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**Meeting:** Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 27 June 2011

**Subject:** **The Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the year 2010 - 2011**

**Report of:** **Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services**

**Summary:** This report sets out the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel during 2010/2011. Members will note that it demonstrates robust Corporate Parenting arrangements are in place in Central Bedfordshire Council. The Chairman has agreed that following discussion of the report, Mr Brian Roberts from the Foster Carers Alliance will be available to discuss with Members of the Committee his own perspective about Central Bedfordshire's Corporate Parenting.

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**Advising Officer:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services

**Contact Officer:** Catherine Parry, Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations.

**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** All

**Function of:** Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

This report directly supports Priority 2 of Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan 2009-2011, Educating, Protecting and Providing Opportunities for Children and Young People (Looked After). The information also supports the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan priorities, and in particular Priority 2, protecting children and keeping them safe and Priority 1, increased educational achievement. All the priorities relate to children who are Looked After by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Strong Corporate Parenting arrangements are central to improving all services for children and young people in care. The focus on Corporate Parenting at strategic level within Central Bedfordshire Council is delivered by The Corporate Parenting Panel, The Children in Care Council, The Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

All officers and Members of the Council are corporate parents and therefore responsible for Corporate Parenting in line with current legislation and guidance. The Corporate Parenting Panel meets to review actions taken.

**Financial:**

The services are funded through core Council budgets. This includes all costing relevant for Looked After Children's Services including placements, health, education provision and frontline social work teams.

**Legal:**

The legal framework is laid out in The Children Act 1989, Looked After and Leaving Care Act 2000, Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and new Care Planning regulations implemented nationally in April 2011.

**Risk Management:**

There are no new risk management implications arising from the report. The function continues to be subject to announced and unannounced inspections and preparation for this is constantly ongoing. The Annual Report mentions that there were no unannounced inspections during the time covered. This is correct. An unannounced inspection was published in May 2011 and will be included in the 2011/12 report.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

There are no new staffing implications arising from this report. The current resources deployed enable the service to deliver all of its statutory responsibilities.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

The service will respond to the recommendations of an Equality Impact Assessment currently being undertaken. This will influence service planning and review 2011 -12.

**Community Safety:**

There are no new community safety implications arising from this report.

**Sustainability:**

There are no new sustainability implications arising from this report.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- 1. That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**
  - (a) note the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel 2010 – 2011 (Appendix 1);**
  - (b) advise the Corporate Parenting Panel of any issues they may wish to focus on during the ensuing year; and**
  - (c) Following discussion of the Report, ask Mr Brian Roberts any questions they may have about his perception of foster caring in Central Bedfordshire.**

## Background Information

1. The Annual report of the Corporate Parenting Panel (Appendix 1) outlines the delivery of the Looked After Children's Services and allows the Council to demonstrate that it has delivered its Corporate Parenting responsibilities for the municipal year.
2. A good Corporate Parent must offer everything that a good parent would, including stability. It must address both the difficulties which children in care experience and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services. It is also important that children have a chance to influence and shape the parenting they receive. The Corporate Parenting Panel has challenged and supported the services delivered and commented on their effectiveness of provision for the Looked After children and young people of Central Bedfordshire throughout 2010 – 2011.
3. 'Care Matters a time for change' (2007) set out the Government's commitment to all Looked after Children, to secure improved and sustainable outcomes for children in care. The Corporate Parenting Panel works to this guidance.
4. The outcomes that Central Bedfordshire aspires to are set out by what was then the Department of Children and Families, now the Department for Education that said: **"Our Aspirations for children in care are no less than those each parent has for their own children. Children in care are often in much greater need than other children but much less likely to get the help they require. We aim to create a care system that provides every child with a safe, happy, healthy, secure and loving childhood, nurturing their aspirations and enabling them to fulfil their potential."**
5. These aspirations have subsequently been incorporated into the new national Care Planning regulations launched in April 2011.
6. The updated Care Planning regulations 2011 further support the implementation of the Care Matters themes setting them into a statutory framework from April.
7. Through the inspection regime, the Council will need to demonstrate that the regulations have been adopted. Policies and procedures are under regular review to ensure the regulations are adopted in Central Bedfordshire Council.

## Corporate Parenting

8. Terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel are currently being revised in accordance with new Statutory Guidance and will be placed on the Web when agreed.

9. In order to measure, monitor and evaluate changes and improvements made throughout the year a performance framework inclusive of key indicators is subject to internal monitoring and review via the Corporate Parenting Panel. This information will be collated and presented to Overview and Scrutiny as part of the next annual year end report. This will support and not replace the regular performance information that comes to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
10. The Corporate Parenting Panel met on the 25<sup>th</sup> March and agreed several key areas for improvement for this next municipal year. These are outlined in point 16 of the year end report attached as Appendix 1. These will form the basis of the Corporate Parenting Panel's work plan for this year.
11. The Corporate Parenting Panel will be keep its work plan for 2011 -2012 under regular review to ensure ongoing monitoring, evaluation and development of the service for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to suggest areas of enquiry.

### **Children in Care Council Work plan**

12. Central Bedfordshire Council have a secure and active Children in Care Council (CiCC), whose work plan is agreed and reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel 3 times a year. The CiCC meet with the Corporate Parenting Panel at these times. This plan will ensure the most vulnerable children being supported by the Council have an opportunity to air their views and influence service delivery.

### **The Pledge**

13. Central Bedfordshire CiCC developed the current pledge in partnership with all Looked After Children. It is a Pledge that outlines the Council's offer to its Looked After Children and is a core element of the information given to all the children and young people when coming into care. The CiCC will review this and report to the Corporate Parenting Panel this year.

### **Children's Trust/Local Safeguarding Board**

14. The Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Board will continue to ensure that services for the most vulnerable of the Council's clients continue to be robust and improved in line with updated procedures and statutory guidance through challenge of the delivery groups reporting directly to them.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

15. The Committee is requested to note The Year End Report as published on the Council's website and make comments on any issues they think that the Corporate Parenting Panel may wish to focus on in the coming year.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - The Year end Review of the Corporate Parenting Panel for 2010 - 2011