

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 4 January 2022 at 7.00 pm

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- Present:** Councillors Jennifer Smith (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, Sara Muldowney, Georgette Polley and Kairen Raper
- Laura Hall, Thurrock Open Door  
Jenny Josling, Vice-Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association  
Sharon Smith, Chair, The One Team, Foster Carer Association  
Jennifer Smith (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, Sara Muldowney, Georgette Polley and Kairen Raper
- Apologies:** Councillors Abbie Akinbohun (Chair), Elizabeth Rigby and Lynn Worrall and Christopher Bennett.
- In attendance:** Janet Simon, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help  
Ruth Murdock, Strategic Lead Of Quality Assurance And Reviewing  
Kate Kozlova-Boran, Strategic Lead for Employability and Skills  
Dan Jones, Fostering Service Manager  
Clare Moore, Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service and Prevention  
Keeley Pullen, Head Teacher for the Virtual School for Looked after and previous looked after children  
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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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.

Following the Council's constitution as both the Chair and Vice-Chair were unable to preside over the meeting, the Senior Democratic Services Officer invited nominations from Members to elect a Chair for this meeting only.

Councillor Muldowney was nominated and elected as the Chair for the Corporate Parenting Committee held on 4 January 2022.

### **19. Minutes**

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting meeting on 23 November 2021 (14 September 2021) were approved as a correct record.

### **20. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**21. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

**22. Children's Social Care Performance – Quarter 2 2021-22**

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help presented the report which was on pages 13 to 36 of the agenda.

Councillor Carter commented on the timeliness of social worker visits and enquired as to the reason there was a dip in performance compared to the same time of the previous year. The assistant director of children social care and early help commented that the dip could be down to a number of reasons including coming out of Covid, children being on holiday or simply not being available on a given date. She continued by stating although the performance was not poor it was definitely in focus to keep improving.

Councillor Raper enquired as to the spread of children who went missing. Within the report it stated 16 of the 28 individual children who went missing, were missing for 24 hours or less. The Strategic Lead for the youth offending service prevention advised Members that 81% of children who were missing and were looked after children were missing for less than 24 hours. Councillor Raper further enquired as to how many children had been missing for over 24 hours. Officers advised that the majority of missing episodes were less than 24 hours, there was 1 missing child the council was working with the police to find and he was an unaccompanied asylum seeker who had been missing for 20 days.

Councillor Muldowney Chair for the meeting enquired of the work officers in the Council carried out with regards to the youth detention accommodation, as figures showed between April 2020 and March 2021 75% of children were from the Black, Asian, and minority ethnic community (BAME). Members heard how this was a national issue and not just a local issue, officers were monitoring data which was submitted on a quarterly basis along with working with Essex Police and young people before any crime had been committed. In addition to this the local authority was working with schools to be able to prevent crime rather than after any offences had occurred.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1.1 That members note improvements and areas for improvement in Children's Social Care and note the work that is undertaken to ensure good and improving performance.**
- 1.2 Note the impact of COVID 19 on some areas of performance.**

### **23. Children In Care Council Update**

As the Chair of the Children in Care Council had sent his apologies to the meeting, the Chair of the meeting sought Members agreement to defer the item to the next meeting to allow Christopher to speak at the Committee.

This was agreed by all Members.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**The report is to be deferred to the next meeting of the committee on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March.**

### **24. Fostering Recruitment Strategy Update November 2021**

The fostering service manager presented the report to members which was on pages 43 to 50 of the agenda.

Councillor Carter welcomed the report and commented on the positive news that as of November 2021 there were eleven fostering households in assessment, he continued by stating as outlined within the report if successful this would be 16 new placements.

Members discussed the data presented within the report and were advised compared to the previous year there had been fewer enquires, however there had been an increase in marketing and promotion which had led to an improved number of applications. It was asked by Councillor Carter as to whether Thurrock was in line with its statistical neighbours. The fostering service manager explained officer didn't always see those figures however could circulate figure from across the region.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**1.1 Members are updated on Thurrock's Fostering Recruitment Strategy and its impact on the numbers of foster carer approvals.**

**1.2 Members note the marketing activities being undertaken so opportunities are created to increase the recruitment of foster carers**

### **25. Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report**

The Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing presented the report on pages 51 to 78 of the agenda.

Councillor Raper commented on the feedback from Looked after Children with regards to the number of children who didn't know what was within their plan. The Strategic Lead of Quality Assurance and Reviewing agreed with the comments made by Members and commented that when speaking with children, they understood what their plan was and what was involved however

the wording of the question caused some confusion for them. She continued to explain that moving forwards images were to be included to help make the plans more child friendly.

During discussions Foster Carers explained everything was included within the child's plan and it was a lot for young children to take in. It was further explained that if the plans were more age appropriate it might make them less scary for children to look at or want to look at. Officers explained that following feedback from children in care with regards to their plans, there would be a change in the language used and feedback taken back to the service as the questions didn't capture what officers were looking for.

**RESOLVED:**

**For the Corporate Parenting Committee to review and comment on the IRO Annual report 2020 - 2021 and the recommendations in the report.**

**26. National Care Leaver Advisors Visit**

The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care Early Help presented the reports outlines on pages 79 to 84 of the agenda, which documented the visit of Mark Riddle MBE to Thurrock.

Councillor Muldowney enquired as to whether this was the key shift to make the Council exceptional more parenting and less corporate. The Assistant Director for Children Social Care in Early Help explained young people and children within care should feel that the care is about them and that we as Corporate Parents were with them every step of the way.

It was enquired by Councillor Raper as to whether Mark Riddle met with members of the corporate parenting committee. It was noted that on this occasion Mr Riddle did not meet with Elected Members however it could be arranged for the second visit, this was seconded and supported by Councillor Polley.

During discussions Members asked as to whether the champion model was something which was to be introduced in Thurrock and whether officers felt eight board meetings a year was deliverable. Members heard her conversations with Members in the first instance along with partners from multi agencies would need to be heard before a decision could be made. It would be ambitious to presume that by moving to the model would enable Thurrock to deliver everything however it if officers where to look at this route it would need the support a partners within health employment and education.

It was enquired as to whether the plan would be to replace the Corporate Parenting Committee with a champion model. The Assistant Director for Children in Social Care Early Help explained these were ideas following the report from Mark Riddle and as yet no decisions had been made to replace the Corporate Parenting Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1.1 Members of the committee note the feedback provided and the recommendations for Corporate Parenting Committee made by Mark Riddle.**
- 1.2 Members note the work of Officers to progress these recommendations.**

**27. The Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for Children Looked After – Academic Year 2020-2021**

The report of the head teacher from virtual school for looked after children ripped off though was presented to members as outlined on pages 85 to 131 of the agenda.

During discussions members raised concerns such as children refusing to go to school and to the reasons behind this. The Virtual School Head Teacher explained there could be a number of reasons for a child to refuse to go to school and at present there had been no school refusers as children could complete online learning. She continued to explain that the virtual school was working with not only the Local Authority but with Foster Carers who child may refuse to attend school, if this was to happen it was important to find out why the child was refusing to attend school and in some cases an action plan for a phased return was produced.

The Virtual School Head Teacher continued to advise they were working with schools and offering as much support as possible for young people to keep them attending school, however it was also important to remember that some young people thrived with the online learning and some miss the interaction open in school when schools are closed due to COVID.

Councillor Raper thanked the Virtual School Head Teacher for her report and sought if the tutoring service was offered on a one to one basis and who offered the service. The Virtual Head Teacher explained that currently equal teaching was being used to offer the tutoring service on a one to one basis and as part of the service level agreement it was asked all tutors beTQS qualified.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee approves the Annual Report of the Virtual School Headteacher for the academic year 2020-2021 and uses this information to acknowledge, evaluate and, if appropriate, challenge the services that are provided for all CLA.**

**28. Corporate Parenting Committee - Work Programme 2021/2022**

The Corporate Parenting Committee discussed the work programme at pages 133 to 135 of the agenda.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the work programme be updated to reflect the following:**

- **Deferral of Children In Care Council Annual Report to the March meeting.**

**The meeting finished at 8.49 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**