

Time commenced – 6.00pm
Time finished – 6.42pm

**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB BOARD
5 FEBRUARY 2013**

Present: Councillors Bailey, Bolton, Campbell, Martin, Whitby, Williams and F Winter

In Attendance: Councillor Rawson

29/12 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atwal and J Khan.

30/12 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

31/12 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Whitby wished it to be noted that he was a Foster Carer.

**32/12 Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Sub Board held
on 4 December 2012**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33/12 Feedback From Children's Home Visits

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People on Member Visits to Children's Homes. The report was presented by the Lead Service Manager, Regulated Services. It was reported that elected Members had carried out periodic visits to Children's homes to monitor the quality of care and welfare of children and young people and that visits fell within Members' corporate parenting responsibilities. It was further reported that after each visit Members reported on their observations and recommendations and Members were informed of action taken as a result.

Members noted that one of the recommendations for 86 Queensferry Gardens was that it needed a new dining table and chairs, bedroom furniture and desks and asked whether these items had now been supplied. It was reported that the furniture had been ordered and should be on its way to the home.

Members asked about vacancy rates in homes and what was being done to ensure that all beds were being utilised. It was reported that it was not desirable to fill all the homes, to allow vacancies to be used for placement planning and turnover. It was

confirmed that there were currently no children in external placements who could be placed in children's homes.

Members noted that there were no cooks at two of the homes and asked about the interim arrangements. It was reported that recruitment of cooks would take place and that until then the staff would prepare the meals.

Members agreed that all Councillors should be encouraged to visit children's homes. It was felt that all Councillors should be contacted to stress the importance of children's homes visits and that corporate parenting was the responsibility of all Councillors. Members wanted to avoid visits being carried out by the same small group of Councillors. Members noted that the more Councillors can get involved, the easier it is to demonstrate corporate parenting to Ofsted.

Members discussed the possibility of taking young people to future children's homes visits. It was felt that a young person could help to prompt Councillors as to the sorts of questions that they should be asking.

Resolved to note the report.

34/12 Fostering Agency Report

The Board received a report from the Service Director, Specialist Services on the Fostering Agency. The report was presented by the Lead Service Manager, Regulated Services. It was reported that the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services required that the executive side of the Local Authority:

- receive written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every three months;
- monitor the management and outcomes of the service in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children; and
- satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration.

It was reported that the Fostering Agency was also required to produce a Statement of Purpose which was updated once a year. The report presented to Members covered the period October to December 2012 and the updated Statement of Purpose.

Members noted that the number of people expressing an interest in fostering had remained steady, with mainstream approvals more or less keeping pace with de-registrations and the number of approved carers in each category, apart from support carers, more or less unchanged. It was explained that the number of people expressing an interest had remained steady for a number of years but there were seasonal changes.

Members asked what work had been done on looking at the possibility of having a professional foster carer scheme. It was reported that the viability of having such a scheme was being looked at as part of the fostering review. Members noted that

there was a case for a scheme as children were still going to external placements outside of the city boundary.

Members discussed how and why de-registration occurred and noted that if a foster carer felt that de-registration was unfair they would have the right to an independent review carried out by the Independent Review Mechanism. It was reported that when de-registration occurred, legal advice would be sought at every stage.

Resolved to note the report.

35/12 Proposed Legislative Changes to the Post of Virtual School Head

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director for Children and Young People on Proposed Legislative Changes to the Post of Virtual School head. Members noted the following proposals:

- the appointment of a Virtual School Head (VSH) as a statutory requirement for local authorities as soon as parliamentary time allowed;
- to make the VSH a statutory post with responsibility for discharging the existing duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of their looked after children, wherever they are placed.
- The VSH is a nominated officer in terms of the April 2011 regulations and guidance for looked after children and care leavers.

Members noted that schools with looked after children could get the Pupil Premium. Members asked what mechanism was in place to ensure that the Pupil Premium was spent on those looked after children. It was reported that work was being done on this and schools were involved. It was explained that the proposed legislative changes would strengthen the role of the VSH in ensuring that the Pupil Premium was spent on looked after children.

Members asked whether they could check on how a school was spending the Pupil Premium. It was reported that schools were required to publish this information online.

Resolved to note the proposals.

MINUTES END