

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children’s Services
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To: Cabinet – 30 November 2015

Subject: Corporate Parenting Select Committee Report

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of Paper: County Council – 10 December 2015

Summary

The Corporate Parenting Select Committee conducted a review of Members role as elected corporate parents. The report makes a number of recommendations for improving Members oversight role as corporate parents. Cabinet is invited to comment on the final report.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) **APPLAUD** the Select Committee’s work for producing an instructive and timely report;
- (ii) **RECOGNISE** the contribution of the witnesses who provided evidence and the officers who supported the Select Committee’s work;
- (iii) **COMMENT** on the recommendations and commend them to the County Council.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Corporate Parenting Select Committee was established in February 2015 to review Kent County Council’s corporate parenting arrangements and make recommendations for endorsement by the County Council.

2. The Select Committee

2.1 The Select Committee was chaired by Mrs Zita Wilshire and the other Members of the Select Committee were Mr Robert Brookbank, Ms Jane Cribbon, Mr George Koowaree, Mr Bob Neeves, Mr Michael Northey, Mr Richard Parry, Mrs Pauline Stockwell and Mrs Jenny Whittle.

2.2 The terms of reference for the review were agreed on 3 February 2015 and they are as follows:

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

2.3 Substantive time of the Select Committee was dedicated to Evidence Gathering Hearings where internal and external witnesses were invited to give evidence. The full details of all the evidence hearing at the public meetings can be accessed via <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk>. In addition, written evidence was submitted by identified interested organisations.

2.4 The Select Committee also made a number of site visits as part of extended evidence gathering. These opportunities were used to meet and explore issues with children and young people in care and a cross section of frontline social workers.

3. Report’s Key Findings and Recommendations

3.1 The main report discusses some of the key topics and issues that have the most significant impact on health, wellbeing and education of the children in our care. Each chapter highlights the key points and high-level responsibilities that Members, as elected corporate parents should consider. The report also gives a brief account of the Kent picture for the main topics and issues considered. Three important questions are also addressed in the report. These are:

- what are we trying to achieve?;
- what are we doing at present?; and
- what more could be done?

The final section of each chapter puts forward recommendations and questions that we may wish to ask as part of our assurance role as elected corporate parents in ensuring that children in our care continue to be well looked-after.

3.2 The Executive Summary (Appendix 1) is attached to this report. The full Select Committee report will be available to Members via the Member Information

Bulletin. The report will also go on the Members' Area on the intranet. The 15 main recommendations of report aim to:

- Provide Members with a framework to ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of their statutory responsibilities to the children within KCC's care.
- Ensure Members are aware of what they need to do and what questions they need to ask of officers in order to ensure KCC is doing the right things as an organisation to support and provide for its children and young people.
- Make sure KCC has the right systems and structures in place to fulfil its corporate parenting duties in the best and most effective way.
- Make certain that feedback from young people informs everything Kent does, from casework to organisational design and delivery.
- Strengthen the work KCC does with our partner agencies to ensure that the needs of Children in Care and care leavers are prioritised.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Corporate parent legal obligations placed on the Kent County Council require Members and officers to work together along with partner agencies to ensure that children in care are well looked after.
- 4.2 The Select Committee's report will be presented to the County Council for endorsement at its meeting on 10 December 2015
- 4.3 Cabinet should express its appreciation to Mrs Zita Wiltshire, who chaired the Committee and the other Members of the Select Committee. Cabinet should also extend its gratitude to all the witnesses who gave evidence in the course of the review.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) **APPLAUD** the Select Committee's work for producing an instructive and timely report;
- (ii) **RECOGNISE** the contribution of the witnesses who provided evidence and the officers who supported the Select Committee's work;
- (iii) **COMMENT** on the recommendations and commend them to the County Council.

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