

Time Commenced: - 6.00 pm
Time Finished: - 7.00pm

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMISSION 30 SEPTEMBER 2009

Present: Councillors Bolton, Ginns and Higginbottom

12/09 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Williams.

13/09 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

The Chair introduced a late item following the issues raised by Voices in Action at the Children and Young People's Commission.

14/09 Declarations of Interest

There were no late items.

15/09 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16/09 Call-in

There were no items.

Items for Discussion

17/09 Statistical Information on Children Looked After

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Children and Young People which gave statistical information on children looked after and the relevant key performance indicators.

Rod Jones reported that the total number of children in care of the authority was 424 which was the highest period since the report had been produced. It was noted that since the report the number had reduced to 418 but the general trend continued to be upwards. As the increase was steady this suggested that the authority were in control so could respond to any changes in the numbers.

Members were informed that the results regarding children in care accessing education from the children's homes was collected by the

Education Welfare Officer who had visited each of the homes.

The Sub Commission noted that as the number of children in care placements were rising this could reflect the budget and this should be taken into account during the budget scrutiny process, as the rise could cause a budget pressure.

Resolved;

- 1. to note the report;**
- 2. that Council Cabinet takes into account the steady increase in the numbers of looked after children by the authority when setting the children services budget for 2010/10.**

18/09 Provisional Results of Children in Care 2009 Years 6 and 11

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Children and Young People on Exam Results for Children Looked After. It was reported that the figures reported were provisional as the cohort for year 6 were not yet published. It was noted that when the final results were published the Sub Commission would be provided with a further update.

Members were informed that there was an improvement in the percentage of children achieving level 4 or above in English and maths.

Members raised concerns as to what the department were doing to increase the results. It was reported that there was a pilot scheme called stick at it, which helped to enhance the reading skills of children. There was also the letterbox scheme that send out books and English games to children. It was reported that home tuition was also now available.

Resolved to note report and receive a further update at the next scheduled meeting of the Sub Commission.

19/09 Inspection and Management Visits to Children's Homes

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Children and Young People on the inspection and management visits to children's homes.

It was reported that Coronation Avenue had not been visited. All other home visited either received a satisfactory or good result. It was noted there were few requirements from the visits but a number of recommendations, the most important being the physical condition of the buildings.

Members were informed that Ofsted had expressed reservations about the Moorfield site, and the viability of it lasting longer than 5 years after its

refurbishment. It was noted that they did not wish to see homes that housed as many as 17 children. The Sub Commission were provided with details of the building works and decamp plans for the Moorfields site. It was reported that the Bute Walk site building work was on schedule.

The Sub Commission were informed that 41 out of 42 of the management visits were completed. It was noted that these happened each month plus the members visits and the home managers report. Following these actions are identified and followed through.

It was noted that further visits to the homes would be arranged for all Council members. It was reported that following the previous members visits it had been suggested that family units of children from the homes visit the Mayors Parlour, it was agreed this was a good idea.

Resolved;

- 1. to note the report;**
- 2. to schedule further members visits to the children's homes;**
- 3. to arrange for family units of children to visit the Mayors Parlour.**

20/09 Voices in Action Issues Raised by the Children and Young People's Commission

Members of the Sub Commission were informed that the letterbox contact was not a legally binding contract. Unfortunately there was not much that the authority could do to help in children in care if their birth parents did not want contact with them. The children could apply for a contact order, but this would be done following an assessment by a social worker and whether it was felt contact was a good idea. It was noted that when children were adopted there would be a plan around the adoption process before the adoptive parents were identified around contact in the future. It was agreed that sometimes letterbox contact raised the children in care's expectations unnecessarily.

Members noted that the life story work had been patchy due to a lack of resources and under staffing issues of social workers. It was reported that part of the life story work was direct work with the child and then a formal record being produced for them. It was now a procedure that was in place for all children that were placed for adoption. There was training provided to the social workers who carry out this work and a forum had been set up to discuss how this work was carried out including looking at the roles and responsibilities of the child and the social worker.

The Sub Commission were advised that the authority supported young people up to the age of 21 and beyond if they were still in full time education. It was reported that it was common for young people to still call on the service and ask for advice, there was no reduction in support for them.

Members of the Sub Commission were informed that all issues raised at the Children and Young people's Commission would be responded to in writing by the Director for Children and Young People to both Commissions.

MINUTES END