

CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING - WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3 - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor PJ White – Chairperson

N Clarke
JC Radcliffe
HM Williams

HJ David
CE Smith

J Gebbie
CA Webster

D Patel
DBF White

Apologies for Absence

RE Young

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Val Jones	Regional Adoption Manager
Laura Kinsey	Head of Children's Social Care
Andrew Rees	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Elizabeth Walton-James	Group Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made:

Councillor DBF White declared a personal interest in agenda 4 - Children with Disabilities Transformation Programme as a member of the governing body of Heronsbridge School and agenda item 5 – Monitoring the Performance and Progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service as he is employed by Children's Services of Swansea Council which is part of the Western Bay region.

Councillor J Gebbie declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Monitoring the Performance and Progress as she is employed by Children's Social Services of Neath Port Talbot Council which is part of the Western Bay region.

Councillor C Webster declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Children with Disabilities Transformation Programme as a family member is in receipt of Social Services support and is a member of NAS.

Councillor J Radcliffe declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Monitoring the Performance and Progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service as he is currently going through the adoption process with Western Bay.

154. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting of 19 April 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

155. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Head of Children's Social Care reported on an update of the work undertaken to implement a new model of specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs and requested that the Statement of Purpose developed for the new provision which received Cabinet approval in July 2017 be noted.

The Head of Children's Social Care also reported that following approval to develop specialist 52-week provision, the project team initiated plans to take the project forward reporting on progress to the Children with Disabilities Programme Board. She stated that the children and young people attending Heronsbridge School were asked to provide suggestions for the new facility and who proposed the name 'Harwood House', which is the surname of the current caretaker and is in-keeping with how the other buildings are named.

The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Committee of the progress made by the following work streams established:

- Procurement and Construction
- Placements/transition planning
- Registration (including staffing structure and rota)

The Head of Children's Social Care summarised the key points contained within the Statement of Purpose with the registration process commencing with the CSSIW in June 2017 and scheduled to complete by September / October 2017, when it was planned that the first cohort of individuals would be placed within the provision.

The Head of Children's Social Care reported that the project to develop specialist 52-week provision at Heronsbridge School had been undertaken alongside the remodelling work at Bakers Way, which provided short break provision for children with disabilities.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing commented on the importance of the project to deliver specialist 52-week provision which should enable a reduction on the dependence on high cost out of county placements. She stated that she would communicate to Members details of the official opening of the facility once arrangements had been finalised. The Committee thanked the project team for their work in delivering the project. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing also thanked Gail Summerhayes, the Residential Manager for her part in seeing the project come to fruition.

The Committee questioned whether anything can be done in relation to providing signage to divert students attending Bridgend College away from the new specialist facility and whether there would be allocated parking. The Head of Children's Social Care stated that she would look at this issue of signage and commented there would be allocated parking for Harwood House. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing also commented that the practice at the property next to it, namely Heron House which is a facility for adults with learning disabilities would be looked at in order to see how issues of parking are managed.

The Committee asked how many out of county placements existed at present. The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Committee that there were currently 11 out of county placements where they did not meet the criteria to be accommodated within Harwood House. She stated that once a second child had been identified to move into the facility, the criteria for registration would be met.

The Committee asked whether the young people residing at Harwood House would be registered with local GPs. The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Committee that discussing would take place with the families of the young people and they would be encouraged to register with local GPs.

The Committee questioned the process for young people to be allocated provision at Harwood House. The Head of Children's Social Care stated that 2 children had been identified to be in scope for placement within Harwood House and a third child was in the process of being identified, who may not require 52-week provision.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting:

- (1) Noted the information contained in the report, which had also been presented to Cabinet in July;
- (2) Noted that Cabinet approved the Statement of Purpose for the new 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs in July 2017.

156. **MONITORING THE PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE WESTERN BAY REGIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE**

The Regional Adoption Manager presented a report on the performance and progress of the Western Bay Regional Adoption Service, which included the Annual Report on Regional PI Performance for 2016/17.

She informed the Committee that adoption continues to receive high levels of attention from the UK and Welsh Governments and the creation of a National Adoption Service is one of the key policy strands of the Welsh Governments as enacted by the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. This provides powers for local authorities to collaborate in relation to adoption services. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that the Western Bay regional service is hosted and managed by Swansea Council and is integrated into the National Adoption Service. She highlighted the management and oversight arrangements of the National Adoption Service of which, Cardiff Council is the lead and host authority.

The Regional Adoption Manager reported that the Western Bay Adoption Service became fully operational in April 2015 and provides a range of services and interventions across five key domains. She highlighted the key achievements of the regional adoption service, which had seen more children placed within the service than with Inter Agencies (IA), with 13 placements taking place in Bridgend with WBAS and 11 with IAs. The length of time taken from becoming looked after to placement had reduced from 19.5 months to an average of 15.3 months, which had not met the national bench mark of 13 months.

The Regional Adoption Manager reported that the average time it takes for children who wait longer than six months from Should Be Placed Decision to placement has increased from 9.25 months to 10 months. She stated there had been considerable successes with a number of children placed within very short timescales. She also informed the Committee of the greater collaboration between Family Finding and the Adoption Support to put together packages of support for more complex children or where placements need additional support.

The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that the average time to approve adopters from the inquiry stage to Agency Decision Maker had decreased from 10.1 months last year to 9.7 months. She stated there had been a small increase in the

number of children presented to panel where there was evidence of Life Story Materials. Performance in the number of Birth Parents referred and offered a service had been sustained.

The Regional Adoption Manager highlighted the challenges / developments that the service will need to undertake in the forthcoming year.

The Committee questioned whether patterns or trends had emerged where enquiries had been made by prospective adopters but did not proceed with adoption. The Regional Adoption Manager stated there was no specific evidence of why potential adopters did not proceed to adoption.

The Committee referred to the new collaboration proposals whereby this Council would partner with the Cwm Taf Health Board and questioned the performance of their adoption service. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that a decision had yet to be made on future collaboration and health board boundaries, but a scoping exercise of all services provided had been carried out and officers had held initial meetings with colleagues in the Cwm Taf Health Board. She stated that officers are very proud of the achievements to date made by the Western Bay collaboration. The Regional Adoption Manager stated that the regional adoption collaboratives were mandated by legislation and a change in legislation would be required if health board boundaries were to change.

The Committee questioned whether there is third sector involvement to assist birth parents. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that there are services in the third sector to assist birth parents and adopters and the regional adoption service run a birth parents group which had not proven successful to date. She stated that there would be a focus on assisting birth parents to write the annual letter to their child which had been adopted. The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Committee that the Western Bay Management Board has stakeholder representation from the third sector.

The Committee referred to the national decline in the number of adopters coming forward and asked what steps are being taken to encourage adopters. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that in the regional service's first year of operation there had been a surplus of adopters but the trend had reversed in that there were now more children than prospective adopters. She stated that there was a need to target the recruitment of adopters as there is an imbalance both locally and nationally and the number of enquiries received had dropped. She informed the Committee that most enquiries are received from people who do not have their own children and who would want to adopt babies. She also stated that many children are part of sibling groups and are more difficult to place for adoption.

In response to a question from the Committee as to how the regional adoption service performs compared to other regions in Wales and how many looked after children had been adopted, the Head of Children's Social Care stated that she would provide the Committee with performance data. She stated that children remain looked after until the adoption is granted and the aim is to ensure that children cease to be looked after and placed for adoption at the earliest opportunity and the Permanence Team actively track children more robustly. The Regional Adoption Manager informed the Committee that 69 adoption orders had been granted this year, with 12 adoption orders taking place in Bridgend at Quarter 2.

The Committee asked whether the regional adoption service has a relationship with other adoption services. The Regional Adoption Manager stated that there are 2 other adoption services in Wales, namely, St David's and Barnardos and the regional service works with them. However they have lower adoption numbers than the regional service.

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The regional adoption service was looking at developing a Service Level Agreement in relation to children who are harder to place.

The Committee questioned the level of support available to prospective adopters in meeting out of hours where some employers may not be sympathetic in allowing staff time off work to attend meetings and courses in relation to adoption and also where schools may not be sympathetic to adopters. The Regional Adoption Manager confirmed that the service works around adopters work commitments by undertaking meetings and visits in the evening. The Head of Children's Services informed the Committee that there is Welsh Government guidance in place for how the adoption service works with schools. The Regional Adoption Manager also informed the Committee that the regional service meets with the LACE Coordinators of the 3 local authorities in Western Bay and pupil deprivation grant is also available for adopted children. The service works with schools and teachers to raise awareness to support adopted children.

The Committee referred to the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary of additional funding being available for adoption support and asked what type of additional support can be provided. The Regional Adoption Manager stated that it was too early to establish what the additional funding would be used for.

The Committee questioned the powers available to the authority to refer children going through the adoption service to CAMHS. The Regional Adoption Manager stated that until the adoption order is granted, the local authority has responsibility for that child. She stated that the GP would normally refer the child to CAMHS but in complex cases the local authority would make the referral. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee the authority needs to ensure the needs of the child are paramount and she reassured the Committee that it would continue to work with the child.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting noted the performance and review of the adoption service and its ability to meet the needs of those affected by adoption within the region.

157. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

158. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

Following the application of the public interest test in consideration of this item, it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the item in private, with the public being excluded from the meeting as it would involve the disclosure of exempt information of the nature as stated above.

159. CHILD PRACTICE REVIEWS

The meeting closed at 4.15 pm