

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE

4.00pm 23 JANUARY 2013

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Shanks (Chair)

Also in attendance: Councillor Rufus (Deputy Chair), Gilbey and Hyde

PART ONE

21. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

21a Declarations of substitutes

21.1 There were None

21b Declarations of interests

21.2 There were none

21c Exclusion of the press and public

21.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

21.4 **RESOLVED** - That the public are excluded from the meeting from items listed on Part 2 of the agenda.

22. MINUTES

23.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair be authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2012 as a correct record.

23. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

23.1 The Chair explained that as part of the internal review of the Council’s governance arrangements a meeting had been held to consider the status of the Sub-Committee.

The Senior Lawyer, Natasha Watson, explained that it had originally been envisaged the Sub-Committee would co-opt foster parents and children in care to participate in discussion; however, this gave way to questions in relation to anonymity, and it was felt inappropriate to publish the names of such co-optees. Instead it had been agreed that in future such persons could attend meetings as observers, and the Sub-Committee could invite their views as necessary.

- 23.2 Furthermore discussion had also been held in relation to the Chair of the Sub-Committee, and it was felt there could be a conflict if the Sub-Committee was chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services; especially where the Sub-Committee was seeking assurance. It was also envisaged that there should be greater 'buy-in' from other departments to better reflect the corporate nature of the Sub-Committee.
- 23.3 It had also been suggested that an annual event could be held informally with children in care, foster parents and care leavers that could help inform an annual schedule of work.
- 23.4 The Chair also noted the first of three training sessions to be held on Tuesday 29 January around Members roles as corporate parents; the second on safeguarding children in need and the third on the legal framework.

24. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 24.1 There was none.

25. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

- 25.1 There was none.

26. CHILDREN IN CARE PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 26.1 The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Children's Services; the report provided a summary of key performance indicators, and an analysis of the key issues. The full report of performance indicators was attached to enable regular monitoring by all Members, as well as Members of the Sub-Committee.
- 26.2 Following a request from the Chair the Senior Lawyer clarified that an interim care order was initially granted for a maximum of 8 weeks; the courts would then be able to renew this every 28 days until either the final order was made, or there is a hearing that the order is no longer needed. A review of the family justice system had made clear that timescales of approximately 1 year were too long for the legal status of children to remain uncertain, and it had been accepted by Central Government that they must complete with 26 weeks – with a set of very prescriptive exceptions. Although this legislation had not yet come into effect a target had been set to complete within 26 weeks; the challenge for local authorities was to develop a system to meet the courts and take advantage of the faster timescales.
- 26.3 Councillor Hyde asked for more information in relation to the instability of placements; and in response Officers explained that the biggest factor affecting placement stability was careers struggling with challenging behaviour. Work was undertaken at stability meetings and additional services were put in place for support where appropriate.

26.4 Following queries from Councillor Gilbey it was explained that the education and employment performance of care leavers was better locally than the national average; however, the number of unemployed was rising, and it was accepted that employability was a challenge which needed to be focused on.

26.5 The Sub-Committee also discussed 6-monthly sexual health and substance misuse screenings. It was highlighted that this was often a subject that foster carers and social workers struggled to properly address as it was considered a difficult topic to discuss. More work could be undertaken with the Children in Care Council to consider linking up some of this with the work of the virtual school. The Senior Lawyer noted this was an example of a target that was less simple to assess; the discussions needed to be a two-way process between the social worker and the young person. Recording issues were also noted such that this kind of screening might happen informally as part of wider discussions.

26.6 RESOLVED –

- i. That the Sub-Committee note and scrutinise the information in the report.
- ii. That the Sub-Committee consider any particular issues they may wish to consider in more depth at future meetings.
- iii. That Sub-Committee consider how to relay this information to the broader Council to ensure high awareness of the responsibilities for children in care.

27. EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN CARE

27.1 The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Children's Services in relation to the Education of Children in Care. The local authority had a responsibility to promote the educational attainment of children in care, and the Sub-Committee should ensure the responsibility of the local authority for children in care was one shared by all Senior Officers and Members. Opportunities were also made available to young people within the Council for high quality work experience; work shadowing and apprenticeship opportunities. There was a clear understanding of the barriers to educational attainment and how these can be over come.

27.2 Members noted that the exclusion record was good; the position was similar to 2011, and it was highlighted that a member of staff would be recruited to support the 16+ personal education plans (PEP). Work would also be undertaken in relation to resourcing, and some comparative work would be done with East and Sussex County Councils.

27.3 Following a query from Councillor Shanks it was explained that the virtual school stopped at 16.

27.4 Councillor Gilbey asked about the virtual school's relationship with the two academies in the city, and it was explained that more time needed to be spent working with them.

- 27.5 The Sub-Committee discussed the placement of children in care in schools, and it was highlighted that some local authorities took the view that children in care should only be placed in schools rated 'good' or 'excellent'; the Council would work to this as a standard, but tried to take a practical approach and consider factors such as locality and friendship groups. It was noted that this would also apply to children placed in school outside of the city.
- 27.6 Councillor Gilbey asked about placing children in care at the new Free School which was due to open this year, and it was explained that this would be down to the parental choice and considered on a case by case basis. Following further queries it was explained that the local authority had some say in how schools would spend the pupil premium, and they would ask the school to share this information.
- 27.7 **RESOLVED** – That the Committee receives the report and continues to monitor educational outcomes for Children in Care.

28. EMPLOYABILITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

- 28.1 The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Children's Services in relation to the Employability for Young People in Care and Care Leavers. The report outlined the positive actions to develop employment opportunities as detailed in the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Employability related to a wide range of opportunities that the Council and its partners can offer young people and include apprenticeships, work experience, taster days and work placements. The strategy assisted young people action to improve employability and included: advocating and providing work experience, work placements and employment opportunities within the Council and its partners, and promoting the needs of care leavers for work experience, training and job opportunities with employers and employer organisations in the city.
- 28.2 It was highlighted that there would be apprenticeships fair in February. Officers in Children's Service would have two weeks notice before job adverts went out publicly to give support to children in care and care leavers whom wished to apply; the job opportunities would still have to offer publically to meet equality and employment laws.
- 28.3 It was noted that the Council should have a crucial role in not only signposting young people, but also providing opportunities. Officers explained that schools also had a statutory duty to offer careers advice, and care leavers were entitled to pathway plans.
- 28.4 Councillor Gilbey noted that this process should begin before aged 16, and Officers said that work experience at an earlier age was important. Councillor Shanks added that it was also important foster carers had access to the necessary information.
- 28.5 The Sub-Committee agreed to forward the report to the Policy & Resources Committee for further discussion, and to consider how such opportunities could be provided across the Council. Officers added that the commitment to provide opportunities needed to be much more explicit.

28.6 RESOLVED –

- i. That Sub-Committee monitor the development of bespoke packages leading to sustainable employment for each young person in care, based on an assessment of their interests, aspirations and abilities. This will assist Childrens Services in improving outcomes and reducing NEET (Not Engaged in Education, Employment or Training) for these young people.
- ii. That Sub-Committee secure a commitment across the local authority, and with other partner agencies wherever possible, to support packages of work placements, work experience, apprenticeships, full and part-time employment and training for young people in care and care leavers.
- iii. That these employability opportunities form the basis of Brighton & Hove City Council policy and procedure to assist our young people leaving care to achieve economic well being.
- iv. That the report be forwarded to the Policy & Resources Committee to discuss how such opportunities can be provided corporately.

29. PART TWO MINUTES

- 23.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair be authorised to sign the Part 2 minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2012 as a correct record.

30. CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE

- 30.1 As listed in the Part 2 report.
- 30.2 **RESOLVED** – That the recommendations listed in the Part 2 report be agreed by the Sub-Committee.

31. PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

- 31.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Part 2 Items remain exempt from disclosure from the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 5.47pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of