

1. Meeting:	Cabinet
2. Date:	Wednesday, 8th September, 2010
3. Title:	Corporate Parenting Group
4. Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

The report sets out proposals to establish a Corporate Parenting Group.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet:-

- (a) Receives the draft terms of reference and forwards them to the first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group for discussion.**
- (b) Agrees interim arrangements for membership.**
- (c) Reviews these arrangements in 12 months time.**

7. Proposals and Details

The Looked After Children Scrutiny Sub-Panel undertook a scrutiny review into the "Corporate Parents Arrangements". The review and recommendations were agreed by Cabinet at its meeting of 7th July, 2010.

As part of the review, an audit of corporate parenting activity was undertaken, based on the National Children's Bureau's Template. Although there were many areas where activity could be evidenced strongly (for example, advocacy and complaints), the audit highlighted some important gaps. These include:-

- Absence of Corporate Parenting Group with multi-agency representation.
- Lack of definition about the respective roles (for example, role of the member on the Fostering Panel).
- Lack of clarity about lines of reporting (how and where do Members on the Fostering or Adoption Panels formally feed in concerns or issues).
- Absence of a shared protocol for receiving/actioning recommendations arising from the bodies with a corporate parenting remit.
- Lack of clarity about the links between the Local Strategic Partnership, Children's Board and our Corporate Parenting arrangement.

7.1 Decision Making

7.1.1 The review recommended "That a Corporate Parenting Board is established as a sub-group of the Children's Board; its membership to include the lead member, key members with corporate parenting responsibilities, co-optees and relevant officers and partners as required".

7.1.2 A number of local authorities have established such corporate parenting boards or panels, with membership and terms of reference reflecting their local arrangements. Taking into account the specific legislative responsibilities of Elected Members in respect of their Corporate Parenting roles, the majority of these are sub-committees of the Executive or Council.

7.1.3 Further work will need to be undertaken to clarify the link between the Local Strategic Partnership, Children's Board and our Corporate Parenting arrangement.

7.1.4 It is suggested that any decisions taken by the Corporate Parenting Group be referred for ratification to the Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and Developing Learning (or to Cabinet if of wider corporate significance) or to respective partners bodies.

7.2 Terms of Reference

7.2.1 Draft terms of reference have been developed (attached as Appendix 1). It is suggested that these are forwarded to the Corporate Parenting Group for comment and amendment.

7.3 Membership

7.3.1 The review did not explore the composition of the proposed group or prescribe its membership, other than suggesting it is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and Developing Learning to maintain its strategic overview.

7.3.2 Drawing on examples from other Local Authorities, it is suggested that the membership of the Corporate Parenting Group is as follows:-

- Chair - Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and Developing Learning;
- Elected Member on Fostering Panel;
- Elected Member on Adoption Panel;
- Cabinet Member for Adult Independence, Health and Well Being (or his/her nominee);
- One member nominated from the opposition group;
- One Member from Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel.

Reflecting their wider corporate parenting roles, further consideration should be given to whether additional Cabinet Members wish to be members of this board or attend when relevant items are on the agenda.

7.3.3 The review also suggested that in addition to the Elected Member representation, consideration should be given to appointing non-voting co-optees to the Group. For example:-

- Foster carers representatives;
- Designated governors for Looked After Children;
- Representative from the NHS;
- Others as required on a permanent or 'as or when' basis.

It is suggested that the first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group determines its co-option arrangements.

7.3.4 The review recommended that key officers and partners should also be active members of the Corporate Parenting Group; this was endorsed by the Children's Board at its meeting on 6th August, 2010. It is suggested that relevant officers and partners are invited to the first meeting.

7.4 Looked After Children Council

The review asked that the Corporate Parenting Group has formal links to the work of the Looked After Children's Council. Further consideration is required by the Corporate Parenting Board about how this will work in practice.

7.5 Review

It is suggested that Cabinet reviews the arrangements in 12 months to assess if they are meeting organisational requirements and improving outcomes for Looked After Children.

8. Finance

Support for the Corporate Parenting Group will be met through existing resources. It should be noted that since Cabinet approval has been given to the review recommendations, the LAC Scrutiny Sub-Panel has been disbanded.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The Authority's Corporate Parenting arrangements must contribute to improved and sustainable outcomes for Looked After Children and their families. These arrangements should bring together the relevant agencies to ensure that timely decisions are made about the care and education of the Borough's most vulnerable children. Failure to ensure that our arrangements are robust may undermine this and negatively impact on future inspection judgements.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

See 'Care Matters: Time for Change' agenda and Ofsted Inspections of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Scrutiny Review: Corporate Parenting Arrangements.
- Department for Education and Skills (2007); *Care Matters: Time for Change*. Norwich: The Stationery Office.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009); *Care Matters: Ministerial Stocktake Report 2009*.
- Ofsted (2009) *Inspections of Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services: Framework for Inspection and Guidance for Local Authorities and Partners*.

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