

MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 13 June 2013 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors Bukky Okunade (Chair), James Halden, Mike Revell, Joy Redsell, Charles Curtis, Angie Gaywood and Sue Gray.

K Crawford – Foster Carer/ One Team
J Howell – Foster Carer/ One Team

In attendance: P. Coke – Service Manager (Children & Families)
B. Foster – Head of Children’s Social Care
M. Boulter- Democratic Services
S. Tuttle – CICC Chair Person

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 13th April 2013 were approved as a correct record.

The Committee noted that they were still awaiting the legal requirements as to the committee’s involvement and role in corporate parenting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

3. ADDITIONAL ITEMS

The Chair requested that two items be given a brief update:

Peer Review

Southend council had agreed to undertake a peer review and at the Committee’s request, they would attempt to undertake this before September. Officers noted that Lambeth, as an outstanding service, was also a good choice but nationally, the government encouraged peer activity within regions.

New Placements Review

The Director of Commissioning at Peterborough Council had agreed to review this issue in Thurrock. It was planned that they would meet with Members of the Committee to understand their viewpoints.

4. CORPORATE PARENTING: TRAINING SESSION

The Committee received a brief training session which explored the role of corporate parenting and the children in care council, as well as the practicalities of corporate parenting and why it was important.

The Committee felt that the training should be rolled out to all Members. The Committee also felt they needed more direct contact with the children themselves.

RESOLVED that:

- i) **The training documents be put in the pigeon holes of all members on Thursday 20th June, following the full council meeting.**
- ii) **A training session at 6pm on 5th September be explored with Members. Councillors Halden and Gaywood to act as liaisons in each party to see if there is an appetite for this training.**

5. THURROCK FOSTERING SERVICE 2012-2013

It was explained to the Committee that there was a national shortage of foster carers. The challenges facing the services were to retain carers, to recruit more carers in competition with other councils and also, to recruit more ethnic minority foster carers. Officers recognised that the work of the Foster Carer Association was invaluable to supporting the network of carers and their families. The last inspection had rated the service as 'good'.

The foster carers stated that the money offered to foster was low and was not competitive with London Councils. However, the training and support at Thurrock was good. The proposal to move level one carers to level two, as a minimum, would increase the weekly income of a carer to £106 per week.

The committee debated the budget and it was highlighted that the service had recently received a £3 million increase in its budget to deal with increased demand. There was uncertainty as to whether demand would increase further.

Some Members felt that that the recruitment advertising needed to be better managed and officers responded that they were working with a specialist in the communications team who was partially ring fenced for the new recruitment campaign for foster carers.

The Committee briefly discussed the causes of increased demand and officers felt that it was partially to do with large families having difficulties, therefore requiring all the children to be fostered but also, increased population and the recent economic pressures.

The Committee learnt that some children went into care as soon as they were born and there were specially trained foster carers who accommodated mother and baby.

Officers recognised that the inspection had identified leadership only as adequate but this was due to the reduction in gathering statistics effectively enough. This was due to a key manager being seriously ill and away from work at a critical time.

Councillor Gaywood asked for a sentence on page nine to be amended so that it strengthened the role and importance of foster carers.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

Members requested some form of information on mother and baby provision within the fostering service, as well as relevant items on communications strategies.

The meeting finished at 8.44pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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