

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 7 October 2013

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs:

M A G Versallion (Chairman)

A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)

D Bowater

N B Costin

Mrs S A Goodchild

B Wells

Officers (voting)

Mrs E Grant – Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services

Carers (non-voting)

Mrs J Crawford

Mrs H Philips

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Mrs A Barker
Mrs J Ogle

Officers in Attendance: Mr G Jones – Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Miss H Redding – Assistant Director School Improvement
Ms C Seemarks – Personal Advisor/Participation Support Worker
Mr N Wood – Interim Head of Service for Adoption and Fostering

Others in Attendance: Representative – Children in Care Council

(Councillor A L Dodwell in the Chair)

CPP/13/22 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 22 July 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/13/23 **Members' Interests**

Councillor Costin declared a general interest as the Chairman of Barnfield College.

CPP/13/24 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman advised the meeting that she had greatly enjoyed the recent Children in Care Council annual awards evening and thanked the young people and Personal Advisor/Participation Support Worker for their efforts. The Chairman then referred to comments she had received regarding the apparent reduction in the number of care leavers present at the awards. In response the Personal Advisor/Participation Support Worker informed the meeting that all young people had been invited to attend the awards evening. The meeting noted the explanatory comments of the Children in Care Council representative on this matter.

Members expressed their thanks to the Assistant Director Children's Services for presenting the awards. In response the Assistant Director expressed his enjoyment of the awards evening and commented on the young people's appreciation of the strong Member and senior officer attendance at the event.

A Member referred to the positive comments expressed by three foster carers at the awards evening on the quality of the support they received from the Council.

A foster carer raised the point that Shared Lives carers did not have an awards evening and suggested that one be introduced. In response the Assistant Director undertook to examine this issue.

(Councillor Versallion in the Chair)

The Chairman apologised to the Panel for his late arrival which had been caused by his attendance at an earlier meeting. He too commented positively on the presence of senior Members and officers at the awards evening. The Chairman also informed the Panel that he had received a gift from one of the children in care and would be writing to thank him. He then advised the Panel of staffing changes at Assistant Director level in the Children's Services Directorate following the recent departure of the Assistant Director for Learning, Commissioning and Partnerships.

CPP/13/25 **Entitlements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers - Workshop**

Following the earlier reference to the Children in Care Council awards evening (minute CPP/13/24 above refers) the Children in Care Council (CiCC) representative advised Members that, at that event, children and young people had been asked to write down on cards what they had felt to be their proudest moment in the last year. The representative had brought some of the cards with her and circulated them amongst the Panel for Members to read.

The CiCC representative next requested that Panel Members consider attending a meeting with CiCC representatives to be held outside school/college hours. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations explained that a meeting arranged for that time would allow a greater opportunity for the young people to attend. He added that the meeting would be informal in nature whilst stressing the importance of Member involvement. The Chairman gave his support for such a meeting and the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations undertook to report to the Panel with possible meeting dates and venues.

The meeting then turned to the forthcoming attendance of CiCC representatives at a meeting of the All Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in the House of Commons to discuss entitlements for Looked After Children and care leavers. The Panel noted that the All Parliamentary Group was now scheduled to meet in November rather than October as had originally been scheduled.

The Panel had before it a list showing five entitlements for Looked After Children and five entitlements for care leavers which had been identified as the most important by attendees at a previous meeting of the All Parliamentary Group held in February 2013. The CiCC representative asked Members to consider the entitlements in the context of the following question:

'As Corporate Parents, how will you ensure young people are receiving the entitlements they are due to receive as a looked after child or care leaver?'

Both Members and officers separated into groups of two to three persons to discuss the question and write their answers on cards. At the end of the exercise each group outlined their responses and these were discussed by the Panel as a whole. During the discussion the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations referred to the need to ensure the review of the Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Looked After Children at least every six months. At the conclusion all cards were passed to the Personal Advisor/Participation Support Worker for collation.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the points made through the workshop be captured and brought back to a future meeting;**
- 2 that the collated points be passed to the Children in Care Council representatives due to attend the All Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in November 2013;**
- 3 that the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations submit an item on measures to ensure the review of Looked After Children's Personal Education Plans to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.**

CPP/13/26 **Quarter One Report on the Fostering Service - April to June 2013**

The Chairman welcomed Neil Wood, the Council's new Interim Head of Service for Adoption and Fostering.

The Panel received a report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter One (April to June 2013) with comparison to previous quarters.

The Panel received updates on the following areas:

- Recruitment of foster carers
- Placements for children
- Training for foster carers
- Key events
- Ending of the Shared Service Arrangement

Following an introduction by the Interim Head of Service for Adoption and Fostering, and additional comment by the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations, Members sought clarification on a number of issues within the report. In particular discussion took place of the forthcoming ending of the shared service arrangement with Bedford Borough Council for adoption and fostering. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services advised that a range of possible options for the administration of the Central Bedfordshire Council service fostering and adoption panels would be considered shortly and that there would be full regard to budget pressures. The meeting noted that, as a result of disaggregation, each council would need to employ its own specialist officers and the overall cost of service provision would therefore rise for both authorities.

NOTED

the content of the Quarter One report on the Fostering Service for the period April to June 2013.

CPP/13/27 **Interim Report of the Virtual School for Looked After Children**

The Panel considered a report by the Executive Member for Children's Services which provided information on the role of the Virtual School for Looked After Children and the outcomes for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2012/13. In addition the report identified the steps taken since September 2012 to develop the role of the Virtual School in order to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and identified the next stages of its development.

The Assistant Director School Improvement advised the meeting that the report before them was interim in nature and had been provided in order that Members received information, albeit provisional, on the educational outcomes for Looked After Children rather than wait until next March for the annual report, which contained full, validated data.

The Assistant Director School Improvement then worked through the report introducing and developing the information contained under the following headings:

- The Virtual School
- Background
- Exclusions
- Attendance
- Pupil's Achievement
(including Key Stage 1 results, Key Stage 2 provisional outcomes, Key Stage 4 provisional outcomes)
- Governance
- Priority actions for 2013/14

Whilst various issues were raised for clarification and discussion, Members expressed satisfaction with the steps identified to improve academic outcomes for Looked After Children in the future.

In conclusion the Chairman referred to the revised format adopted to convey information on Key Stage 4 provisional outcomes and requested that the original format be reintroduced in future reports as it clearly illustrated cohort achievement.

RESOLVED

that the measures taken to improve the academic outcomes for Looked After Children, together with those identified as Priority Actions for 2013/14, be approved.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.37 p.m.)