

Corporate Parenting Panel – 27 Sept 2016

Title: Overview of Corporate Parenting Training for Elected Members

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

This paper gives an overview of member development activity to support elected members in their role as corporate parents.

Recommendations

1. That the Corporate Parenting Panel comments on the overview of corporate parenting training for elected members;
2. That consideration be given to what future corporate parenting training should be incorporated into the member development programme;
3. That a further update on development activity be provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel in six months' time.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – summary of evaluation sheets from sessions held on June 24 and July 22, 2016.

Background Papers

Nil

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

N/A

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Report title: Overview of Corporate Parenting Training for Elected Members

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Panel comments on the overview of corporate parenting training for elected members;
- 1.2 That consideration be given to what future corporate parenting training should be incorporated into the member development programme;
- 1.3 That a further update on development activity be provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel in six months' time.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Fresh Start Improvement Plan (Phase 1) had two specific actions relating to Corporate Parenting.
 - Well-developed role of Cabinet Member for Children's Service;
 - Visible elected member leadership on looked after children and child protection issues.
- 2.2 In response to the Improvement Plan, the member development 'offer' has taken a tiered approach reflecting the different levels of corporate parenting responsibilities. These different levels are outlined in the National Children's Bureau's (NCB) publication "Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice" (2015), and are as follows:
 - Universal responsibility (Level 1) – all members;
 - Targeted responsibility (Level 2) – those with more specific roles e.g. those undertaking Regulation 33 visits; members of fostering and adoption panels; members of Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP);
 - Specialist responsibility (Level 3) – Lead Member.
- 2.3 Democratic Services (Member Development) has organised the delivery of Level 1 training to newly elected and returning members as part of the 2016 Member Induction Programme. All members have been invited to attend these sessions. Of those members elected in 2016, **19 out of 24** have attended at least one session on corporate parenting (including Level 1 and 2 sessions). **53 out of 63 members** have attended an in-house development session on corporate parenting since 2014 (84%).
- 2.4 Work has commenced to organise Level 2 input for members with more specific roles but this is at a preliminary stage. This will be provided largely by officers in the Children in Care team, although there is scope to explore external delivery if required.
- 2.5 At Level 3, the Commissioner for Children's Social Care and Senior Officers from Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) have provided specific development support to the Lead Member, with Democratic Services facilitating external support and development opportunities to the Lead Member via the LGA.

3 Key Issues

3.1 Universal Responsibility (Level 1)

Two generic induction sessions outlining corporate parenting responsibilities of councillors were delivered a LGA Peer Member (these sessions were delivered as part

of the LGA support to the Council's improvement programme). The sessions were run on 24 June and 22 July 2016. 22 members attended these sessions (of which 18 were elected in May 2016). Similar sessions were offered in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

3.2 The outline of this programme is as follows:

- The Council's statutory responsibilities to looked after children and care leavers
- What are members responsibilities as corporate parents
- Explore key policy issues and challenges
- Key lines of enquiry for councillors

3.3 All members attending the sessions in 2016 completed an evaluation sheet (summary attached as Appendix 1). Feedback from these sessions has been positive. In respect of specific requests for further information a 'resource' pack has been circulated and is available on-line (see para 3.8). CPP is asked to consider the evaluation and determine what further action is required on the basis of the feedback.

3.4 **Targeted Responsibility (Level 2)**

A session for members of CPP and Improving Lives Scrutiny Select Commission was delivered by the Head of Service, Children in Care on 7 June, 2016. Five members attended this (including three new members). Of these, only one member of CPP attended. Because of the low attendance, it is suggested that this session is repeated at a future point.

3.5 The purpose of the training was to give councillors a more in-depth understanding of their roles as corporate parents and some the key issues for scrutiny. An outline of the session is as follows:

- Providing an overview and understanding of the legislative and policy framework for looked-after children.
- Mapping out and gaining knowledge of the local arrangements for looked-after children.
- Working in a child-centred way to understand the views and experiences of children and young people in care.
- Understanding and involving local partners and other agencies which have a stake in the arrangements for looked-after children.
- Creating clear recommendations for improvement and monitoring the impact on both the system and the lives of children.

3.6 A request has been made to organise an induction session for new members on the Adoption and Fostering Panel. In addition, further in-depth briefings will be provided to members on the Corporate Parenting Panel to update members of policy developments or specific service initiatives or issues. Progress will be reported back to a future CPP.

3.7 **Specialist Responsibility (Level 3)**

The Lead Member has received sector specific support from CYPS and the Commissioner for Children's Social Care. In addition, a peer mentor has been appointed through the LGA. Development opportunities are available from September 2016 on the LGA Leadership Academy and LGA 'Essentials' sessions; including specific input on children's services and commissioning.

3.8 Resources

The following resources are available on the intranet for all members:

- LGIU guide for councillors as corporate parents “If this was my child”¹;
- LGA Guide “Must Knows: What you need to know about safeguarding and corporate parenting”;
- National Children’s Bureau (NCB)/ LGA/ Centre for Public Scrutiny publication “10 Questions to ask if you are scrutinising services for Looked After Children”.
- Each member of the Corporate Parenting Panel has been given a copy of the NCB “Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice: A handbook for Councillors”. Following feedback from the induction session requesting detailed information on the corporate parenting role, two further copies have been left in each of the Political Group Offices for reference.

3.9 There is scope for members to access e-learning through the RMBC Directions pages on the intranet should relevant modules be posted on-line. There is a specific question on the personal development plan (PDP) questionnaire to identify if members wish to access learning and development through on-line resources.

3.10 Seminar Programme

The Seminar programme is a complementary part of development programme, giving the opportunity to brief members on policy developments or ‘hot topics’. Should relevant areas be identified, these can be factored into the seminar programme accordingly. There is also scope to brief members through the fortnightly member newsletter.

3.11 Audit

A record is kept of attendance at each session, which is recorded on the Council’s HR system. This enables Democratic Services (Member Development) to identify when members have last attended a session or if they are yet to attend (see para 2.3). This information will be reported to the Member Development Panel in due course, to inform the development programme (including refresher sessions) accordingly.

3.12 Personal Development Plan

As part of the Improvement Plan it has been agreed that each member will have a PDP in place². As part of this process, each member will be asked specific questions about the training and support they have received and whether they are confident of their role as Corporate Parents. There is opportunity in the PDP for Members to identify individual training needs related to their generic or specific responsibilities. The outcomes from PDPs will be fed back to the Member Development Panel to inform future member development programmes.

4 Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 The induction sessions for members have already been delivered. The Joint Improvement Board received regular progress reports on the Improvement Plan and agreed that the actions outlined in Para 2.1 were substantively complete. Future activity will be to be picked up as part of the ongoing focus on member support/development in Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan.

¹ Although the LGIU guide was written in 2003, the questions and checklists are still relevant and a helpful guide to understanding councillor’s role

² The format of the PDP process is currently under consideration.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 The initial focus of the programme was agreed by the Leader in consultation with the Lead Member and Leaders of the Opposition Groups (March 2016). The suggested approach was endorsed by Commissioners and SLT. Future corporate parenting programmes will be developed on the basis of the PDP process and input from CPP, the Lead Member, Member Development Panel, Commissioners and SLT.

6 Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The generic induction session has been delivered. The wider programme of support and ongoing development is being formulated. Progress will be reported to the Joint Improvement Board (as part of the ongoing focus on member support/development), Member Development Panel and Corporate Parenting Panel.

7 Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9 Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 Members should have regards to the human resources required to deliver training and development interventions to ensure that they are cost effective and value for money.

10 Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 Councillors as Corporate Parents have a key role in improving the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers, many of whom may become vulnerable adults. It is therefore important that elected members consider and promote the welfare of looked after children through their various activities and are equipped with the knowledge and understanding to do this effectively.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 In developing and delivering a training and development programme, consideration has been given to equalities implications. An equalities impact assessment has not taken place, but is a relevant consideration particularly in respect of looked after children and care leavers who have protected characteristics.

12 Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 The development of a learning and development framework for corporate parenting involves close liaison between CYPS and Democratic Services.

13 Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 By providing comprehensive learning and development opportunities, the risks of councillors not being effective corporate parents is mitigated.

14 Accountable Officer(s)

James McLaughlin, Democratic Services Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Ian Walker, Interim Head of Service, Children in Care, CYPS

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- N/A

Assistant Director of Legal Services:- N/A

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/A

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This report is published on the Council's website or can be found at:-

<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>

Appendix 1

Members' role as Corporate Parents 2016 (Induction) – Summary of evaluation sheets

Of 22 responses:

Were your objectives achieved							
<i>Please tick one box</i>							
Yes, in full	15	Yes, partly	7	No, not at all	0	Too early to say	0
To what extent did the session cover issues relevant to your role?							
<i>Please tick one box</i>							
To a great extent	16	To a moderate extent	6	To a small extent	0	Not at all	0
Please rate how satisfied you were with this session, overall:							
<i>Please tick one box</i>							
Very satisfied			18	Fairly dissatisfied			0
Fairly satisfied			4	Very dissatisfied			0
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied			0	Don't know			0
Overall, did the session...							
<i>Please tick one box</i>							
Exceed your expectations	9	Meet your expectations	13	Fall short of your expectations		0	

What have you learned today

The meaning and the importance of understanding a councillors role and responsibilities; Methods to "do" it successfully
 Emphasis on assurances - What to look for; Questions to ask; What actions/steps we can take to fulfil our responsibilities
 Different sources of information/data, guides and documents
 Importance of building relationships with relevant professionals;
 Request feedback from independent reviewing officers
 Awareness of the Rotherham context; Scale of Corporate Parenting in RMBC; Statistics; Costs to RMBC
 Schools responsibilities for LAC; Virtual schools
 I need more detailed information re fostering and their dos and don'ts;
 More information on outcomes; Checking implementations are in place
 Further information such as Abduction notices
 To be vigilant that all external reports are not always accurate; To check with other councillors and the area they are working on

What do you still not understand

Figures still don't add up

What will you consider doing differently

Be a more informed and effective councillor; To be more proactive and not reactive - going further than the face value
 Consider how Looked After Children are affected by all services
 Setting up a working group
 Request more evidence of what is happening & whether it is a good experience for LAC
 Ask appropriate questions; challenge and probe officers

What did you find most beneficial

Being able to discuss points and increase knowledge of the subject
 Better able to recognise the signs that things may be going amiss in this field
 Understanding the responsibility we have as councillors as Corporate

Parents

All of it; very informative; very engaging session

Detailed explanation of a councillors responsibilities; discussions and knowing how to ask the right questions

How could the session be improved

Bullet point printout; references; further information/web pages; more specific instruction on how to practically carry out my duties

Any other comments

An excellent and informative session, encouraging important discussion; Useful introduction/clarification; Highly knowledgeable presenter