

Time Commenced: - 6.00 pm
Time Finished: - 7.40 pm

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMISSION 24 MARCH 2009

Present: Councillors Bolton and Latham

20/08 Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

21/08 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

22/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

23/08 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24/08 Call-In

There were no items.

Items for Discussion

25/08 Statistical Information on Looked After Children

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Children and Young People on Statistical Information on Looked After Children. The statistical information would be updated for future Sub-Commission meetings to assist councillors in fulfilling their corporate parenting role.

It was reported that the number of looked after had marginally risen and officers estimate this number to reach 430 by this time next year. Officers stated that the national situation was having an impact on the service's attempts to guarantee a reduction in looked after children.

Resolved to note appendix 2 of the report, which gave statistical information on children looked after and the relevant key performance indicators.

26/08 Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Children and Young People on the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy. Members were asked to comment on the draft strategy.

Members queried what impact the new governance structure would have on the current arrangements. Officers informed the Sub-Commission that the new structure, outlined in the draft strategy, would improve the Council's engagement with the children it looks after.

Resolved that:

- A. The final report be presented to the Sub-Commission's June meeting;**
- B. The Sub-Commission supported the plan to adopt the strategy from September 2009;**
- C. The Sub-Commission receive copies of the department's Focus on Us magazine when they are published; and**
- D. The Sub-Commission be circulated a copy of the Children in Care Council's 'Top Ten Issues' list.**

27/08 Inspection and Management Visits to Children's Homes

Members asked for an update on actions identified in minute 17/08 and asked officers to respond. The Sub-Commission were informed that a surveyor had begun to assess the priority 1 works required at Bute Walk and Moorfield children's homes. A report will be brought back to the Sub-Commission's June meeting providing full details of the outstanding condition surveys.

The Sub-Commission also received an oral update on Members visits to children's homes since the previous meeting. It was reported that three Member visits had taken place and Councillors had provided helpful suggestions for improving the facilities. Officers were assessing if some of the priority 1 works funding could be redirected to cover these improvements.

The Sub-Commission then considered the report from Director of Children and Young People on Inspection and Management Visits to Children's Homes.

Resolved that:

- A. The Sub-Commission note the report; and**

- B. The Sub-Commission will receive written reports detailing each Members visit to the Council's children's homes, including Members' suggestions for improvement.**

28/08 Annual Fostering Report

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Children and Young People on the Annual Fostering Report. The Sub-Commission were informed the service was dealing with additional pressures from court assessment referrals and this was impacting on their ability to process general assessments. It was reported that these placements only benefit children being moved to extended family whereas general assessments meant additional foster carers within the city who would take in anyone waiting for a placement.

The service had received an elevated number of complaints than previously and while some of these were unsubstantiated those that were had been thoroughly investigated. The Assistant Director - Specialist Services said he welcomed complaints as each one would be investigated and the service delivery scrutinised.

The Sub-Commission asked if the service expected an increase in the number of volunteers to be carers and are there any difficulties facing the service in training new carers. It was reported that CRB checks were no longer causing problems during the assessment of new carers, although this forms only one part of a long recruitment process which on average takes a minimum of six months. Usually foster care interest increases in times of recession and the service was preparing for this eventuality.

Resolved that:

- A. The Fostering Service continues to provide an annual report for the period from 1 April to 31 March and reviews the Statement of Purpose as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002;**
- B. A monthly highlights report is produced to track key performance indicators; and**
- C. The work and developments of the Fostering Service as outlined in the report be noted.**

MINUTES END