

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 3 July 2014 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), James Halden (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Charles Curtis, Susan Little and Joycelyn Redsell

Natalie Carter, Thurrock Open Door Representative
Jackie Howell, Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association (Chair)
Sharon Smith, Thurrock One Team Foster Care Association (Vice-Chair)

Apologies: Councillors Sue Gray

In attendance: Nicky Pace, Interim Head of Service for Care and Targeted Outcomes
Paul Coke, Service Manager (Children & Families)
Roland Minto, Service Manager (Placement Support)
Jan Natynczyk, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Looked After Children and Care Leavers

This report provided the Committee with an overview of the services for looked after children and care leavers and provided information as to the statutory and legislative changes that may have an impact on the service.

Members asked questions/commented as follows:

- The Looked After Children's Strategy needed to be reviewed in tandem with The Pledge. Officers reported that the Children in Care Council were reviewing The Pledge in March and the outcome would be reported back to this Committee. Likewise, Officers would review the Looked After Strategy, with a view to challenging both Members and Officers and report back to this Committee;

- A report on Troubled Families was requested, for submission to a future meeting of this Committee;
- There was concern over the increased percentage of children that had been difficult to place. Officers acknowledge this, but pointed out that it was still a relatively small number in the overall placement picture. The figures also identified some very positive moves into permanent adoption.
- Members were keen for children to be well informed of apprentice schemes available, ideally between the ages of 14-15 and Councillors had a key role to play in this. This could be facilitated via open days etc. It was also essential to link up with Youth and Education Services, with a view to targeting young people and certain groups.

RESOLVED: That the points highlighted above be noted and report backs be submitted to this Committee on The Pledge, Looked After Children's Strategy and Troubled Families.

4. Work Programme

Attention was drawn to the Committee's Work Programme for the forthcoming Year.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Work Programme be noted;**
- 2. That an item on the Independent Review of the Officers Annual Report be added to the Work Programme for consideration in September;**
- 3. That a report on the Fostering Service be added to the Work Programme for December;**
- 4. That details of Looked After Children's profiles be incorporated into the standard report submitted to this Committee;**
- 5. That a report on how to enhance access to apprenticeships for Looked After Children, be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee, taking issues such as the role of the Children's Council into account.**

5. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Prior to Exclusion of the Press and Public, Members raised concern that Co-opted Members were in receipt of exempt papers.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised the Committee, that Co-opted Members had a right to receive exempt papers, no matter how sensitive and remain in the meeting during consideration of these items.

Concern was also expressed about exempt papers circulating in the public gallery.

It was noted that the papers in question were those of a substitute Member of this Committee sitting in the public gallery, who had lent her papers to a fellow Councillor observing the meeting. The observing Councillor clearly stated that he had not and had no intention of looking at the exempt papers.

The Committee were also advised that all Members of the Council had a right to ask to see exempt papers.

The Chair stated that due to the sensitive nature of this issue, the exempt reports would be withdrawn from the meeting and the future content of such reports reviewed in light on the discussion at this meeting.

The Chair asked Co-opted Members to hand their exempt papers to Democratic Services and vacate the meeting. She invited Members of the Council, present in the public gallery, to remain in the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the items involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part I of Schedule 12A, Paragraphs 1 and 3 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Committee proceeded to consider the exempt items on the agenda.

6. Information on Recent External Placements for Young People

This report was the latest in a sequence of reports previously requested by Members of the Committee, to provide additional information about the decision making process and pressures in making external placements for looked after young people. The report placed this in the wider context of the current demand for placements for looked after children.

RESOLVED: That the efforts made by Officers to choose appropriate resources for looked after children, including some of the more difficult to place children be noted.

7. Children's Placement Review Report

It was noted that Appendices 3 and 4 were missing from the report and would be circulated separately to Members of the Committee.

The purpose of this report was to examine budget and payment arrangements, commissioning and procurement arrangements and joint commissioning.

It also sought to establish that there were effective exit strategies in place and to appraise the development of the Council's own fostering service and how it could contribute to future planning.

Officers invited Members of the Committee to attend a panel meeting, which scrutinised the care plan of every child coming into the care system.

RESOLVED: That the report and actions taken be noted.

The meeting finished at 9.05 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**