

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 19 March 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Paul Arnold (Chair), Vikki Hartstean (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, John Cecil, Cici Manwa and Augustine Ononaji

Wendy Caswell and Jackie Enifer

Apologies: Councillors Georgette Polley

In attendance:

Carly Banks, Participation and Engagement Officer
Sharon Hall, Assistant Director, SET CAMHS and Children's Services for South Essex & Thurrock
Clare Moore, Strategic Lead - YOS and Prevention
Ruth Murdock
Keeley Pullen, Head Teacher for Virtual School
Tina Russell, Area Manager, NELFT
Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help
Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director Housing and Development

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

32. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting on 19th March 2024 were approved as a correct record.

33. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

34. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

35. Thurrock Young Voices

Thurrock's Young Voices presented their report to the Corporate Parenting Committee:

- Thurrock Young Voices has played an active part in the CLA (Children Looked After) awards.

- Looking to expand of power of participation training.

Members noted and asked the following questions:

- The Chair thanked Thurrock Young Voices and was looking forward to attending future events.
- Councillor Hartstean asked what the best thing Thurrock Young Voices is have achieved.
 - Feedback, attending and organising events and being recognised.
- Councillor Ononaji congratulated Young Voices on their skills, suggestions and noted their good ideas. He sort more detail on the carnival theme.
 - To bring together cultures to represent who we are and where we are from.
 - Different workstations, flags and masks and celebrating cultures.
- Councillor Carter asked for details on the optional survey.
 - Aim is to be more comfortable to get honest answers.
 - To create no judgement spaces.
- Councillor Manwa noted the importance of sanitary products for young people. Support for care leavers and looks forward for more improvements.
- Councillor Cecil asked if it would be helpful to have a friend in interviews.
 - Young people would love to, but young people are not always proud to be care, it is about being able to feel comfortable.
- Wendy Caswell (Co-Op) asked what assessment Thurrock Young Voices were referring too.
 - Some young people have different experiences,
 - Need to break barriers down.
 - Supportive foster cares are fundamental.
- The Chair was pleased with how Young Voices have developed over the past year.

36. Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2022/2023

The Chair asked if there were any questions on the Parenting Committees Annual Report that will be presented to Full Council. The Chair added that the Parenting Committee is a good and constructive cross-party committee.

Members noted the following:

- Councillor Carter noted the good work over last two years. That the committee is non-political and congratulated the Chair for his bipartisanism. He also noted the warm nature of the committee.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the contents of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2022/2023 be noted.

37. Children's Social Care Performance 2022/2023

The Assistant Director of Children Services presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- 291 Looked after Children, 260 in aftercare.
- Numbers remain stable and good compared to statistical neighbour.
- Spike in June and July due to UAAC
- 9%-11% have a disability, figure is stable.
- Missing episodes are reducing and looking to reduce still.
- Initial Assessments remain area of improvement and focus. Task and Finish group looking into improvements.
- All children placed within a 20 miles radius.
- Majority of care leavers keep in touch; contact should be led by the care leavers.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- Councillor Cecil asked if family have good relationship with GP why can't that GP do the health assessment.
 - Sharron Hall – Statutory that it has to be a paediatrician.
- Councillor Hartstean asked where UASC are placed.
 - Range of options and factors, it includes age. If under 16 then Foster Carers, if over 16 then supported accommodation depending on needs and skills of the young person. Case by case
- Councillor Hartstean asked what the youngest UASC is.
 - Youngest are age 14 years old, 8 young people under 16.
- Councillor Carter noted that 14 is a young age and wanted to know entry age and the level of care given.
 - One just turned 14 and another who is 14.
 - Support from virtual school and health needs are met, they have been registered with a GP.
 - They have the same rights as any other child.
 - Good outcome with education
- Councillor Hartstean noted 52% of care leavers go into further education and that it was lower than the statical neighbour.
 - Seeing some improvement and working to raise the number.
- Councillor Carter noted a gain and consistent improvements over time but was disappointed with low number in further education.
 - The Local Authority want as many in employment, training or further education as possible.
 - Keeley Pullen noted that a young person may not always be ready for education right away. The Local Authority can give home tuition and work to overcome initial barriers.
- Councillor Ononaji complemented the service and asked if the good rating was Ofsted graded or internally.
 - Benchmark and compared against statistical neighbours.
 - Data looked at regularly and questioned and improve.

- Councillor Ononaji asked what challenges with Initial Health Assessments
 - Challenges with shortage of paediatricians, it is a national issue.
 - Sharron Hall – Paper on IHA and is waiting for response and funding.
- Councillor Ononaji is there a requirement drive to hire more paediatricians.
- Councillor Carter asked where the IHA report will be heard at.
 - ICB possesses would not go through the Local Authority's Overview and Scrutiny functions.
- Councillor Cecil asked how funding is arranged for UASC in schools.
 - Funding would be directed to them.
 - Needs are met for all children.
 - Support maybe needed for dialect or language.

The Chair thanks those who answered and drafted report and read the recommendation.

RESLOVED:

1.1 That members note improvements in Children's Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.

1.2 Members scrutinise the performance data and provide challenge to the service as required on how, as corporate parents we provide appropriate services, keep children and young people safe and promote good outcomes.

38. CLA Health Report

The ICB sent apologies and were not able to present their report on evening.

- The Vice-Chair expressed her disappointment with the ICB.
- Councillor Carter asked if the report could come back for the next meeting to be scrutinised.

RESLOVED:

1.1 The information contained within this report to be noted by Corporate Parenting Committee members.

The Parenting Committee decided to drop recommendations 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 & 1.6 as they were unable to scrutinise, ask questions of the ICB.

39. SET Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Report for Children Looked After

The Assistant Director SET CAMHS and Partnerships presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- Thurrock SET CAMHS received 34 formal referrals into the service between January 2023 and December 2023.
- 33 were accepted, and 1 was not accepted.
- An audit was undertaken and 90% of referrals were dealt with within timescales.
- Monthly meetings take place between Children Services and SET CAMHS.
- Looked After Children are a priority.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Manwa wanted clarification on racing scaled, how is it done.
 - Scores are done on paper and grouped by age.
 - 2 measurements are taken at minimum.
 - Self-rated.
- Councillor Carter asked for more detail on trauma work.
 - Different types of interventions: group and one to one is available.
 - Building trust is important.
- Councillor Carter sought confirmation for the acronym EM1
 - Eye movement
- Councillor Ononaji asked what type of programmes agencies provide.
 - Provision in Thurrock for a transition to Mind at adulthood.
 - Depends on needs of young people.
- The Chair if there is a follow up mechanism for those who are discharged.
 - Hotline between SW and CAMHS
 - Try to prevent relapse.
 - Prioritised LAC
- Jackie (Co-Op) asked if training for Foster Carers was available to carers outside the borough.
 - Training covers the Borough of Thurrock, Southend City and Essex County.

The Chair read the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That members note and comment on the report.

40. CLA and the Youth Justice Service

The Head of YOS and Prevention presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- Children in Care are more likely to enter the Youth Justice System.
- Numbers of offenders is small. 31 children recorded with statutory outcome, 6 were Looked After Children.
- 17% down from 30%

- Look to divert children elsewhere where possible.

Members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

- Councillor Manwa asked a question about the decriminalisation of young people and what measures are implemented.
 - An example was given of the out of court disposal panel. The panel try to understand the background first before the young person goes to panel.
 - Looked After Children are often given option 22, which is no formal work undertaken. This is because there is a team of social workers around them already.
 - Youth Justice System provide support to Social Workers.

The Chair read the recommendation:

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That members note the work undertaken to safeguard Looked After Children and divert them the Youth Justice System.**
- 1.2 That Members scrutinize the data and provide challenge in relation numbers of the children who have contact with the Youth Justice System.**

41. Annual Report of the Virtual Schools

The Head Teacher of Virtual School presented their report to the Corporate Parenting Committee:

- The service supports children aged 3 -18
- Year 5 now Year 6 have the highest level of need, 50% of pupils have a special need.
- Thurrock children are performing better. Attendance nationally is down and slowly improvement Looked after Children have better attendance rates.
- Reduced number of unauthorised absences
- 16 pupils were excluded an increase of 2% but below national average.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Manwa asked if tuition is available for grammar or any specialist school.
 - Yes
- Councillor Manwa asked how children at school get access to IT and if there are issues, how are they resolved.
 - School is virtual as in there is no physical building, not online. Help schools to reach educational outcomes.
 - IT is provided by the school or pupil premium on a case-by-case bases.

- Councillor Hartstean was glad to see there were no permanent exclusions and asked if there are any concerns around erstwhile children.
 - Exclusions can create a legacy.
 - Service would challenge off rolling.
 - Education will still be provided.
- Councillor Hartstean who looks after the emotional wellbeing of those who have been excluded.
 - Find out what has triggered the exclusion.
 - EOTAS
 - Schools can off role students after 20 days if out of area
- Chair asked what alternative education packages there are and enquired about equine therapy.
 - Offsite and outreach work
 - Equine therapy working towards qualification for vocation.
- Wendy (Co-Op) thanked the Headteacher of the Virtual School and the team and the good work they do.

The Chair read the recommendation. Councillor Cater abstained due to being portfolio holder.

RESOLVED:

1.1 The Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2022-2023 and uses this information to evaluate, scrutinise and, if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided.

42. Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme:

The Chair noted that it was the last meeting on the municipal year and gave thanks to the officers.

The Chair was aware that there was a need for an update on the situation with IHA's (Initial Health Assessments)

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking officers, committee members and co-opted members for the work they had done throughout the year.

The recording of the meeting can be found from the following link:
[Corporate Parenting Committee - 19 March 2024, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcast \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The meeting finished at 9.39 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**