

ITEM 6

Time Commenced: - 6.00 pm
Time Finished: - 7.15 pm

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMISSION WEDNESDAY 27 April 2005

Present: Councillor Hussain (in the Chair)
Councillors Jones, MacDonald, and Turner

20/04 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Webb and Winter.

21/04 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

22/04 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

23/04 Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Joint Sub-Commission

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24/04 The Education of Children Looked After (Gatsby Project)

The Sub-Commission considered a joint report from the Directors of Education and Social Services that looked at the progress of the Gatsby Project.

Pauline Inwood reported that the first phase of Education Project, mainly funded by the Gatsby Foundation, ran in Derby from 2000 to 2003. The Gatsby Foundation had then agreed a further proposal for a further three years' funding of £292,280 to extend the project and develop an exit strategy. The second phase of the project would run until October 2006. Evaluation of both phases of the project was being undertaken by the National Children's Bureau – NCB, in Collaboration with Luton University. The exit strategy would include details of the mainstreaming funding of the project and team activities beyond October 2006.

It was reported that the as cohorts of children in each year group were very small slight variations in individuals' circumstances could make a large percentage difference. The education of all Children Looked After in

Derby City was monitored through the work of the Advisory Teacher, Principle Officer and Education Welfare Officer, in liaison with schools, carers and other professionals. It was noted that nearly a third of Derby's school age Children Looked After attended schools outside the authority.

It was reported that the nine East Midlands local authorities, through the Named Officers Group of the Special Educational Needs Partnership had recently revised and re-launched the East Midlands Regional Protocol for Looked After Children. This had been signed up to by all the Directors of Education and Social Services involved. The protocol set out approaches to improve arrangements between local authorities for the education of Looked After Children who move across local authority boundaries.

Councillor Turner commented that the table included in the report would be better if there was comparative information on children not in care and special children not in care. Also that the data was purely statistical so didn't show how motivated the children were.

Pauline Inwood replied that a qualitative study was being done which would include information on children's motivations and that could be brought to a future meeting.

It was reported that the Gatsby Charity Foundation had confirmed that there would be no further funding beyond the second phase that would end at the end of October 2006. Councillor Turner raised concerns about how this would be funded in the future and that allocating funding should be a priority.

Resolved to:

- 1. note the report.**
- 2. request that further details of the qualitative study on children's motivations be brought to a future meeting**
- 3. recommend to Council Cabinet that during the 2006/07 budget setting process priority be given towards providing funding to meet the Educational needs of Children Looked After**
- 4. that Council Cabinet should continue to improve the education of Children Looked After and explore other funding streams to meet the shortfall in the funding of the Gatsby Project when the grant from the Gatsby Foundation expires in October 2006.**

25/04 Statistical Information on Children Looked After

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Social Services that provided statistical information on children looked after.

The statistical evidence presented in the report set out details of progress made towards the Council's priorities of improving children and young people's prospects and improving the life chances for vulnerable and disadvantaged people and communities.

Councillor Hussain requested that in future data from other periods be included in the table to allow comparison. He also requested that a detailed report be provided on the process young people go through to be adopted. It was agreed to bring a detailed report to a future meeting.

Resolved to note the report and ask the Director of Social Services to report to a future meeting on the processes involved from deciding to offer a child for adoption and the adoption order being confirmed.

26/04 Adoption Agency Report

The Sub-Commission considered a report from the Director of Social Services that gave a yearly update on Derby City Adoption Agency.

It was reported that the Derby City Adoption Agency had continued to develop services to meet the needs of children for whom adoption was in their best interest. The Agency also continued to provide services to meet the needs of adults including adoptive parents, birth families and adopted adults.

The Adoption Panel met a total of 12 times between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005 and it was hoped that in the following year, the panel would meet more frequently.

It was reported that there was a significant drop in the number of children waiting for placement compared to the previous year, however, this was due to 2 audits taking place which decided that adoption was no longer a realistic plan for a number of children on the register. The children currently waiting for placement were now all being actively promoted as needing adoptive families.

It was reported that no children with special needs were placed during this time and that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find adoptive placements for children with special needs.

Councillor Hussain asked whether the department set their own targets and if so could the Sub Commission know what they were so they could gauge whether or not they were being met.

Keith Woodthorpe responded that targets were set as part of the business plan, which was a large document which was being worked on for the forthcoming year. It was agreed that these could be circulated once complete.

Resolved to note the report and ask the Director of Social Services to provide more information on the targets of the Adoption Agency.

MINUTES END