

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 24th January, 2017 in Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor G Hayes (Chairman)
Councillor G Merry (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors P Butterill, B Dooley, S Edgar, D Flude, S Pochin and L Smetham

Officers in attendance:

Gill Betton – Head of Children’s Development and Partnerships
P Lambert – Head of Cared for Children
Nigel Moorhouse – Director of Children’s Social Care
Cherry Foreman – Democratic Services Officer

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Grant, J Saunders, G Wait and M Warren.

24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2016 be approved as a correct record.

26 INPUT FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON FIVE PRIORITY AREAS

Representatives from the Corporate Parenting Committee Shadow Board of Children in Care and Care Leavers attended the meeting and were introduced to the Committee. The Chairman reported that both he and the Vice-Chairman had met with the Shadow Board previously and been most impressed with its involvement to date.

The Shadow Board had been invited to attend the meeting in order to present to Members some of the issues it had identified as being of concern to children in care, and which they would like the Committee to investigate further. The following common themes had emerged during its discussions:

Paperwork and permissions

This included the upset and disappointment caused when permission was not received in time to go to a friend's house for tea or a sleepover; participate in a school activity; the time taken to obtain a passport or a driving licence for example.

Education

Additional support was needed for children who had to move from school to school a number of times; greater assistance in helping to understand and access funding for further education; assistance in obtaining a bus pass.

Whilst the young people understood that some difficulties were caused by safeguarding or health and safety issues, they asked if processes could be speedier and easier to understand. There was also concern that the reasons given to them when a delay did occur, or a permission was refused, might not necessarily be the most honest answer and this caused additional frustration.

The Chairman confirmed he would investigate their concerns further with both Members and Officers and respond to the Shadow Board direct.

In discussing the input of the Shadow Board and thanking them for attending the meeting, a discussion ensued on how best to co-ordinate business between it and the Committee. It was agreed that once the Committee meeting dates for the coming municipal year had been confirmed, the Shadow Board would arrange its meetings to fit in with its timetable; this would enable Members to attend Shadow Board meetings at a time and place more convenient for the young people and for them to then report back on its discussions.

The Members of the Shadow Board were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting.

With reference to cared for children and education, consideration was given to the input of the Virtual School and whether proposed changes in the application of the pupil premium grant would enable it to be used to assist in improving outcomes of cared for children. The Committee was advised this could be included in the annual report of the Virtual School which was due to be considered at a future meeting of the Committee. In addition a report on the Care Leaver Offer was due to be considered by the Committee at a future meeting and this would encompass some of the concerns with regard to further education.

Members confirmed they had found the input of the Shadow Board very useful and asked how younger children in care could be offered a similar opportunity to make their voice heard; it was agreed this be given further consideration.

RESOLVED

1. That the points raised by the Corporate Parenting Committee Shadow Board of Children in Care and Care Leavers be noted and investigated further, and that a response be presented back to the Shadow Board direct.
2. That consideration be given the role of younger cared for children with the Committee and how to enable them to have a voice and be involved.

27 THE HEALTH OF CARED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL REPORT 2015 - 2016

The Committee was invited to consider a report prepared for the Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board on its role as corporate parent for the health and well being of children in their care. The purpose of the report was to provide assurance to the Board and to highlight any potential areas for service improvement in 2016/17. It recognised both the statutory responsibilities and the role of agencies working together as corporate parents.

The Designated Nurse for Cared for Children presented the report which covered such aspects as the number of children in care in Cheshire East, health indicators, staffing and funding. The report listed 11 priorities and actions and the Committee was advised that a detailed action plan had been produced taking these into account following the Care Quality Commission Inspection report published at the end of last year.

It was noted that multi agency partnerships were being strengthened through working with the Corporate Parenting Operational Group, which reported to this Committee, so enabling greater scrutiny of how local authority and health services worked together in relation to the health of cared for children.

Members expressed concern that Cheshire East only has a Designated Nurse for 22.5 hours per week, when the guidance recommends this should be 37 hours for an area the size of Cheshire East. This was of particular concern in the light of the initial health assessment timescales for completion. It was explained that this is currently being monitored by Health colleagues.

RESOLVED

That a further health report be considered by the Committee in approximately 6 months time.

28 CLAREMONT RESIDENTIAL HOME OFSTED REPORT

Consideration was given to the results of the Ofsted inspection carried out in November 2016 at Claremont Residential Home which had been rated

as Good in all categories. The Chairman and the Committee thanked the team at Claremont for their work in achieving this outcome. This was considered to be an excellent report and the focus would now be on sustaining this standard of care.

Members were particularly interested in residential homes within Cheshire East that are not overseen by Cheshire East, the involvement of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in ensuring these are safe, cross boundary work with neighbouring authorities, and the position with regard to cared for children placed outside the area. It was agreed that a further report be considered by the Committee at a future meeting to provide an update and including some of these points.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

29 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to an update on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people. National updates included the launch of a consultation by the DfE for the new National Assessment and Accreditation System for child and family social workers (NAAS), and also a working group established by the Department of Health and Education to look into the mental health and emotional wellbeing of looked after children.

Local developments included:

- Local House Project
- Budget proposals
- STAR Awards
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers
- The Regional Adoption Agency
- Special Educational Needs and Disability – Preparing for Adulthood Policy
- Social worker recruitment strategy
- Signs of Safety Innovation Bid

In addition, as agreed at the last meeting, the first populated scorecard showing measures of performance was considered. Members took the opportunity to explore some of the information in greater detail or to seek clarification.

RESOLVED

That the report and the scorecard be noted.

30 MEETING DATES FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017

The Committee discussed the meetings for the forthcoming municipal year. Meetings had been arranged to begin at 5.00pm in order to accommodate the attendance of cared for children. It was suggested, however, that it now be moved to 4.00pm which would still facilitate that but also make it more convenient for some Members.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and Officers agree a schedule of meetings for circulation to the Committee.

31 SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT FOR CARED FOR CHILDREN 2016 - 2017

The Committee considered the Sufficiency Statement which had been refreshed following its initial production in 2015. It sets out the vision for Cheshire East to be a place where children and young people thrive and are safe from harm, feel physically and emotionally healthy, have access to outstanding education and feel prepared for, and excited by, adulthood.

The Statement sets out the provision the authority has in place for the children for which it is responsible ensuring it is flexible, diverse and influenced by what they wanted.

RESOLVED

That the Sufficiency Statement be noted.

32 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

33 REGULATION 44 INDEPENDENT INSPECTIONS OF CHILDREN'S HOMES ANNUAL REPORT 2015 - 2016

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 6.45 pm

Councillor G Hayes (Chairman)