

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 1 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Abbie Akinbohun (Chair), Georgette Polley, Adam Carter, Sara Muldowney and Kairen Raper. Elizabeth Rigby and Lynn Worrall

Christopher Bennett, Children in Care Council
Laura Hall, Thurrock Open Door
Sharon Smith, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association

Apologies: Councillor Jennifer Smith (Vice-Chair) and Jenny Josling

In attendance: Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Naintara Khosla, Strategic Lead, Looked After Children
Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead Of Quality Assurance And Reviewing
Clare Moore, Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service and Prevention
Trevor Willis Service Manager Safeguarding & Reviewing
Kenna-Victoria Healey, 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.

29. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting on 4 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

30. Items of Urgent Business

The Chair of the Committee explained she had agreed to an item of urgent business which would be taken before the word programme item.

31. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Children in Care Council Update

The Thurrock Open Door representative presented the report to Members outlining that over the last 12 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Children in Care Council (CICC) had taken the support of its members online as they were unable to meet with the young people they supported. She

explained consultations and discussions had been had with members of the CICC as to how to best improve the support given to young people, given the restrictions of COVID-19 it couldn't be what it needed to be.

Members heard now that restrictions had been lifted members of the CICC were looking forward being able to meet face to face, as this was not only an important part of socialising but also assisted with recruitment within the group, as this was done by word of mouth.

It was commented that revamping the CICC and the support given was a big job and it was asked what the CICC should be able to do and what could it do. The Thurrock Open Door representative explained that with meetings now being able to be held in person and therefore face to face, it would be easier, to have interactive meetings which were more child lead which is what the CICC needed. She continued by stating it was important that young people were given the opportunity to speak and give their views as gave them the opportunity to promote their voices.

The Committee heard before the pandemic the structure of meetings was very formal with an email of the agenda sent to all members of the CICC as this is what was required three years ago, however big changes could now take place with the use of social media and more interaction for young people which could include working together in age groups as well as mixed groups on projects.

The Chair of the CICC stated he felt it was easier to engage and give your views when meeting face to face, as when meeting online at home there were other things which could cause interference. This included the use of Internet Connections. He continued to say he was excited to see the new changes being made and looking forwards one of which, was the use of social media and members of the CICC making animation videos, writing letters to new young people in care explaining to them the LAC Reviews and alike.

Members thanked the Chair of the CICC for attending the meeting and for presenting the report as it was important to hear back from children within the Council's care.

RESOLVED

That the report of the Children In Care Council report be noted.

33. Children's Social Care Performance - Quarter 3 2021/22

The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children presented the report which was on pages 13 to 36 of the agenda.

Councillor Muldowney thanked officers for the report and commented there had been an increase in missing episodes, however the number of return to home interviews had fallen. She enquired as to whether it was possible to make the return home interviews more informal so to improve the take up of

them by young people. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help explained officers had weekly meetings to discuss different ways to improve return home interviews, however not all young people wanted to take part within these interviews. Members heard there was a network of support provided for children to try and engage with them and understand the reasons for their missing episodes, this included inspire, foster carers and social workers.

Councillor Carter commented there had been 17 new foster carers and wondered if officers were aiming to increase this figure during the recruitment process. The Strategic Lead for Looked After Children commented the number of foster carers was now up to 25 and this was being maintained, she explained the service was moving into a better position and hoped to increase the number of foster carers by 10/15 new households.

Members discussed care leavers in education, employment or training, during discussions they were advised Officers were looking at assisting with apprenticeship roles and bespoke roles for young people to be able to give them the experience of work such as interviews and best practise. Members further heard it was important to offer young people the opportunity to be able to undertake work experience as it enabled them to build on their self-esteem as well as other skills.

It was commented that the headstart programme within the local plan supplied housing for care leavers. Members suggested it would be good practise to speak with young people to be able to understand their needs for example, if they were living with friends, or being close to local amenities such as shops in walking distance.

RESOLVED

- 1. That members noted improvements and areas for improvement in Children's Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.**
- 2. Noted the continuing impact of COVID 19 on some areas of performance.**

34. IRO Reports for Children Looked After Reviews

The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing presented Members with the presentation.

The Thurrock Open Door representative commented on the review stating she was really impressed with the handbook and through the review officers had taken on board everything which had been said, such as making it more friendly for the young people themselves and more child focus. The Service Manager for Safeguarding and Reviewing commented saying as a team they would get better and continue to improve. He continued saying it was

important to make the handbook and interviews more child focus and young person friendly, he was pleased with the work of the Independent Reviewing Officers, and they were proud as a team to represent Thurrock's young people.

Councillor Polley thanked Officers for the presentation and for engaging with young people to make the reviews more child friendly and easier for them to understand.

Councillor Rigby enquired as to whether there would be further reviews undertaken. Officers advised that six monthly interviews would be taking place.

RESOLVED:

The Corporate Parenting Committee noted the child/ young person friendly style of recording for looked after children reviews which is being developed.

35. Corporate Parenting Committee Work Programme 2021/2022

The Corporate Parenting Committee discussed the work programme at pages 43 to 44 of the agenda.

It was agreed that Officers would speak with the Chair of the Committee outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Officers speak with the Chair of the Committee outside of the meeting with regards to items to be presented to first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee 2022/2023.

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