

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE (INFORMAL)	AGENDA ITEM No.
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Report of the Corporate Director People and Communities

Contact Officer(s): Nicola Curley
Contact Details: 01733 864065

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE NEW MEETING SCHEDULE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed new structure of the Corporate Parenting Committee, with recommendations about both the formal and informal meetings, and ways in which the twin responsibilities of the Committee in relation to effective challenge and advocacy can be enhanced in the new model.

It addresses all areas of priority for the Committee, especially Effective Care Planning (2); Placement Stability and range of high quality placement provision (3); Health Issues (4); and Educational Attainment (5). It is also pertinent to all of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee adopts the report's recommendations as follows:

- That there are 3 formal and 3 informal meetings a year
- That the informal meeting is jointly led by a representative from the Children in Care Council or Care Leavers' Forum and has a revised start time of 5.30pm
- That foster carer representatives are now invited to the formal meetings only
- That new reporting mechanisms are developed to enhance the Committee's information about particular issues
- That decisions made at the informal meetings will be referred to the formal meetings for final ratification
- That a six month development programme delivered by the Local Government Association is agreed in principle
- That the work programme is amended on the basis of the new structure and to avoid duplication with other Committees

3. LINK TO THE CHILDREN IN CARE PLEDGE

- 3.1 The report addresses all areas of the Children in Care pledge and the Care Leavers' Charter. It specifically addresses their participation rights, and develops the Committee's knowledge and ability to effectively scrutinise how well positive outcomes are being achieved for children and young people.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Ofsted Inspection in May 2015 identified two areas where the Council needed to develop its performance:
- Ensure that there is a more robust approach to Corporate Parenting and that elected Members and senior managers listen to, and act on, the experiences of children and

young people in order to improve their lives.

- Further develop the role of the Children in Care Council [CiCC] to help make this happen

4.2 Significant changes have already taken place with the change of the Corporate Parenting Panel to a formal Committee, and the Children in Care Council has also benefitted from additional support and a dedicated Engagement and Participation Officer. This report is designed to move the Committee into the next phase of the improvement journey and set a framework for the new ways of working.

5. KEY ISSUES

Changes to the Meetings

5.1 With the decision to change the Corporate Parenting Panel to a formal Committee, it was recognised that there would be a need to develop the meetings in such a way as to enable young people to participate to a greater degree than they had been previously, and to take into account that Committees were public fora.

5.2 In light of this, the Chair and Vice Chair met with Democratic Services and officers to review possible options. It was decided that the best model to recommend to the Committee was to divide the meetings into three formal meetings (operating as all other Committees), and three meetings which were informal and would allow the most participation by young people. The latter meeting would be split into two parts, although it was hoped that young people would attend throughout, and there would be a minimum of reports to that meeting to facilitate a more engaging atmosphere. To encourage open discussion, it was also recommended that foster carers did not attend this meeting, but remained represented, as currently, on the formal Committee.

5.3 The Chair, Councillor Bisby, would meet formally with the Children in Care Council, and agree the items that they would like to be discussed at the informal meetings, ensuring that there was a clear link to the subject matter at the following formal meeting. The Children in Care Council would also be asked to produce a simple rating around the Council's performance in terms of the Pledge for each informal meeting, and this would also be developed with the Care Leavers' Forum. A representative from the Children in Care Council would be asked to co- chair the informal meeting with Councillor Bisby.

5.4 The meeting itself would include standard performance information from officers at each meeting, but presented in a more abridged manner; a report from the Corporate Parenting champions; information from the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Forum; and a case study that would focus on different aspects of the multi-agency role in relation to Children in Care and Care Leavers. Members will, of course, continue to have the opportunity to raise issues and concerns of their own, and to question officers.

5.5 Any decisions made at the informal meetings would then be formally ratified at the next formal Committee meeting by way of a brief updating report.

5.6 The role of the Corporate Parenting champions was recommended to change slightly, and new volunteers were being requested from the Committee. There is a separate report on this item, as Members will see, and it would be helpful if it is considered in the light of this report's recommendations.

5.7 The meeting format and venue was also considered and it was agreed to change the meeting room and suggest an earlier start to facilitate young people's attendance. The recommendation is that the informal meeting regularly commences from 5.30pm going forward.

Data and Performance Framework and Work Programme

- 5.8 Due to the changes in the meeting structure, it was recognised that it would not be possible to bring the volume of reports to the attention of the Committee as has been the position in the past. It was also acknowledged that some reports were being presented at more than one Committee, and this was leading to duplication and a poor use of Member time. The reports themselves are also not always in a format that enables Members to quickly appreciate issues, and enable timely and effective challenge.
- 5.9 In light of this, the recommendation to the Committee is that the work plan is amended over time to focus on the key issues of importance for Children in Care and Care Leavers, and that the reporting mechanisms are evolved over time to support a more focussed scrutiny of outcomes and the effectiveness of Council and wider partnership services for Children in Care and Care Leavers. This is likely to take about 6 months to fully achieve, but the formal Committee will receive a fuller report around this issue and a proposed work programme to take the Committee to the end of the financial year. It is asked, however, that the work programme appended to this report is agreed as an initial step.

Local Government Association Programme

- 5.10 It is also recommended that the Committee agrees a six month development programme, which will be delivered by the Local Government Association (LGA) and senior officers to help embed these changes and address fully the points raised in the Ofsted Action Plan.
- 5.11 This will comprise a review of the data and performance framework presented to the Committee; enhancing the Committee's strength in scrutiny and advocacy; developing the role of the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Forum in feedback and challenge; and developing the Member champion roles.
- 5.12 The Committee will be invited to observe other Corporate Parenting Committees or Panels; will be asked for their input to the model; and ultimately attend workshops to ensure the effective implementation of the work and support the Committee in its role. The Chair will also be supported in parallel to enhance his role and liaison with the Children in Care Council. As a first step, the LGA advisor would attend the next formal meeting as an observer.
- 5.13 This is a very positive opportunity to develop and embed best practice, enabling the Corporate Parenting Committee to hold the Council to the very highest expectations in its delivery of services and achieving the best outcomes for the children and young people in and leaving care in Peterborough. It is hoped that this will be supported by all Members.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There will be some implications for Performance officers in the medium term in relation to the new reports required, but this will not be a significant piece of work.
- 6.2 Support will be required from Democratic Services in relation to the LGA development programme, but there are minimal financial implications in relation to this.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The issues in this report have been consulted upon with the Children in Care Council and they will bring views to the informal meeting as well.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 If the recommendations are agreed by the Committee then the new work plan will be finalised and presented to the next formal meeting. The LGA development programme will begin in October 2016.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 Not applicable

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Corporate Parenting Committee Work Programme – To follow