

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PARENTING

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Corporate Parenting held in the Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 23 February 2017.

PRESENT: Mrs Z Wiltshire (Chairman), 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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P J Oakford

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager (Council)), Mr P Segurola (Director of Specialist Children's Services) and Ms N Khosla (Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Corporate Parenting Select Committee Report - Update February 2017 (Item 2)

(1) The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, paid tribute to the contribution made to the work of the Select Committee by the late Ms Cribbon and Mr Brookbank.

(2) The Committee noted the update on each of the recommendations circulated with the agenda and asked questions of the Cabinet Member and officers. Particular points were highlighted on some of the recommendations which included the following:

Recommendation 1

- Members clarified that the Corporate Parenting Guide should be based on the Local Government Associations handbook, adapted for KCC, and including officer contact details. This would be particularly useful for new Members following the election.
- It was suggested that Ms Khosla liaise with Mr Wickenden to include Frequently Asked Questions regarding Children in Care in the information he was producing for new Members. It was intended that this would be made available via the Member Portal.

Recommendations 2 & 3

- The Committee noted the work that had been undertaken to complete these recommendations.

Recommendation 4

- Mr Oakford assured the Committee that every effort was being made to raise in all appropriate forums the issue of ensuring that responsible authorities were held to account in maintaining the welfare of children in their care.

- Mr Segurola informed the Committee that Mr Ireland would be attending the Education Select Committee on Fostering at the House of Commons and intended to raise Members concerns regarding out of area placements.

Recommendation 5 and 6

- The Committee noted that these recommendations had been completed.

Recommendation 7

- The excellent work of Virtual Schools Kent (VSK) apprentices to support other young people was highlighted
- Ms Khosla mentioned that the new MOMO app. to encourage greater participation by children in care and in particular to enable them to voice their concerns etc. This had been successfully trialled and would be rolled out to children in care during 2017/18.

Recommendation 8

- Mr Segurola stated that although officers were in dialogue with social housing providers there was not enough provision available. This had been exacerbated by the increase in the number of young people leaving care.

Recommendation 9

- Officers explained the work that had been undertaken with young people to redesign pathway planning, concentrating more on life skills, for example how to use a washing machine and an explanation of the different types of tenancy. This would be rolled out over the coming months.
- Members were informed of the work being carried out with foster carer representatives and the Corporate Parenting Panel to establish a clear transition pathway for young people post 16.

Recommendation 10

- Ms Khosla explained the excellent work being carried out by the Head of Fostering to develop the fostering service and referred to the new project “a sense of belonging”.
- Ms Khosla mentioned the innovative plan to have groups of four foster families supporting each other and acting as an extended family arrangement where placements were at risk of breakdown.
- Members congratulated officers on the fostering services marketing campaign.

Recommendation 11

- Mr Oakford referred to the arrangements under the new CAMHS contract to give priority to all Kent Children in Care. Children in Care placed in Kent would be able to access the priority service if this was paid for by the placing authority.

Recommendation 12

- Ms Khosla referred to the new work programme that had been developed with Ms Dunn (Head of Skills and Employability) focusing on young people who were NEET. This had led to a reduction in young people who were NEET over the past 12 months.
- Ms Khosla also referred to the additional quarter of a million pounds that was being invested in care leaver services.

Recommendation 13

- In relation to apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers Mr Oakford and Mr Segurola referred to the new County Council apprenticeship policy that was currently being developed.

Recommendation 14

- The Committee noted the work being undertaken to progress this recommendation.

Recommendation 15

- Mr Segurola confirmed that a Member Briefing had been arranged in June on Specialist Children's Services.
- Mr Segurola informed the Committee of the mixed response to a survey of Kent social workers carried out last summer. There were some concerns regarding caseloads in some areas but generally staff felt supported and that Kent was a great place to work. He also referred to the social worker recruitment and retention work.

(3) RESOLVED That the Cabinet Member and officers be thanked for the work undertaken to date to progress the recommendations of the Select Committee and the update be noted.