

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Committee Room 2, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable on Monday, 5 September 2011

PRESENT

Cllr M A G Versallion (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs A Barker (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs Mrs S A Goodchild
N J Sheppard

Cllrs B Wells

Apologies for Absence: Cllr D Bowater
Cllr Mrs D B Gurney
Mrs J Ogley
Mrs J Crawford
Mrs L Rojek

Members in Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis

Officers in Attendance: Mrs E Grant – Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Mrs C Parry – Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations
Ms M Peaston – Committee Services Manager
Ms S Scholey – Team Leader for Looked after Children Team

Others in Attendance: Representatives – Children in Care Council

CPP/11/5 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

As a matter arising from the minutes, the Chairman agreed to take an update on allowances for foster parents which would be the subject of a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 September and also to the Executive on 4 October 2011.

The Panel recalled that at its last meeting it had expressed a preference for Option 1 as detailed in a presentation to the meeting, and noted that consultation had now been undertaken with foster parents. Whilst no foster parents were present today, those present at the meeting on 5 July 2011 had supported Option 1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, meeting on 6 September, would be advised of the Panel's reconfirmed preference for Option 1 following regulatory consultation.

AGREED to note the update.

CPP/11/6 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

There were no announcements or matters of communication from the Chairman.

CPP/11/7 **Members' Interests**

Personal Interests:

There were no declarations of personal interests.

Personal and Prejudicial Interests:

There were no declarations of personal and prejudicial interests.

CPP/11/8 **Corporate Parenting Panel Meetings - Status**

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services seeking the Panel's views on whether its meetings should be held in public or continue to be held as private, internal meetings.

It was noted that the decision to hold the Panel's meetings in private was made by the Shadow Executive prior to vesting day in 2009, based on a legacy authority's practice. Legislation did not require the meetings to be held specifically either in public or in private. The Chairman had previously indicated his preference for the meetings to be held in public.

It was noted that if the Panel met in public and any sensitive matters needed consideration, the Panel could resolve to exclude the press and public.

Consideration was given to the practice of the two other Bedfordshire local authorities holding their Corporate Parenting Panel meetings in private. The Panel was advised that holding Central Bedfordshire Council's Corporate Parenting Panel meetings in public would not lead to any challenges with the other authorities, and might lead to the reconsideration of their local arrangements to increase transparency.

The Panel considered the impact of a change to holding the meetings in public on the young people for whom the Council was a corporate parent. It was noted that the changes could be explained to them.

AGREED

that the meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel be held in public with effect from the next meeting.

CPP/11/9 **Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers**

The Panel received a draft Executive report on the transition to adulthood for young people leaving the Council's care, on which the Panel's comments were sought.

The report set out the current policy for financial support for care leavers and proposals for updating them.

The Panel was advised that young people leaving care were entitled to the allowances set out in the report. Social Workers ensured that care leavers were aware of the allowances and helped them to access the sums. Where an allowance involved purchases being made, for example to set up home, young people were assisted to make their choices just as those living with their parents would be, and goods were not always bought as new.

The Panel noted that no allowance was identified for health and dental care needs and this should be included.

The Panel asked for some of the sums to be reviewed prior to submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive.

Further to comments made it was noted that consideration was currently being given to the opportunities for providing a service to schools through collating data on the outcomes for school leavers, which would include data on care leavers.

The Panel considered it appropriate that amendments to the sums set out in the policy should in future be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services after consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services, rather than retained for decision by the Executive.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:-

- 1. some amended figures to reflect the Corporate Parenting Panel's deliberations;**
- 2. additional provision of an allowance for health and dental care;**
- 3. to note that the Corporate Parenting Panel advised that in future, a review would be carried out annually by the Corporate Parenting Panel, and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services would seek delegated authority to amend the sums, after consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services.**

CPP/11/10 **Annual Reports for the Adoption Service, Fostering Service and Private Fostering Provision**

The Panel received the statutory reports which would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following day. The Panel was invited to comment, and noted that any comments would be reported at the Committee meeting.

The Panel noted that the Adoption Service would report on a 6-monthly basis to this Panel and the Fostering Service would report quarterly.

The Panel also noted that the Ofsted inspection of adoption at Central Bedfordshire Council would be published on the Council's website later in the week.

AGREED

to note the Annual Reports for the Adoption Agency, the Fostering Service and the Private Fostering Provision and to commend the services.

CPP/11/11 **Corporate Parenting - Introduction of Member and Officer Training**

The Chairman advised that, in his opinion, all Members of the Council should receive training on their role as a corporate parent.

A discussion ensued during which agreement was reached as to how this might appropriately be carried out. The Panel considered that there would be insufficient time to run a session in the slot before a Council meeting.

Whilst acknowledging that School Governors also needed to be aware of the role, the Panel considered that it was appropriate to keep School Governors' training separate.

AGREED

to put in place a programme of briefing sessions to ensure all Members receive the same information and are aware of their role as a corporate parent, with the following arrangements:

- **a session of 45-60 minutes to include a presentation followed by opportunity for questions and discussion**
- **the session to be run three times in the period up to April 2012**
- **the sessions to be run at different times of day and on different days of the week**
- **officers to be invited to training also as corporate parents**
- **in future, the corporate parent session to be part of the induction for all new members of the Council.**

Note:

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations will model this training for the Chair and Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services to approve prior to its release and delivery.

CPP/11/12 **Work Programme**

The Panel noted the draft Work Programme and identified some additional items.

AGREED:-

1. **to add the following items:**
 - **year-end presentation from the Children in Care Council**
 - **Role of Virtual Headteacher (November 2011)**
2. **that the Work Programme should be considered at every Panel meeting;**
3. **that Panel meetings should always be held at Priory House unless there was a significant reason why this was not possible.**

CPP/11/13 **The Flower Exercise**

The Panel took part in an exercise together with Children in Care Council members.

The exercise stimulated discussion about what a good Looked After Children's Service would deliver.

The thoughts and ideas would be written up by Marie Short / Participation Officer to be drawn on in future service planning.

The work would be displayed at the Looked After Children's Awards Evening on 27 October 2011.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.20 p.m.)