



## AGENDA

### SELECT COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PARENTING

Friday, 27th February, 2015, at 10.00 am

Ask for: Denise Fitch/Gaetano Romagnuolo

Stour Room, Sessions House, County Hall,  
Maidstone

Telephone 03000 416090/416624

*Tea/Coffee will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting in the meeting room*

#### Membership

Mrs Z Wiltshire (Chairman), Mr R E Brookbank, Ms C J Cribbon, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr B Neaves, Mr M J Northey, Mr R J Parry, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mrs J Whittle

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

1. Apologies for absence
2. 10.00am - Andrew Ireland - Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, Kent County Council (Pages 3 - 6)
3. 11.00am - Foster Carers - Catherine Atkins, Janet Latter, Janette Sams and Nicki Bailey, (Pages 7 - 8)
4. 12.00 noon - Christine Liggins, Kim Keen and Neil Foad, Independent Reviewing Officers, Kent County Council (Pages 9 - 14)
5. Wrap up session to identify key points from hearing sessions

#### EXEMPT ITEMS

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Peter Sass  
Head of Democratic Services  
(01622) 694002

Thursday, 19 February 2015

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## **Corporate Parenting Select Committee**

### **Andrew Ireland – Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, Kent County Council**

#### **Biography**

Andrew qualified as a Social Worker in 1980 and worked for the Borough of Croydon and Lewisham before joining Kent County Council in 1987.

Andrew worked for Kent County Council for 18 years in a number of roles covering the whole spectrum of Social Services work. In 2002, he was appointed Area Director for Social Services in West Kent and in 2005 was seconded to Swindon Borough Council as Acting Director of Social Services, raising standards there from failing to “one star” rating.

Andrew was appointed to Havering as Group Director for Children’s Services in January 2006. From March 2008, he also took on the role of Director of Adult Social Services in Havering and in June 2008 he became Group Director, Social Care and Learning.

Andrew took up the role of the Corporate Director for Families and Social Care for Kent County Council on 1 November 2011. He also holds the statutory functions of Director of Adults Social Services (DASS) and Director of Children’s Services (DCS) for the council, with responsibility for the support and social care needs of over 2,000 children and 20,000 adults who live in Kent.

Andrew is active in the national associations for DASS and for DCS. He is joint chair of the ADASS/ADCS Joint Committee and a member of the ADASS Executive Council.

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# **CORPORATE PARENTING SELECT COMMITTEE**

## **Hearing 2**

**Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

### **Witness Guide for Members**

*Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.*

### **Themes and Questions**

#### **Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director - Social Care, Health and Wellbeing**

- Please introduce yourself and outline the roles and responsibilities that your post involves.
- What are your corporate parenting duties and responsibilities?
- In your view, to what extent are KCC Members and officers fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities?
- What else – if anything – can KCC Members and officers do in order to fulfil their corporate parenting role?
- What are the Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate's key objectives for the improvement of children and young people in care's outcomes? Is a new Kent's Looked-After Children Strategy being developed?
- What are, in your opinion, the other key issues with regards to children and young people in care in Kent?
- In your opinion, to what extent is collaborative working within KCC and with external agencies effective in the provision of quality services to children and young people in care in Kent?
- In what ways – if any – can a move towards a more commissioning-based model offer opportunities for Members to fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities?

- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

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### **Themes and Questions**

#### **Catherine Atkins, Janet Latter, Janette Sams and Nicki Bailey, Foster Carers**

- Please introduce yourselves.
- How long have you been foster carers for? Why did you decide to become foster carers? How many children have you cared for?
- What skills are needed to be a good foster carer?
- What are the most rewarding aspects of being a foster carer?
- What kind of support have you received from Kent County Council?
- What are the main challenges faced by foster carers?
- In your view, what are the main issues faced by children and young people in care in Kent?
- What more can Kent County Council do to help deal with all these issues?
- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

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## **Kent County Council**

### **Corporate Parenting Select Committee**

#### **Kent County Council's IRO service**

The Kent Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service is part of Kent County Council's Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate, sitting within the Children's Safeguarding Unit. The role of the County IRO Manager is undertaken by the Head of Quality Assurance.

There are 2 IRO teams:

- The East and South Kent Area Team (1 Team Manager and 12 IROs)
- The North and West Kent Area Team and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Team (1 Team Manager and 10 IROs)

The IRO function for children and young people in care is separate from the chairing of child protection (CP) conferences, which is undertaken by the other arm of the reviewing service. KCC employs 11 CP chairs, which are incorporated into 1 county team, managed by a CP Chairs Team Manager. Together, the 2 IRO teams and CP Chairs team form one county service.

In May 2012 the capacity of the IRO service increased from 15 to 22 full-time IRO posts. A further increase of 2 full-time or equivalent IRO posts was agreed in April 2014 in order to reduce further IRO caseloads and enable IROs to undertake a more robust level of case oversight.

In addition to the permanent IROs within the service, the IRO service employs additional IROs on zero hour contracts (2 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014) to assist in chairing reviews when there are vacancies/staff sickness.

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**Kent County Council**  
**Corporate Parenting Select Committee**

**Independent Review Officer Service Annual Management Report**  
**2013/2014**

**Summary**

The report provides an account of the performance of Kent County Council's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service for children and young people in care during the year 2013/2014 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014).

- IROs completed 4,685 quality assurance audits over the year, out of 5,220 reviews chaired; a 90% completion rate.
- IRO caseloads have been steadily reducing, although this trend needs to continue in order to enable them to be as effective as possible in their case oversight role.
- There has been some improvement in the participation of children and young people in care at their reviews. Further work is required to strengthen their participation and involvement.
- IRO activity data shows that there has been a drop in the amount of time IROs spend seeing children between reviews.
- The proportion of review meetings chaired within statutory timescales remains high (97.2%).
- The IRO service receives a late notification of children coming into care in approximately 20% of cases.
- There has been an ongoing improvement in performance in care planning. For example, in Q3 of 2012/13 65.8% of plans reached a "satisfactory" level or higher; this improved to 75.4% in Q4 of 2012/13, and to 74.8%, 78% and 79.9% in Quarters 1, 2, 3 respectively in 2013/14.
- There has been a significant drop in the proportion of social worker's reports for the review graded as "satisfactory" or better since the previous quarter (that is, from Q3 to Q4 of 2014). A key factor remains the timeliness of these reports being completed and provided to the IRO before the review.

- Only 15% of children and young people in care reported in questionnaires that they knew what the Pledge was.
- Around half of all the children and young people in care in Kent who responded to surveys said that they did not receive a copy of their care plan.
- 6% of children and young people in care in Kent who responded to the “leaving care survey” said they found it difficult to receive the support and help they needed after leaving care.
- Although carers were generally confident about IROs’ practice and quality of service, they identified the following areas for improvement:
  - Having a better understanding of the role of IROs
  - having IROs contact numbers and being able to contact them in between reviews
  - keeping the same IRO for the child in care
  - cutting the length of reviews.
- Overall, comments from social workers and other professionals indicate that they find the IRO service to be very responsive and that it demonstrates sufficient case oversight.
- Parents are generally positive about the IRO service. However, they would like to receive reviews’ minutes on time, have greater involvement in their child’s review and discuss their concerns with the IRO before the review meeting.

# **CORPORATE PARENTING SELECT COMMITTEE**

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### **Themes and Questions**

#### **Christine Liggins, Kim Keen and Neil Foad, Independent Reviewing Officers, Kent County Council**

- Please introduce yourselves and outline the roles and responsibilities that your posts involve.
- Please briefly outline the main functions of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service in Kent.
- In your view, what constitutes good and effective corporate parenting?
- In what ways do IROs in Kent challenge and support social workers and their managers to improve practice and promote better outcomes for local children and young people in care?
- What are the main issues around the provision of services to children and young people in care in Kent?
- What more – if anything - can KCC, and KCC Members in particular, do to address these issues?
- In your opinion, what can be done – if anything – to improve the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people in care in Kent?
- In your view, what are the main issues – if any - affecting the IRO service in Kent? What – if anything – can be done to improve the service?

- To what extent, in your experience, are children and young people in care in Kent engaged in the decisions that affect them? What else – if anything – can be done to improve their involvement?
- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?