

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 4 February 2013

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs M A G Versallion (Chairman), A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman), N B Costin, N J Sheppard, A M Turner and B Wells

Officers (voting)

Mrs J Ogley - Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Carers (non-voting)

Mrs J Crawford and Mrs H Philips

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs D B Gurney

Officers in Attendance: Ms F Mackirdy – Head of Adoption and Fostering
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Ms M Short – Participation Officer
Mrs S Tyler – Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations

Others in Attendance: Representatives – Children in Care Council

CPP/11/26 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 5 November 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/11/27 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman advised that item 8 (Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2012/13) would be brought forward and considered before item 5. Members were aware that item 8 included a presentation by representatives of the Children in Care Council and considering their item prior to the other reports would provide them with the opportunity to leave in time to attend another appointment.

The Chairman advised that, arising from the Panel's decision at its last meeting (minute CPP/12/20 refers), a working group of the Panel had visited Hertfordshire County Council to observe a corporate parenting meeting at that Authority. He expressed his thanks to the County Council for its hospitality. The Chairman then advised that similar trips were planned to two other local authorities for the same purpose. After the trips had taken place consideration would be given as to whether any of the practices observed could be adopted by this Council's Panel to improve its ways of working.

The Chairman then expressed his appreciation to the Head of Adoption and Fostering for the positive outcome arising from the Ofsted inspection of the fostering service in December 2012 (minute CPP/11/30 below refers).

CPP/11/28 **Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

CPP/11/29 **Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2012/13**

The Panel considered the Children in Care Council Annual Report 2012/13 and the Work Programme Priorities for 2013/14. In addition Members received a presentation from representatives of the Children in Care Council (CiCC).

At the Chairman's request the Participation Officer undertook to circulate copies of the first CiCC newsletter to all Councillors. The Director of Social Care, Health and Housing stated that a link would also be included within the Staff Central magazine.

With regard to the creation of a dedicated website for Children in Care the Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations reported that discussions were ongoing with Corporate Communications and ICT regarding the form a website could take. A Member with experience in this field indicated that she would be willing to assist in the design and development of the site.

A Member referred to the three pony days organised by the British Horse Society where young people had had the opportunity to learn how to care for the ponies and learn the basis of riding them. The Member stated that young people would be welcome to visit the horses that she owned. The Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations undertook to establish the insurance requirements for such a visit.

Discussion took place on holding the proposed annual CiCC conference for members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The conference would provide an opportunity for Members to meet the different CiCC groups and see their work and achievements. Although the conference could also be open to senior Central Bedfordshire Council managers the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing reminded the meeting that all Council employees held a corporate responsibility for Looked After Children. The possible date of the conference was also considered with the Easter holiday and summer holidays having been

suggested by the CiCC. A Member commented on the proximity of the Easter holiday and the relative lack of time to prepare.

The meeting considered possible changes to the way the Annual Awards evening was organised; the number of attendees having lead to a lengthy evening and boredom amongst some of those present. Although the CiCC had considered splitting the age range for the evening and having two different events the representatives were also aware that the Awards Evening was the only time at which all Looked After Children were gathered together. An earlier start to the evening was suggested but the representatives advised that starting at 6.00 p.m. allowed young people to prepare for the evening after a day at school or college. Further discussion took place on possible changes to the arrangements especially with regard to the number of young children who received nominations for an award. The possible dates for the Awards Evening in 2013 were noted.

With regard to the attendance by CiCC members at a national CiCC event in London to share examples of good practice the meeting noted that the CiCC members had come away with ideas on how to improve Central Bedfordshire's CiCC. The Participation Officer undertook to circulate feedback on the trip to the Panel.

The meeting considered a proposal by the CiCC that Looked After Children nominate social workers for an award for their efforts in helping young people. Whilst welcoming this suggestion it was suggested that the range of officers eligible for nomination be extended. The Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations undertook to progress this item and report to the next Panel meeting.

On behalf of the Panel the Chairman thanked the CiCC representatives for attending the meeting.

NOTED

- 1 the Children in Care Annual Report 2012/13;**
- 2 the Children in Care Council Work Programme Priorities 2013/14;**
- 3 the presentation by the Children in Care Council representatives.**

(Note: The CiCC members left the meeting room at the conclusion of this item).

CPP/11/30

Outcomes of Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service - 11-14 December 2012

The Panel received a presentation on the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of the Fostering Service which had taken place between 11-14 December 2012. As was required under the current Ofsted inspection framework ten working days notice of the inspection had been given. Members noted that the inspection was the first to take place since the Council had come in to being.

The meeting was advised that the two Ofsted inspectors on site had:

- Examined records
- Met with children, foster carers, staff, other agencies
- Considered the feedback from the surveys sent out in April 2012
- Analysed performance data and the self-assessment submitted in May 2012

A judgement about Overall Effectiveness had been formed based on four sub-judgements; these being:

- Outcomes for children
- Quality of service
- Safeguarding
- Leadership and management

The Overall Effectiveness of the service had been judged to be 'Good'. In the sub-judgements of 'outcomes for children' and 'safeguarding' the Council was judged to be 'Good'. With regard to 'quality of service' and 'leadership and management' the Council was judged to be 'Adequate'.

The Head of Adoption and Fostering informed Members of those areas that the Ofsted inspectors had considered required attention. The meeting noted that the Ofsted report contained eight recommendations and these, together with the related responses contained in the Foster Service operational action plan, were set out in the presentation for consideration.

The Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that a new inspection framework was due to be introduced from 1 April 2013 which would remove the separate inspections of adoption services, fostering services and services for Looked After Children. Instead there would be one, unannounced, ten day inspection of services for Looked After Children which would consider the placements and support given to them and the planning for their permanency including adoption if appropriate.

In response to a query the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained the positive contribution made by Ofsted.

RESOLVED

that the Foster Service operational action plan, drawn up in response to address the eight recommendations contained within the Ofsted report and set out in the presentation to the Corporate Parenting Panel, be confirmed and adopted.

CPP/11/31

Quarter Three Report on the Fostering Service - October to December 2012

The Panel received a report by the Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during

Quarter Three (October to December 2012) 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
- Ofsted inspection

The Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that the number of foster carers recruited was similar to the figure for the same period in 2011 as was the number of placements made. In response to a query the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the Independent Fostering Agency provision was used to place some children in order to allow siblings to remain together.

The Head of Adoption and Fostering advised that, further to comments made by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services at the last meeting (minute CPP/12/23 refers), she would ensure that, in future, data was included as part of the relevant text of the report as well as in graphical form within the report's appendix.

In response to a query the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that, theoretically, all foster carers could care for any child. Foster carers within the shared Adoption and Fostering service were not, therefore, categorised as being either Central Bedfordshire Council or Bedford Borough Council carers. However, there was a geographical element, amongst others, in deciding where children should be placed.

Following further discussion the Head of Adoption and Fostering confirmed that the number of Looked After Children was increasing and would continue to do so. She stated this was the result of economic and social factors coupled with increased professional awareness. She further stated that officers were aware of likely increases in Looked After Children that could arise as a result of the projected general population growth within Central Bedfordshire.

NOTED

the content of the Quarter Three report on the Fostering Service for the period October to December 2012.

CPP/11/32 **Adoption Improvement Grant**

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services which outlined the changes to adoption law and practice which had been introduced during the summer of 2012 together with further amendments which had been proposed in a consultation which had finished in December 2012. Prior to this, in October 2012, each council had been advised of the allocation of an Adoption Improvement Grant to assist it with the

implementation of the reforms. The meeting noted that the grants had to be allocated within the 2012-13 financial year with clear reporting deadlines to the Department for Education on 18 January and 15 April 2013. The meeting also noted that the allocation to Central Bedfordshire was £37,010.

The Head of Adoption and Fostering worked through the proposed options for spending the grant as set out in the report. The proposals were:

- The pilot of a specialist Family Finding Project which concentrated on good quality publicity and follow up for children who were difficult to place
- A short time-limited project to consider the feasibility of implementing a fostering for adoption model
- A short term increase in capacity for the Adoption Panel Medical Advisor
- A short term increase in capacity through the recruitment of a locum adoption advisor
- A contribution toward the appointment of an administrator to organise events for the local adoption consortium

The total of the five proposals came to £36,720.

With regard to the proposed implementation of a fostering for adoption model a query was raised regarding the action required to encourage and attract placements. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that since the report had been written the Council had received additional grant from the government in support of its 'Further Action on Adoption' programme to increase the number of adopters. The meeting noted the government was also encouraging local authorities to join with each other in local consortia to improve efficiency.

In response to a query regarding the measurement of outcomes the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the Adoption Scorecard would reveal whether there had been any improvement in the Council's performance in terms of reduced adoption timescales.

Discussion took place on various issues relating to Looked After Children's wellbeing. In connection with this the Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that report on apprenticeship schemes within the Council would be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED

that the proposed options for the spend of the Adoption Improvement Grant, as outlined in the preamble above, be approved.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.03 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Dated.....