

<b>1 November 2012</b>		<b>ITEM 7</b>
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee</b>		
<b>Update Report on Establishment of Foster Carer Association and Development of Foster Carers Charter</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Roland Minto – Service Manager, Placements and Support		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> To note content of report and approve proposed text of Foster Carers Charter	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Barbara Foster Head of Service, Care and Targeted Outcomes		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Jo Olsson Director Peoples Services		
<b>This report is</b> public		
<i>If the report, or a part of this, has been classified as being either confidential or exempt by reference to the descriptions in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, it is hereby marked as being not for publication. The press and public are likely to be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any confidential or exempt items of business to which the report relates.</i>		
<b>Date of notice given of exempt or confidential report:</b>		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To provide members of the Corporate Parenting Committee with an update on the development of the Foster Carers Association, to present a “final” draft of the proposed Foster Carers Charter, and to propose a mechanism for the “sign off” of this.		

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In June a report was prepared for the Corporate Parenting Committee describing work that had been done to reconstitute the Thurrock Foster Carers Association. It went on to outline the parallel work which was being done to develop a local Foster Carers Charter.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1.1 The members of the Corporate Parenting Committee are asked to note the progress in developing the work of the Foster Carers Committee.**

- 1.2 **The members of the Committee are asked to approve the draft text of the Foster Carers Charter, and to agree the proposed mechanism for sign off of this.**

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

- 2.1 As discussed in the previous report, the development of both the Association and the Charter are in line with the Statutory Guidance on Fostering and current Government Policy initiatives. They are intended to both strengthen the relationship between Foster Carers and the authority, whilst also providing formal recognition of the valuable contribution of Foster Carers and to affirm their importance in the decision making process about children's everyday lives and care arrangements.

## **3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:**

- 3.1 A successful launch event was held at Treetops School on Saturday June 30<sup>th</sup>, and was attended by a number of Foster Carers, elected members, and Social Care staff. This evidenced good organisational skills from the Committee members, and indicates a positive base from which to develop in the future.
- 3.2 The work of establishing regular meetings of Committee members has continued, although the pace inevitably slowed during the school holiday period, when carers needed to focus their day time attention on the children in their care. Momentum has now picked up again, and work is going on to plan both a pre-Christmas social event, targeted at Foster Carers themselves, and a social activity in the New Year aimed at the children and young people in their care.
- 3.3 At the last Corporate Parenting Committee it was agreed that we need to ensure appropriate representation of Foster Carers at the Committee. It was therefore agreed that a letter would be written to the Chair of the Association, inviting the nomination of regular representatives. A positive response has been received, with the proviso that because of the changing commitments of individual carers it may not be possible to guarantee the availability of the same individuals each time.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that in future the Foster Carers Association will be able to provide their own periodic updates on their activity to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

## **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

- 4.1 Building on a skeleton charter issued by central Government in 2011, work has been undertaken locally by both Foster Carers and Social Work staff to develop a statement which puts in very specific terms a set of mutual expectations and commitments.

- 4.2 A final draft of the text is attached as Appendix 1, and it is hoped that members of the Corporate Parenting Committee will approve this as the agreed version.
- 4.3 In the previous report to Committee it was noted that an appropriate “political” process is needed to be identified for the sign off of this Charter. It is important that the Charter becomes and remains a “living” document which becomes a vital reference point for discussion, and as such needs to be open to future revision. At the same time this needs to be balanced against the need to avoid excessive over-revisions which do not significantly enhance the content.
- 4.4 The proposal therefore is that provided the Committee are satisfied with the current draft, as soon as is practicable a final version is formally signed by the Chair of the Committee, the Chair of the Association, the Head of Service and the relevant Portfolio Holder (in the event that this is not also the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee).
- 4.5 The Charter would then be reviewed at the beginning of each Municipal year, prior to the first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee, by the Chair of the Association and the relevant Service Manager. Any suggested amendments would then be brought to the attention of the Committee, and the Charter signed off on an annual basis as an indication of the Council’s ongoing commitment and support of the Charter.

**5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 5.1 Successful on-going development of the Association should assist with longer term recruitment and retention of Foster Carers

**6. IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Michael Jones**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652772**  
**mxjones@thurrock.gov.uk**

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

**6.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652054**  
**Lindsey.marks@BDTLegal.org.uk**

There are no legal implications arising from this report

### 6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
Telephone and email: **01375652472**  
[sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk)

The establishment of a foster carer charter can have a meaningful impact in terms of setting a framework for the values of the association. However any charter should have a high regard to the principles of equality and diversity, and be supported by the appropriate consultation with different groups of foster carers.

### **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- Draft Text of Foster Carers Charter

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