

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE REVIEW
DATE OF DECISION:	19 <sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2013
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>				
AUTHOR:	Name:	Alison Elliott	Tel:	023 8083 2602
	E-mail:	Alison.elliott@southampton.gov.uk		
Director	Name:	Alison Elliott	Tel:	023 8083 2602
	E-mail:	Alison.elliott@southampton.gov.uk		

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
None

#### BRIEF SUMMARY

Corporate parenting is a statutory function of the Council. The leadership and commitment of Elected Members in their role as Corporate Parents, is of critical importance in achieving good outcomes for children and young people in care. The Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked after Children Inspection in 2012 graded service provision for Looked after Children as inadequate and many of the performance indicators relating to outcomes for looked after children presently place Southampton in poor performance.

A review of the current Corporate Parenting Committee arrangements has taken place and this report recommends proposals for strengthening those arrangements to ensure robust challenge and improve outcomes for Looked after Children in the City.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) To appoint a Corporate Parenting Committee with cross party membership of 6 Elected Members including the Lead Member for Children's Services made up of 3 Labour, 1 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Councillors Against the Cuts.
- (ii) To approve the proposed Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Committee, attached as Appendix 1 of the report.
- (iii) To delegate authority to the Head of Legal, Human Resources and Democratic Services following the consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Director of People to approve any minor amendments to the terms of reference to ensure arrangements remain fit for purpose.

## REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Corporate Parenting is a statutory function of the Council and the Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked after Children Inspection in 2012 graded service provision for Looked after Children as inadequate and many of the performance indicators relating to outcomes for looked after children presently place Southampton in poor performance.
2. Edward Timpson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, wrote to all Lead Members and Directors in June this year reminding them of the importance of having in place strong Corporate Parenting processes which embed the voice of the child.
3. The benchmark for effective Corporate Parenting should be “would it be good enough for my child”? Clearly with service provision for Looked after Children graded as inadequate as part of the 2012 Ofsted inspection and performance indicators placing Southampton in poor performance a review of the current arrangements were essential.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

4. The option of doing nothing to review the current model of Corporate Parenting for Southampton has been discounted given the Ofsted inspection. In addition a regional Corporate Parenting Seminar has been hosted by West Sussex County Council and provided an opportunity for best practice regarding the delivery of effective corporate parenting to be shared.

## DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

5. The aim of the Corporate Parent is to ensure that Local Authorities meet their duties under the relevant legislation and statutory guidance that require Local Authorities to provide for, safeguard and promote the welfare of Children in Care, act corporately in relation to this role and ensure that all Elected Members are aware of and contribute to their responsibilities in this area.
6. The Corporate Parenting Committee acts to assist the Council in continuing to fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards children looked after and leaving care and provide the strategic direction to ensure that they are effectively supported to reach their potential through the provision of excellent parenting, high quality education, opportunities to develop their talents and skills, and effective support for their transition to adulthood.
7. The Committee has a responsibility to monitor and review the quality and effectiveness of services for children looked after delivered by Corporate Parents; the council, partner agencies and commissioned services; to ensure that every child and young person looked after is supported to be safe, happy, healthy and to achieve their full potential. In addition, it has a key role in listening to the voice of children and young people looked after and leaving care.
8. Research into other models within Local Authorities has shown that many Corporate Parenting Panels/Committees have their Children’s Services Cabinet Member as the lead, with a majority membership from the administration and a minority membership from the opposition groups. Opposition members are usually those who are responsible for Children’s

Services for their groups (the shadow cabinet members or Scrutiny leads).

9. In the recent round of Ofsted inspections of services for looked after children, the effectiveness of corporate parenting groups has been commented upon. Inspectors have stated where the group worked well it provided the leadership necessary to drive an ambitious and coherent multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for looked after children and care-leavers. Where it did not work well, services for looked after children tended to be less effective.
10. Ofsted identified where looked after services were considered to be good. In these authorities the Corporate Parenting Committee:
  - demonstrated a strong cross-party commitment to looked after children, by championing their rights, having high aspirations for their achievement, monitoring children's progress and challenging outcomes;
  - clearly understood its role and the responsibilities of the local authority towards looked after children, and planned for and prioritised their needs, resulting in a greater focus on improving outcomes;
  - actively engaged with their young people, for example through children in care councils that are well-established and have effective and regular links with senior management and elected members
11. An example of good practice regarding corporate parenting arrangements in the London Borough of Lambeth has been highlighted by Ofsted. Lambeth's Corporate Parenting Board monitor and review services to establish the objectives and priorities for looked after children by council departments and partner agencies. Their central role is to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. They have a similar number of children looked after as Southampton and their structure for delivery is as follows:
  - The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the Lead Member for children and young people and includes five elected members (cross-party membership).
  - The board meets five times a year. Each meeting has a themed focus on health, staying safe, education, economic well-being and making a positive contribution.
  - The Lead Member meets members of the Children in Care Council prior to each board meeting.
  - The Children in Care Council has a standing agenda item at the board and the chair and co-chair of the care council attend the meetings. Young people are confident that their views are taken seriously and lead to change.
  - Members of the Children in Care Council present the annual Corporate Parenting Board report to full Council each year with the support of the Lead Member. All councillors sign the pledge each year at the full Council meeting.

12. Following a consultation process with the existing Corporate Parenting Committee which is made up of the Cabinet and representation from opposition members and a team of multi agency professionals it is proposed that Southampton revises and develops its model of Corporate Parenting by the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Committee in line with the London Borough of Lambeth model. In particular membership of the Committee will be made up of 6 Elected Members (3,1,1,1) from across all political parties including the Lead Member for Children's Services. Membership of the Committee will also include representatives of service users, namely the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Children in Care Council and Southampton Foster Carer's Association and will continue to be supported by a team of multi agency professionals in order to monitor and review services and establish priorities for Looked after Children by Council Departments and Partner Agencies.. Reporting mechanisms will be strengthened to:-
- Present a report to Council twice a year one of which will be an annual report and require Elected Members to endorse their commitment to Southampton City Council's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care.
  - Submit an Annual Corporate Parenting report to the following bodies:
    - Southampton Safeguarding Children's Board
    - People Directorate Divisional Management Team
    - Children's Trust Board
  - Agree at the start of each municipal year an annual work programme setting out its key priorities and areas for action, and record outcomes of these actions.
  - The Chair of the Committee will meet with the Director of People, Corporate Parenting Team Manager and Chair of the Children in Care Council separately before each Committee meeting to agree the agenda and review actions and progress to embed and ensure the voice of the child .
  - Monitor performance of the Council against key performance indicators and as a whole authority commitment to joint-working arrangements between council departments and partner agencies and examine ways in which holistic, integrated and cross-cutting practice can be further embedded and priorities and objectives agreed.
  - Make recommendations to decision makers in both the Local Authority and strategic partners where necessary to fulfil Corporate Parenting duties.

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

### Capital/Revenue

13. Support to the revised Corporate Parenting Model will be managed within existing resources.

### Property/Other

14. None.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

### Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

15. There are statutory obligations and guidance for the role of the Local Authority as the Corporate Parent in the Children's Act 1989 and 2004, Children and Young People Act 2008, Quality Protects 1998, DfES 2003 - Councillor's Guide to being a Corporate Parent and the Duty on Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Looked after Children.

### Other Legal Implications:

16. The Corporate Parenting Committee will not be a formal committee of the Council under either the Local Government Act 1972 or the Local Government Act 2000 and Political Proportionality does not apply. The Committee will not have a formal decision making role but will support the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Director of People in the execution of their statutory decision making functions.

## POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

17. The role of the Corporate Parenting Committee will have an impact across the following Policy Framework:-
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
  - Adult Learning Plan
  - 14-19 Strategy

KEY DECISION? Yes

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

#### Appendices

1.	Proposed Terms of Reference
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#### Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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#### Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
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#### Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	None	
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