

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MINUTES

12 OCTOBER 2010

Chairman: Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors:

* Husain Akhtar	* Brian Gate (1)
* Christine Bednell (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)	* Janet Mote
* Margaret Davine	* William Stoodley

In attendance: (Councillors) * Mark Versallion Minute 16

* Denotes Member present
(1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

11. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillor Brian Gate

12. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made.

13. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2010, be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the following paragraph at the end of Minute 9, Teenage Placement Strategy:

Members expressed concern that the Teenage Placement Strategy had been referred to Cabinet without being considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel prior to its referral.

14. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions or petitions were received or deputations put at this meeting.

RECOMMENDED ITEM

15. RECOMMENDATION REPORT - Children in Care Council

An officer introduced a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services, which set out the progress made in formalising the terms of reference of Harrow's Children in Care Council, and the drafting of the Harrow Pledge.

He advised that:

- the Children in Care Council would now be known as Beyond Limits;
- the purpose of the Harrow Pledge was to provide a publicly available document that would explain depth what children should expect from their Corporate Parents;
- officers in Children's Services shared the responsibility to deliver the Harrow Pledge as a corporate strategy.

Members of the Panel were pleased with the work undertaken, and congratulated representatives of Beyond Limits present at the meeting in formalising the Harrow Pledge. They agreed that it would positively benefit young people in a pastoral and academic sense.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to Cabinet) That

- (1) the draft terms of reference be approved, in particular the interface proposals between Beyond Limits and the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- (2) the Harrow Pledge as outlined by Beyond Limits be adopted;
- (3) two non-voting members of Beyond Limits be appointed to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Reason for Decision: To provide a forum for Children Looked After (CLA) to participate and influence policy, and enable them to discuss issues relating to their own direct experiences of the services they have received.

Care Matters-Time for Change 2007, stipulates that Local Authorities were expected to set up Children In Councils as a way of ensuring that children who were looked after had a voice.

It was also expected that local Children in Care Councils monitor the implementation of locally produced Pledges and in conjunction with Corporate Parenting Panels.

RESOLVED ITEMS

16. INFORMATION REPORT - Update on the Teenage Placement Strategy

The Divisional Director Safeguarding, Family Placement and Support, provided a verbal update on the progress made with the Teenage Placement Strategy. She advised that:

- placement pressure was most felt surrounding teenage Children Looked After (CLA). Earlier this year, three CLA Challenge Panels took place where placements of all CLA and care leavers aged sixteen plus were reviewed;
- there were 50 CLA either in or requiring semi-independent accommodation;
- the Leaving Care LEAN review being conducted in conjunction with Capita, included direct input from Care Leavers about what worked for them and how independent living support could be developed further;
- as a matter of good practice, foster carers and care leavers allowances were being reviewed to ensure that these remained relevant and appropriate;
- on 14 September 2010, Cabinet agreed to the change of use for the Honeypot Lane Children's Residential Unit. The new Unit would accommodate seven CLA aged 16-18 years living semi-independently as a stepping stone towards full independence;
- it was intended for the structure of the workforce at the Unit to be finalised by November 2010 to ensure that an appropriate skills mix was maintained. Stakeholders, staff, Unions and Partners had engaged positively in the consultation process and no complaints had been received about the proposed operating model. The Voluntary Severance Scheme (VSS) and possibilities of redeployment were being considered by existing employees' at the Unit. The intention was to fully implement the new Honeypot Lane operating model by April 2011. Dialogue with key partners, police and Health Services was ongoing to finalise the proposed operating model.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- the purpose of semi-independent units such as what was being proposed for Honeypot Lane, was to provide a resource to support CLA in the transition to full independence. All CLA requiring semi-independent accommodation would be assessed to gauge their readiness and suitability;

- Life Skills training for CLA was best provided where they were living, using the existing support networks available to the young person;
- the Life Skills Training Programme included a number of essential areas including practical training such as basic household maintenance. The training also sought to support young people with making and maintaining relationships, building networks and developing emotional resilience;
- the Life Skills Training Programme would be delivered in both one-to-one and small group based sessions. The frequency of formal training sessions would be increased, with foster carers implementing the skills learnt through the training at the earliest possible opportunity;
- CLA were fully supported in engaging with work experience opportunities.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

17. INFORMATION REPORT - Activity and Performance

An officer introduced a report, which set out key data relating to Children Looked After (CLA) and children with Child Protection Plans (CPP). It also provided a performance position for National Indicators for Children's Social Care.

She advised that:

- there were approximately 131 CLA and 191 children with CPP from Harrow;
- there were 47 CLA from Brent currently placed in Harrow. Cross borough placement with neighbouring authorities was an area that needed to be considered in terms of impact on other local services;
- provisional results showed that 50% of Harrow CLA attained at least Level 4 in Maths and English at Key Stage Level 2 (KS2);
- provisional statistics showed that 11.8% of Harrow CLA attained 5 or more A* - C in their GCSE's, including Maths and English.

In response to questions, officers advised that:

- the academic data outlined in the report were provisional as official GCSE results for the 2010 academic year would not be published until January 2011;
- referral targets were set by the Divisional Director Safeguarding, Family Placement and Support, the Referral and Assessment Service Manager and the Performance Manager to improve the service provided;

- factors that contributed to certain National Indicator performance targets not being met were:
 - (i) challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified social workers;
 - (ii) cover arrangements to account for two members of staff from the Duty and Assessment Team who were currently on maternity leave;
 - (iii) the review of the statutory guidance (Working Together), meant that all assessments had to be undertaken by a qualified Social Worker. These assessments were previously carried out by Social Care Assistants;
 - (iv) the unrelenting nature of contracts and referrals received;
- the Social Work Reform Board and the Munro Review were being examined to identify strategies for recruiting and retaining qualified Social Workers;
- Foster Carers were approved by either the Local Authority or Independent Agencies. Children could be placed in different boroughs depending on their needs and placement availability;
- there were ongoing efforts to ensure that CLA from Harrow were placed with carers living in the borough;
- all adoption and special guardianship arrangements were granted through Court Orders;
- benchmarked figures detailing relationships and trends with neighbouring boroughs would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel;
- the current National Indicator figures as at September 2010 were positive, and would be presented to future meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) benchmarked comparison figures with neighbouring boroughs be presented to a future meeting of the Panel;
- 3) the most recent National Indicator figures be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 8.10 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE BEDNELL
(Vice-Chairman in the Chair)