FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support outlined a report on behalf of the Corporate Director - Children, the purpose of which, was to identify plans, policies and strategies for inclusion in its Forward Work Programme, and finalise the Forward Work Programme for the period 1 January 2010 to the 30 April 2010.

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised the Committee that at this time however, there were no items for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme for the above mentioned period.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting - Cabinet Committee notes that there are currently no plans, policies and strategies identified at this time for inclusion in its Forward Work Programme for the period 1 January 2010 to 30 April 2010.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm.