

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	18 January 2007
Subject:	Corporate Parenting Panel
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Clark, Director of Children's Services
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Janet Mote, People First – Children's Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Draft Terms of Reference

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out a proposal to establish a Corporate Parenting Panel to enable the Council to fulfil its duties as Corporate Parent to Children Looked After by the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Cabinet is requested to:

1. To establish a Corporate Parenting Panel as an Advisory Panel to Cabinet to meet on a quarterly basis
2. To establish the Panel as a proportionate body comprising 6 Elected Members and Reserves and to appoint a Chair to Panel
3. To agree the draft Terms of Reference for the Panel attached as Appendix 1

REASON:

As requested by Elected Members attending the Corporate Parenting Committee of 25 October 2005 and 20 April 2006 to enable the Council to fulfil its responsibility as Corporate Parent.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

1. Background

- 1.1. Corporate parenting can be described as the best efforts of the local authority to care for, nurture, educate and support children and young people who are looked after; i.e. to make sure that they receive the care that would normally be offered by their family so that they achieve their potential.
- 1.2. Sir William Utting in his report 'Children in the Public Care' (1991) saw a positive benefit in members taking a personal involvement and retaining personal oversight of the way in which the local authorities responsibilities are discharged.
- 1.3. The Quality Protects Programme was launched in September 1998 and a special grant of £885m over 5 years was allocated to councils with social services responsibilities. In addition to improvement and quality, a central part of Quality Protects has been an emphasis on the role of councillors as "corporate parents" to their authority's looked after children.
- 1.4. The Social Exclusion Unit report 'A Better education for children in care' (2003) highlighted the responsibility of the whole local authority, not just Children's Services departments, to act as 'corporate parent' for children in care.
- 1.5. In 2003 the DfES published 'If this were my child... A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent.'
- 1.6. In 2005 the Government published 'statutory guidance on the duty of local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004'. This includes a vital leadership role for the Lead Member for Children's Services and places a responsibility on them, alongside other councillors, to ensure that the local authority acts as the corporate parent for all its looked after children.
- 1.7. A Corporate Parenting Group was established in its current format in 2000. Over this period the annual cycle of meetings has evolved to include a quarterly business meeting, 2 briefing meetings and 2 events involving young people. 15 Elected Members had indicated they wished to be included on the circulation list for agendas and papers for the business and briefing meetings. All Councillors would normally be invited to attend events involving young people, including the annual celebration of achievement event for children looked after.
- 1.8. The last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee was held on 20 April 2006. Councillor Davine chaired the Committee with cross-party representation at meetings.
- 1.9. Elected Members attending the Committee had previously expressed their desire for the Corporate Parenting Committee to be constituted as

an Advisory Panel to the Council. At the meetings held on 25 October 2005 and 20 April 2006 the Director of Children's Services was asked to submit a report to Cabinet to this effect.

2. Details of the Proposal

2.1. The reports proposes the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Panel to enable the Council to fulfil its duties as Corporate Parent to Children Looked After by the Council. The Council as a whole is the Corporate Parent, and Councillors have a key role in that. Being a good Corporate Parent means that we should:

- Accept responsibility for children in the Council's care;
- Make their needs a priority;
- Seek for them the same outcomes as any good parent would want for their own children.

2.2. The role of a Corporate Parent is to find out who and where these children are and to make sure that the Council is doing its best to help them.

2.3. As a Corporate Parent, Councillors have a right and a duty to question their authority about this group of children, with executive and scrutiny functions providing avenues through which to do this.

2.4. The draft Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) sets out the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

3. Options considered

3.1. Consideration was given to retaining the Corporate Parenting Committee on its existing basis. Elected Members were of the view that establishment of a Corporate Parenting Panel as an advisory panel would publicly demonstrate the Council's commitment to fulfil its Corporate Parenting role. It would also place the Panel formally on the Executive side, and differentiate it clearly from the Scrutiny function.

4. Consultation

4.1. None undertaken

5. Financial Implications

5.1. The costs associated with implementing this proposal will be contained within existing budgets.

6. Legal Implications

6.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report

7. Equalities Impact

7.1. This report deals throughout with equality issues for Children Looked After, Children in Need and those on the Child Protection Register.

8. Corporate Priorities

8.1. This report addresses the Corporate Priorities of Making Harrow Safe, Sound and Supportive and Empowering Harrow Youth.

9. Key Performance Indicators

9.1. The Corporate Parenting Panel will receive regular progress reports on Key Performance Indicators appertaining to Children Looked After, Children on the Child Protection Register and Children in Need.

10. Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

10.1. This report deals throughout with the needs of a group of children and young people who are amongst the most vulnerable and at risk in Harrow.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Paula Foulds Date: 17 October 2006
Monitoring Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Sharon Clarke Date: 19 October 2006

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact:

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020 8424 1911

Background Papers:

1. Children in the Public Care' (1991)
2. A Better education for children in care' (2003)
3. If this were my child... A councillor's guide to being a good corporate parent (2003)
4. Statutory guidance on the duty of local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children under section 52 of the Children Act 2004 (2005)

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 020 8424 1911

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	1, 5

Corporate Parenting Panel

Draft Terms of Reference

Purpose

1. To ensure that the Council is fulfilling its duties towards Looked After Children corporately and in partnership with other statutory agencies.
2. To consider matters referred to the Panel within its terms of reference and to make recommendations to Cabinet/Portfolio Holder as appropriate including:
 - a. Approving annually the Statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service
 - b. Approving annually the Statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service

Role of the Panel

1. To take an overview of the Council's and partner agencies responsibilities towards looked after children
2. To examine ways in which the Council as a whole and partner agencies can improve the life chances of looked after children and care leavers.
3. Ensure there are good joint working arrangements between council departments and partner agencies.
4. To provide a forum for Children Looked After (CLA) to participate and influence policy and enable CLA to have opportunity to talk about issues relating to their own direct experiences of services they have received. Hence the Board will ensure that the positive experiences/services are maintained and lessons are learnt and changes made in the areas that require improvements.
5. To comment on and contribute to plans, policies and strategies for looked after children and make appropriate recommendations for action.
6. To have a monitoring role, by receiving regular progress reports on a number of key PI's e.g. educational attainment (including implementation of Personal Education Plans), health assessments and implementation of Local Area Agreements for CLA.
7. Monitor the plans/needs of children in Secure Accommodation.
8. To receive regular reports on the needs of care leavers including employment, further education, training and housing.
9. To receive annual reports on the following services
 - Adoption
 - Fostering
 - Complaints
10. To meet with CLA and their carers on a regular basis to consult and celebrate achievements, festivals etc.
11. To manage and arrange Member visits to
 - Children's Homes
 - Foster Placements
 - Frontline Services (as indicated in the Victoria Climbié Audit)

Membership

The Corporate Parenting panel will comprise:

A proportionate number of 6 Elected Members

Service Users, Carers and Schools (Non-Voting)

- 2 Children Looked After
- 2 Foster Carers
- 1 Designated Teacher

Senior Officers (advisors to the Panel – to attend as appropriate to the work of the Panel)

- Director of Children's Services
- Group Manager + Children and Families
- Group Manager Safeguarding and Family Support
- Group Manager Fostering, Adoption and Residential Care
- Senior Professional (Inclusion)
- Principal Educational Psychologist
- Senior Coordinator (Children Looked After)