

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE**

**5 JANUARY 2015**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN**

**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**ANNUAL AWARDS TO CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee of the historical arrangements that have been in place within the Council to celebrate the achievements of Bridgend's Looked After Children (LAC) and to seek Cabinet's views on the future arrangements for celebrating the achievements of Looked After Children.

**2 Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 This report links to the following Corporate priorities:

- Working together to raise ambitions and drive up educational achievement.
- Working with children and families to tackle problems early.
- Working together to help vulnerable people to stay independent.
- Working together to tackle health issues and encourage healthy lifestyles.

**3 Background**

- 3.1 Promoting the health, education and general well-being of Looked After Children is a statutory duty placed on the local authority under the Children's Act 1989. Their educational achievements are always recognised at school through assemblies and award evenings. For the past five years, an annual event has been held to celebrate the achievements of all LAC children in Bridgend. This event, attended by senior officers, Members, celebrities, dignitaries, LAC and their carers has been held at the Grand Pavilion Theatre in Porthcawl, during the school Easter holidays. During the event, individual children receive a certificate and a gift in recognition of a particular achievement they have accomplished during the past 12 months.
- 3.2 The Council believe it is important to formally recognise the achievements of Looked After Children as many have experienced troubled and difficult early childhood experiences which for some has had a negative impact on their self-esteem and confidence. Receiving an achievement award, therefore goes some way to boosting self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

## **4 Current situation/proposal**

- 4.1 Substantial feedback following the last two celebration events has posed the question as to whether the current arrangements for celebrating the achievements of LAC are the most appropriate means for doing so. For example, this year's event, though attended by over 100 people, highlighted an issue around poor attendance of many children who were due to receive an award. Questions were also raised about the duration of the event which saw many young children becoming restless, tired and agitated by the end of the event. (The event ran for approximately 5 hours) Approximately 25% of the children and young people who were invited to attend the LAC awards did not turn up to the event. Many of these were teenagers who chose not to attend. Others did not attend as the event was held during the school holiday and one can only assume that they were actually away on holiday with their carers.
- 4.2 The annual event requires investment of significant officer time to arrange (estimated to be over 100 hours) and requires significant financial support to cover the costs of catering, theatre hire and gifts for the children. Consequently it is necessary to consider whether the financial and officer time investment is still the best way for the Authority to recognise LAC achievements. Consequently, Members are being asked to consider whether the annual award event should continue in its current form or whether alternative ways of celebrating the achievements of LAC are to be explored
- 4.3 One option for Members to consider is a proposal to reduce the time and scale of the event by holding the annual event in the Council Chambers instead of the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl. LAC will be invited to this event along with a number of dignitaries such as the Children's Commissioner for Wales and local politicians. Members of the Council Corporate Parenting, the Mayor and the Leader could host the event. Members of the Councils Corporate Management team would also be invited along with the Statutory Director of Social Service who would assist the Mayor and the Leader in with the distribution of certificates to all LAC in attendance at the event.

## **5 Effect upon Policy Frameworks and Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 This has been considered but as there are no new or changed services policy / functions in this report, it is therefore not applicable at this time.

## **6 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 This has been considered but as the report is for information and discussion purposes, an assessment is not deemed necessary at this stage.

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 For the past two years, the Council has invested approximately £7,500 to cover associated cost of arranging and hosting the annual event to celebrate the achievements of LAC. In addition, approximately 100 hours of senior officers' time is invested into arranging and managing the event each year. Should Cabinet agree that the option detailed in paragraph 4.3 above will be an appropriate means of

celebrating the achievements of Looked After Children in the future, this would result in a saving of approximately £6,500. for the local authority. Such savings will be realised as a result of not having to hire The Grand Pavilion or pay for external caterers to provide food and beverages at the event.

## **8 Recommendations**

- 8.1 Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee are asked consider the option being put forward in paragraph 4.3 above as a way to celebrate the achievements of Bridgend's LAC in the future.

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