

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting:	14 September 2021
Report Title:	Proposal to Develop a new Corporate Parenting Strategy
Report of:	Ged Rowney, Interim Director of Children's Services
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the proposed approach to the development of a new Corporate Parenting Strategy for Cheshire East to improve outcomes for our cared for children and care leavers.
- 1.2. The Corporate Parenting Strategy meets the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 as it contributes to 'A council which empowers and cares about people' and the priority to 'be the best Corporate Parents and improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people'.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1. Endorse the proposed approach to the development of a new Corporate Parenting Strategy as set out in this paper; and
 - 2.1.2. Endorse the existing plan for 2021.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. As an advisory committee to the Children and Families Committee, one of the roles of the Corporate Parenting Committee is to act as advocate for cared for children and care leavers, ensuring that their needs are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council and its commissioned services.
- 3.2. The existing Corporate Parenting Strategy was due to expire in 2020. However, due to the increased demands from the COVID-19 pandemic, the review and refresh of the new strategy was put on hold. We are now

in a position to carry out this piece of work, working with cared for children and care leavers and other key stakeholders.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** The existing Corporate Parenting Strategy could be extended for a further period. However, whilst the overarching pledges are likely to remain unchanged or with minor amendments, it is timely to check that these still meet the needs of our cared for children and care leavers.

5. Background

- 5.1.** The existing Corporate Parenting Strategy runs from 2018 to 2020 and was endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Committee in November 2018, along with the 'youth proofed' pledges to cared for children and care leavers.
- 5.2.** The pledges were subsequently accepted and endorsed by the full Council in December 2018 in order to make the commitment to cared for children and care leavers by the Council's Members and officers and to ensure that there is a clear and joint vision about Corporate Parenting in Cheshire East as being everyone's responsibility.
- 5.3.** The Council also decided that all key council decisions be considerate of the potential consequences, unintended consequences and benefits to cared for children and care leavers, and that this be achieved by asking a mandatory question in each report about the impact of the decision upon cared for children and care leavers.
- 5.4.** Good progress has been made in achieving the pledges set out in the 2018-20 Corporate Parenting Strategy. This progress has been reported to the Corporate Parenting Committee each year via the Corporate Parenting Annual Report.
- 5.5.** The intention was to develop a new Corporate Parenting Strategy in 2020, ready to launch in 2021. However, due to the increased demands from the COVID-19 pandemic, the was put on hold.
- 5.6.** The current plan is to review and refresh the Corporate Parenting Strategy over the next few months, to be launched alongside the new Children and Young People's Plan in March/April 2022. An outline timescale for actions is set out overleaf:

Date	Action
2021	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek endorsement from Corporate Parenting Committee to proposed approach • Focussed sessions together with cared for children and care leavers to review pledges and identify current priorities
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with staff from Cheshire East Council and partner agencies to feedback views of cared for children and care leavers and seek their responses to how these need to be addressed in the new strategy.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate information gathered into headline priorities • Share draft and take any final feedback from cared for children and care leavers, key staff and partners
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise draft strategy
2022	
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek endorsement from Corporate Parenting Committee on the draft strategy
February/March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek endorsement of the draft strategy and pledges from Children and Families Committee/Council.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise document for launch
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch new strategy

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1.** The new strategy will be developed together with cared for children and care leavers and involve key stakeholders to ensure that the new strategy addresses their needs.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1.** There is a range of legislation and statutory guidance that sets out the role of the local authority in respect of cared for children and care leavers. There are statutory obligations and guidance in relation to the Local Authority's role as Corporate Parent in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Children and Young People Act 2008; the Children and Families Act 2014; and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 7.1.2.** In particular, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers.

7.1.3. The priorities within the new strategy will be developed in line with current legislation and best practice.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. There are no direct finance implications at this stage. However, the new strategy may identify initiatives that may require additional funding. These will be identified through the business planning process and follow existing approval routes.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. The new strategy will be developed in line with current Council and partner policies, where appropriate. Any changes in policy required as a result of the new strategy will follow existing approval routes.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. All children and young people have a right to be treated equally and have their disability, gender, ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic needs met. As corporate parents for children and young people in care and care leavers, it is essential that the Council is able to demonstrate that it considers equality implications in all decisions made in relation to cared for children and care leavers. The new strategy will consider any actions to improve equality issues for cared for children and young people and care leavers (a vulnerable group because of their experiences) and ensure that they are supported to achieve the same outcomes as their peers.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. There are no direct HR issues in developing the new strategy, although delivery of the strategy will need sufficient staff with the right skills to deliver it.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. There is a risk that if the new strategy does not address the right priorities, then outcomes for cared for children and care leavers are not improved. There are also financial and reputational risks for the Council of not getting services right for this group of children and young people.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. The new Corporate Parenting Strategy is a key document that sets out our ambition and plans to improve outcomes for cared for children and care leavers.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. Cared for children and care leavers are more at risk of poor health outcomes. Improving health outcomes is a pledge within the current strategy and is expected to remain within the new strategy to target the needs of this group of children and young people.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. There are no climate change implications.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Not applicable
Background Papers:	The current Corporate Parenting Strategy can be found at: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/livewell/corporate-parenting-strategy.pdf Our pledges to cared for children and care leavers can be found at: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/livewell/care-and-support/youth-proof-pledges-feb-2019.pdf