

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 12th November, 2019 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

### **PRESENT**

Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Councillors J Barber, M Benson (for Cllr Edgar), J Buckley, C Bulman,  
P Butterill and S Holland

### **Officers in attendance**

Kerry Birtles, Head of Service: Cared for Children and Care Leavers  
Karen Chan, Service Manager: Cared for IROs  
Keith Martin, Head of Service: Children with Disabilities and Fostering  
Steve Nevitt, Service Manager: Placement and Resources  
Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People  
Laura Rogerson, Headteacher, Virtual School for Cared for Children  
Kate Rose, Head of Service: Children's Safeguarding  
Julie Zientek, Democratic Services Officer

### **27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bailey, M  
Beanland, S Edgar, K Flavell, D Flude and M Warren.

### **28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **29 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September  
2019 be approved as a correct record.

### **30 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE FROM ELECTED MEMBERS**

The Vice-Chairman reported that she had attended a drop in session on  
the care leavers celebrations, which had been interesting and informative.

Councillor C Bulman reported that she and Councillor K Flavell had met  
with Laura Rogerson, Headteacher of the Virtual School for Cared for  
Children, to find out how they would be able to help.

### **31 INPUT FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Head of Service for Children with Disabilities and Fostering reported that a young person had been involved in the development of an agenda for the Children's Trust.

### **32 VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER'S ANNUAL REPORT (DEEP DIVE ON PLEDGE 2 - IMPROVE EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING)**

The Committee considered the Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report, which presented an overview of the operation and impact of the Virtual School during 2018-2019.

The Virtual School had continued to support all cared for children and to continually review its operation to ensure it was meeting its statutory duties while providing effective support. Cared for Children were making good progress overall. The overall number of children had continued to rise and there were more children with a high level of Special Educational Needs.

In response to points raised by Committee Members it was reported that:

- All Cheshire East Cared for Children who did not attend schools in Cheshire East had a plan in place and a named advisor, and the Virtual School ensured that they received the support they needed.
- A specialist attendance officer had been in place since May, and support was being offered to friends and family in order to encourage an improvement in the attendance of Cared for Children.
- Attendance of foster carers at training sessions had been quite low and additional support for foster carers was being considered. However, in general children in foster care had high attendance at school, which may explain why foster carers were not attending training.
- Apart from children with high level medical needs, who required time out to receive treatment, the level of really worrying attendance was no different to any other school.

RESOLVED – That the Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report be endorsed.

### **33 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19**

The Committee considered a report providing information about the performance and practice of the Independent Reviewing Officer Team in relation to the monitoring and review of care planning in Cheshire East. It also reported on the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in relation to Quality Assurance through the Practice Alert and Dispute Resolution Policy.

A separate report had been produced specifically for cared for children and young people, reflecting the areas of performance of most interest to them.

In addition to the information contained in the report, and in response to questions from Committee members, officers stated the following:

- The social work teams were now stable and it was hoped that there would be a reduction in the percentage of reviews and pathway reviews being rearranged. In the next report, Members would be provided with more information regarding the reasons why it was necessary for reviews to be rearranged.
- The decrease in the number of consultations returned from Health and Education colleagues and parents was concerning. One of the workstreams was considering how the return rate of consultations could be improved.

RESOLVED - That the report be endorsed.

#### **34 UNREGULATED PLACEMENT PROVISION**

The Committee considered a report regarding the Council's use of unregulated placements for young people aged sixteen and over, which was increasing.

Unregulated provision was not subject to any regulatory framework, and there had been increasing national, political and press concern regarding the use of 16+ supported accommodation. Following a Notice of Motion submitted to Council, a letter had been sent to the Children's minister recommending the introduction of a regulatory framework for 16+ accommodation.

There were a number of areas of good practice in Cheshire East, including Ignition Panel and the supported lodgings scheme. There were also plans to improve the level of support offered to the most vulnerable young people through the development of Bespoke.

Cared for Children placed in Cheshire East by other local authorities would continue to be monitored, and if placements were inappropriate they would be referred back to their home authority.

The Committee welcomed the positive report and the work of the Ignition Panel, which had been established in January 2016 to give Cared for Children and Care Leavers more choice and ownership with regard to their accommodation arrangements.

RESOLVED – That Corporate Parenting Committee notes:

- 1 the contents of the report, as set out in Appendix 1;
- 2 the recommendation to the Children's Minister to tighten regulations around 16+ accommodation.

### 35 **CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee considered a report providing an update on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers. The report aligned with the pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The Appendices to the report detailed the options available for Members to become involved in Corporate Parenting and the November Children's Rights Month challenges, which had been designed to give an insight into the issues that children and young people faced every day.

Highlights included:

- The children's and young people's work in developing the 'Language that cares – changing the way professionals talk about children in care' being shortlisted for the 'children in care' category of the Children and Young People Now Awards.
- Closer relationships with employers in the borough, including Chromalloy in Crewe.
- Recommissioning of short break services for children with disabilities.
- Support for children and young people to apply for either Citizenship or EU Settled Status.
- Liberty Protection Standards.
- Transition for young people with Autism.

RESOLVED: That

- (a) The report be noted.
- (b) Corporate Parenting Committee Members be requested to complete the proforma in relation to Elected Member Options for Corporate Parenting Engagement, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- (c) Corporate Parenting Committee Members be requested to consider taking part in the November Children's Rights Month challenges, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

### **36 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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 that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

### **37 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE REPORT**

The Acting Executive Director of People briefed Members of the Committee on the Ofsted inspection of Cheshire East Council's children's services, which was underway. The inspection would review the quality of the support provided to children, young people, and their families at early help and prevention, child in need and child protection, cared for and care leavers' services, and education for vulnerable pupils.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.50 pm

Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)