

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 17th September, 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, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar, K Flavell,
S Holland and M Warren

Officers in attendance

Gill Betton, Head of Service: Children's Development and Partnerships
Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children's Commissioning
Keith Martin, Head of Service: Cared for Children & Care Leavers
Sue Preston, Service Manager: The Children's Society Children's Rights Project
Laura Rogerson, Headteacher, Virtual School for Cared for Children
Jacquie Sims, Director of Children's Social Care
Kayleigh Wilshaw, Service Manager: Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Julie Zientek, Democratic Services Officer

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bailey and D Flude.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 be approved as a correct record.

19 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

The Vice-Chairman reported that she and the Chairman had been to the Children's Conference, which was very well attended.

There was nothing to report from the work streams this time. Officers would be producing a proposal, including a calendar of events, and delivering further training. Committee members would also be DBS checked. In addition, a template would be circulated to enable Members to update the pen profiles which outlined their interests, and which were appreciated by the young people.

20 UPDATE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers reported that he had met with My Voice, the children in care council, the previous week. The children and young people were looking forward to the Star awards event, which was taking place at Tatton Park on Sunday 24 November.

21 FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Fostering Panel for 2018-19, presented by the Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers.

The recruitment of foster carers was a significant national issue. Cheshire East Council was a member of Foster4, a collaborative project which recruited foster carers on behalf of the four Cheshire Local Authorities. However, there was a need for a 10 – 15% increase in foster carers in Cheshire East in the next 3 – 4 years. It was intended to undertake a review of fostering services, including the next steps and support for foster carers.

In response to questions from Members, it was reported that:

- 'Mockingbird' was being developed to provide more support to foster carers, with a foster carer in the middle of a hub supporting 6 – 8 others. A social worker had recently been recruited, to provide stability.
- Cheshire East Fostering Panel members undertook training during the year.
- There was currently no Elected Member on the Fostering Panel.
- The membership of the Fostering Panel included a foster carer, and the number of social workers on the Panel had increased.

RESOLVED - That the report and its conclusions be noted.

22 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Consideration was given to the Annual Report of the Committee for 2018-19, which highlighted progress and achievements, and set out priorities for the forthcoming year.

The Committee also considered a proposed amended version of its Terms of Reference, which had been discussed at the Committee's last meeting, on 18 June 2019.

During the discussion and in response to points raised by the Committee it was reported that:

- An elected Member was to be sought for the proposed governing body for the Virtual School. Officers would send Members details of the requirements and level of commitment, and request expressions of interest.
- The Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers would report to the next meeting regarding the use of leisure centres by cared for children.

RESOLVED

That

- (a) the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Committee for 2018-19 be noted.
- (b) Cabinet be recommended to receive the Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report for 2018-19 and approve the amended Terms of Reference subject to an amendment to include 'visits' in paragraph 4.

23 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE AND SCORECARD

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.

With regard to the Quarter 1 Corporate Parenting Scorecard, the report detailed areas of concern and what was being done to address them. The Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers agreed that further information relating to the meaning of each column could be included next time.

During the discussion and in response to points raised by the Committee it was reported that:

- In relation to Pledge 2 (Education, Employment and Employment Outcomes), 7 cared for young people were now going to university, 1 to an apprenticeship and one was starting work.
- Support was provided during university vacations by maintaining foster placements, arranging other placements or by securing accommodation at universities. Support would also be provided for those continuing in higher education.

- In relation to Pledge 3 (Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe Being a Good Corporate Parent), delays in being able to confirm a plan of permanence could be the result of extended care proceedings.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

25 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the Cheshire East Children's Rights Service Annual Report for 2018, which provided an overview of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service delivered by the Children's Society for Cheshire East.

During the discussion and in response to points raised by the Committee it was reported that:

- Corporate parents could not be Independent Visitors.
- Independent Visitors and young people were introduced at a match meeting, but they did not have to continue if they did not get on.
- Training and support were offered for volunteers.
- In cases where communication had broken down in a placement, an advocate would liaise with the young person.
- There was training and support available for social workers, and the Children's Society had been training social workers on children's rights

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

26 FOCUS REPORT ON PERMANENCY AND KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE (PLEDGE THREE)

The Committee considered a report providing an update on progress, impact and developments in relation to Pledge Three of the Corporate

Parenting Strategy ('We will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe').

Members noted that:

- The number of Cared for Children had increased, but there had also been an increase in the number of discharges.
- Ignition Panel enabled young people to talk about what they wanted in terms of housing and support.
- With regard to foster care, 36 young people had been matched on a long term basis.
- A stability practice lead had been recruited, and foster carers attended stability meetings, of which there had been 16 during the quarter.
- There had been a focus on criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation, and a strategic approach was being developed.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.55 pm

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