

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 JUNE 2015

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES

CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET-COMMITTEE CHAMPION UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Members with an update from the Committee's Corporate Parenting Champion on the work being undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Cabinet-Committee.

2. Connection to Corporate Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 The key improvement objectives identified in the Corporate Plan 2013–2017 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The amended Corporate Improvement Objectives adopted by Council on 25 February 2015 formally set out the improvement objectives that the Council will seek to implement between 2013 and 2017. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

3. Background

- 3.1 Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a local authority towards looked after children and young people. This is a legal responsibility given to local authorities by the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The Council as a whole is the 'corporate parent' therefore all Members have a level of responsibility for the children and young people looked after by Bridgend.¹
- 3.2 In order to further develop and enhance the Council's corporate parenting role with its partners, a Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee comprising all Members of Cabinet was established by Cabinet on 4 November 2008.
- 3.3 The inaugural meeting of the Cabinet Committee was held on 27 November 2008. It has been agreed that the Cabinet Committee will meet bi-monthly. The terms of reference for the Cabinet Committee are:
- to ensure that looked after children are seen as a priority by the whole of the Authority and by the Children and Young People's Partnership;

¹ Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh Local Government Association 'If this were my child... A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent to children in care and care leavers', June 2009

- to seek the views of children and young people in shaping and influencing the parenting they receive;
- to ensure that appropriate policies, opportunities and procedures are in place;
- to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Authority in its role as corporate parent against Welsh Government guidance.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 The role of the Scrutiny Champion is to represent their relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, partaking in discussions with Cabinet over items relating to children in care and care leavers.
- 4.2 In this role, it is also suggested that Champions provide regular updates to their Committees to ensure that Members are informed of the ongoing work of the Cabinet-Committee and particularly any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.
- 4.3 It is also proposed that Members consider how the services within the remit of their Committee affects children in care and care leavers, and in what way can the Committee can therefore assist in these areas.
- 4.4 Provided below is a brief update from Cllr J E Lewis who is the nominated Corporate Parenting Champion for the Community Safety and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.5 In July last year, the fifth Safeguarding and Family Support Service Annual report was submitted by the Head of Service following the introduction of the current arrangements for evaluating Social Services in Wales. It focused on the process of self-evaluation which involved consultation with Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and would continue to be the major source for the CSSIW's inspection programme.
- 4.6 The Annual report delivered the council's own assessment of performance in respect of their social services responsibilities and focused on strategic objectives and improvement priorities across the department. The new approach to reporting is intended to:
- See that performance management accountability transfers back from the National Centre to the relevant council members, chief executives, directors, managers and officers;
 - Present a recognisable picture to those delivering and served by their Social Services locally;
 - Generate the core set of information needed by CSSIW to deliver their annual performance data and information;
 - Provide an assurance function;
 - Immediately link much more information to business planning to enhance priority improvement.

- 4.7 During October of 2014, the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee were advised that historically investment in Corporate Parenting towards prevention and early intervention initiatives had been done in a very uncoordinated fashion. In view of these findings, over recent years there has been significant investment as well as commitment towards both the prevention and early intervention within the county borough of Bridgend engaging with Connecting Families, the Intensive Family Support Services Rapid Response Team and Families First. Due to this the local authority has also increased the focus on developing integrated approaches in relation to supporting both families and social workers as well as other practitioners. It was acknowledged that there was a need to establish a Strategy to ensure that the range of prevention/early intervention initiatives in place were joined up coherently and emphasised a common purpose so that the needs of the children do not suffer or escalate in any way.
- 4.8 Key elements of the Strategy were to ensure that Childrens Services in Bridgend County are driving a “whole system” approach to supporting children and keeping families together. There were extra financial savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy by streamlining the management of the education support services portfolio.
- 4.9 On the 5th January 2015 the Social Services Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 was presented to the Corporate Planning Committee. On the 1st May 2015 the Act received Royal Assent. The committee was informed that the officers of the Council had been able to influence the legislative process by requesting the word “Wellbeing” be inserted in the title of the Act. The Act set out a new legal framework to bring together and modernise social services law which takes effect from April 2016. It is the intention that the Act will make social services sustainable by addressing economic challenges, taking into account demographical changes which would provide people with more control over their lives, care and support.
- 4.10 To ensure successful implementation of the new approach the Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Social Services announced that a Delivery Transformation Grant of £220k over the next two years would be provided across the Western Bay region.
- 4.11 It is the role of the Committee to ask the Champion any questions or raise any queries with him/her to be fed back to the Cabinet-Committee.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 The work of the Partnerships and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental well being in the County Borough of Bridgend.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The attached report has been provided as an update and therefore does not relate to a specific decision or Equality Impact Assessment.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to consider and note the Corporate Parenting Champion's update.

Andrew Jolley,
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Background Documents

None