

Time Commenced: - 6.00 pm  
Time Finished: - 7.27 pm

## **CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMISSION**

### **1 JULY 2009**

Present: Councillors Bolton, Ginns, Higginbottom and Williams

#### **01/09 Appointment of Chair for the 2009/10 Municipal Year**

Resolved to appoint Councillor Higginbottom as Chair of the Sub Commission for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

#### **02/09 Apologies**

No apologies for absence were received.

#### **03/09 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair**

There were no late items.

#### **04/09 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Williams declared a personal interest in Minutes 09/09 and 10/09.

#### **05/09 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **06/09 Call-In**

There were no items.

### **Items for Discussion**

#### **07/09 Statistical Report and Annual Performance**

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Children and Young People providing a statistical breakdown of the children in care and the performance of the Directorate. The Assistant Director of Specialist Services reported that although the number of children in care had seen a slight decline in September 2008, since then the numbers have risen and the trend is national. The children have been brought into the care of Derby City Council either through the courts system or through voluntary agreement.

Councillor Higginbottom expressed concern that there had been a significant drop in the number of children in care achieving level four in the Key Stage Two English test. The Assistant Director of Specialist Services stated that not all the children in care took the SATs exams and so they would not have scored any marks. The statistics also do not reflect those children who do not have English as their first language.

Councillor Williams queried how effective the health checks had been for the children in care. The Assistant Director of Specialist Services stated that although the service has not had a substantial reduction in its budget, case loads for social workers since the Baby P incident have increased. Officers work hard to ensure that all the children in care receive the necessary treatment but they cannot force young people to attend against their wishes.

**Resolved:**

- A. To note the report;**
- B. To receive a progress report at the next meeting; and**
- C. To receive a report on the downturn in performance of children achieving level four in the Key Stage Two English test.**

## **08/09 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. Officers informed the Sub Commission that their comments from the previous meeting had been incorporated into this version.

Councillor Williams suggested that the Children in Care newsletter should be circulated to all councillors as they all share in the responsibility as corporate parents. Councillor Williams also asked minutes of the Children in Care Council could be sent to the Corporate Parenting Sub Commission and for a member of the Sub Commission could have a seat on the body. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer raised concern with a member of the Sub Commission sitting on the Children in Care Council as it would then need to scrutinise its decisions. Councillor Williams suggested that the Sub Commission member could instead act as an observer.

**Resolved to:**

- A. Arrange for the Children in Care Council newsletter to be circulated to all members of the Council, co-ordinated by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer in the first instance with covering letter;**

- B. Seek Constitutional advice from the Monitoring Officer to check whether a member of the Sub Commission can sit on the Children in Care Council;**
- C. Amend the wording of section 5.2 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy to include all Members of the Council rather than limiting elected Members visits to just the Corporate Parenting Sub Commission; and**
- D. Recommend that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy for implementation on 1 October.**

## **09/09 Maintenance of Children's Homes**

The Sub Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director for Children and Young People relating to maintenance of children's homes. The Assistant Director of Specialist Services informed the Sub-Commission that improvements to Bute Walk and Moorfield identified from the completed condition surveys will be carried out between August and November 2009. The design phase is complete and a tendering process has begun. All works that were identified as priority one and two will be carried out as well as some additional items requested by managers.

It was reported that condition surveys have now been completed at Coronation Avenue, Queensferry Gardens and Cricklewood Road and minor improvements are planned to follow on after the completion of work at Bute Walk and Moorfield. Suitability and sufficiency surveys and Property Performance Assessments have now been completed on all five homes and are currently being analysed. An options appraisal will follow to develop the medium and long-term plans for the five homes.

**Resolved to note report.**

## **10/09 Elected Member Visits to Children's Homes**

The Sub Commission received a report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People updating Members of the visits to children's homes carried out by councillors and the feedback they had provided officers.

Members of the Sub Commission praised the dedication of the staff at the children's homes. Each had visited children's homes in Derby and had been impressed by the staff's work ethic, patience and understanding they displayed to the children in their care.

**Resolved:**

**A. To note the report; and**

**B. To ensure that the staff at children's homes are praised for their hard work with a letter from the Chair of the Sub Commission and that the comments are filtered down through their staff briefing structure rather than a stock letter be issued.**

## **11/09 Improved Access to Sexual Health Support for Children in Care**

The Sub Commission considered a report requesting improved access to sexual health support for children in care. It was reported that these children were much more likely to have teenage pregnancies and unprotected sex. Officers wished to provide an enhanced package of sexual care for children in care by enabling nurses and other specialist workers to give additional sexual health services. This would initially be in-line with the agreed menu of options on offer to secondary schools through extended school-based health services with the potential to be expanded according to need.

Councillor Williams queried whether 12 should be the youngest age or if this should be lowered and relationship advice could be added to the youngest age groups. Officers stated that to begin with they will offer the service to 12 year olds as the minimum age and then expand in the future.

Councillor Williams asked how the Council currently ensures that children who are sexually active get the help they need. It was reported to the Sub Commission that there is support already provided however this proposal seeks to expand care workers role to provide emergency contraception and preventative work.

**Resolved to support the proposals.**

MINUTES END