

By: Gaetano Romagnuolo, Research Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)

To: Corporate Parenting Select Committee – 3 February 2015

Subject: Corporate Parenting Select Committee Topic Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To discuss and agree proposed Terms of Reference, Scope and general approach for the Review

1 Introduction

Kent County Council is committed to delivering effective corporate parenting to all the children and young people it looks after. In order to ensure that the journey for these young people is as smooth and enriching as possible and that they fulfil their potential it is crucial that all elected Members, officers and services across the local authority work together in their interest.

The establishment of the Corporate Parenting Select Committee reflects a recognition that more can be done to improve the experiences and life chances of children who need to be looked after. In particular the review will focus on the vital role that elected Members, as Corporate Parents, can play in engaging with children under their care, in championing their rights, and in ensuring that they grow up and develop with the best possible care and opportunities.

The timing of the review is appropriate; a “whole council” approach and the move towards a more commissioning-based authority model offer a unique opportunity for KCC Members to re-focus their awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities, to consider how corporate parenting can be delivered effectively within these new arrangements, and to ensure that children in care are at the heart of the services delivered to them.

Children in care, like all children, need to be loved, cared for and supported as they grow up and become more independent. It is a legal and moral duty of corporate parents to nurture them with the emotional and practical support that good parents give their children for the best possible start in life.

2 Committee Membership

The Select Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council:

Mr Robert Brookbank (Conservative)

Ms Jane Cribbon (Labour)

Mr George Koowaree (Liberal Democrat)

Mr Bob Neaves (UKIP)

Mr Michael Northey (Conservative)

Mr Richard Parry (Conservative)

Mrs Paulina Stockell (Conservative)

Mrs Jenny Whittle (Conservative)

Mrs Zita Wiltshire (Chair Designate - UKIP)

3 Draft Terms of Reference

1. To consider the definition of “Corporate Parent” and the variety of roles and duties associated with it.
2. To engage with, amongst others, children in care to better understand what works well for them and what KCC can do to improve the fulfilment of its corporate parenting responsibilities.
3. To investigate best practice across the country and abroad of how elected representatives within local government engage with and support children in care.
4. To examine the extent to which the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members are effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of children in care.
5. For the Corporate Parenting Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

4 Draft Scope

The complexity of this topic and the tight timeframe of the review require a clear and focused approach. Possible key themes and aspects to be covered by the review are detailed below:

1. To consider the definition of “Corporate Parent” and the variety of roles and duties associated with it.
 - a. To explore the definition of being a “Corporate Parent” and the legal implications associate with it.
 - b. To examine the roles and responsibilities that KCC Members and officers hold as Corporate Parents.

2. To engage with, amongst others, children in care to better understand what works well for them and what KCC can do to improve the fulfilment of its corporate parenting responsibilities.
 - a. To engage with, and listen to, children in care in Kent to better understand what works well for them and what KCC, and in particular KCC Members, can do to improve the fulfilment of their corporate parenting responsibilities.
 - b. To gather evidence from KCC Members and officers, and representatives of relevant external organisations to inform the review.

3. To investigate best practice across the country and abroad of how elected representatives within local government engage with and support children in care.
 - a. To explore best practice examples, both across the country and abroad, of how local authorities and their elected representatives engage with and support children in care.
 - b. To consider how this best practice can be replicated to improve corporate parenting in Kent.

4. To examine the extent to which the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members are effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of children in care.
 - a. To examine the extent to which the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members are effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of children in care.
 - b. To identify further mechanisms, if necessary, to improve the effectiveness of this monitoring approach.

5. For the Corporate Parenting Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

5 Proposed Timetable (summary)

January 2015	Informal sharing of terms of reference cross-party via email
3 February 2015	First meeting of Select Committee, to appoint the Chairman and to discuss and agree the Terms of Reference of the review
Mid to end February 2015	Hearings and possible visits
End February 2015	Committee meets to identify key issues and to make recommendations

Early to end March 2015	Report writing, production of first draft
Early April 2015	Committee discusses the first draft of the report and suggests amendments. Amendments carried out accordingly
Early-mid April 2015	Select Committee share the report with Cabinet Member(s) and Corporate Director(s)
Mid April 2015	report shared with relevant boards (by email)
17 April 2015	Despatch for Cabinet
27 April 2015	Report presented to Cabinet
13 May 2015	Despatch for County Council
21 May 2015	Report presented to County Council

6 General Approach

The review is proposed to include a short period of desk-based research. Written evidence will be obtained during the course of the review and will be provided to Members as soon as it is received.

7 Evidence Gathering – Hearings

It is proposed that about 12 hearing sessions of 45 minutes each will take place in February 2015. Hearings will normally be open to the public unless there is a specific requirement to hold a closed session.

It is proposed that Members remain for 30 minutes after each set of interviews (normally 3 in each set) to ensure that all views, key points and emerging recommendations are captured.

Details of suggested witnesses/organisations to invite to hearings are outlined below. Others may be suggested as the review progresses (written evidence may be requested from those who are unable to attend or cannot be included in the timetable).

- A group of Social Workers
- A group of Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)
- A group of Foster Carers
- Mrs Ann Allen, Chair of Kent's Corporate Parenting Panel
- Paul Brightwell, Children in Care and Young People Service Manager, KCC
- Philip Segurola, Acting Director, Specialist Children's Services, KCC
- Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director, Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, KCC
- Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services, KCC

- Tony Doran, Headteacher of Virtual School Kent, KCC
- Nancy Sawyer, Designated Nurse for Children in Care
- A professional to share the perspective of the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Representatives of advocacy services for parents
- Representatives of organisations that can contribute with information and evidence with regard to children in care and corporate parenting, eg Lilac
- Academics, professionals, other witnesses who can make relevant contributions.

8 Site Visits

There is an opportunity for Members of the Committee to meet with two groups of children in care of differing ages, and one group of young people in care currently doing and apprenticeship (including care leavers), at The Swattenden Centre in Cranbrook.

The date of the potential visit is **Thursday 19th February**. The daily timetable offers some flexibility as the young people are at the Centre for the whole day.

9 Project Risks

The tight timescale necessitates a focused approach. There is no time in the programme for the Committee's report to be formally considered by Corporate Management Team and other boards; the report will be shared with them via email.

Recommendations:

1. To agree the Terms of Reference and general approach to the review of Corporate Parenting

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