

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 21 June 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor Clifford (substitutue for Councillor Kaur)
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor D Kershaw
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor A Lucas
Councillor P Male
Councillor C Thomas

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson

Other Members: Councillor Bigham

Employees (by Directorate):

People: J Gregg, P Smith
Place: G Holmes

Apologies: Councillor B Kaur

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2018 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. Corporate Parenting and the Corporate Parenting Board

The Board received a briefing note which set out Members' responsibilities as corporate parents and the role of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The briefing note set out the definition of a 'corporate parent' and the legal responsibilities as set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017. That Act required that a core offer which set out what the Council would offer to its care leavers, be published by December 2018.

The Corporate Parenting Board was the body in the Council that reviewed and focussed on the progress of our Looked after Children and Care Leavers, and was chaired by the lead member for Children's Services.

The briefing note set out data in respect of Looked after Children and care leavers.

Members asked questions on a number of aspects in the report including the following:

- What support was given for independent living.
- What financial support was available from Government
- The need to remind members the Council and partners of the importance of their corporate parenting role.

Arising from their discussion, the Board requested further information on the following:

- Education outcomes for Y11 LAC last year
- Percentage of LAC Level 4+ in Maths and English, LAC NEET numbers and what is being done to support students
- Examples of schools who are good with LAC
- Plans for underachieving LAC in second half of secondary school

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note progress made against the 2015 Task and Finish group recommendations.**
- (b) To recommend that in-house training be provided to all elected members and senior managers.**

4. Progress Towards an Outstanding Fostering Service

The Board received a briefing note which detailed progress made towards establishing an outstanding fostering service together and the subsequent benefits for Coventry's looked after children.

In March 2015, a report was presented to Scrutiny Board 2 following a Task and Finish Group review of Coventry's fostering service. Ten recommendations were made and actions were now completed, these were appended to the briefing note.

The briefing note indicated that the implementation of the recommendations had contributed to a significant improvement in Coventry's fostering service in the last 2 years.

The Board noted that other areas of improvement were in:

- Recruitment of foster carers
- Current mainstream placements
- Occupancy rates
- Specialist services
- Support for foster carers
- Connected person's placements
- Staying put

The Board discussed a number of issues including the matter of housing in terms of the capacity to foster, and arising from this, the Board agreed to refer to

Scrutiny Board 4, the consideration of housing allocation priority for foster carers who require a bigger house.

The Board also acknowledged and commended the work of the Operational Lead for Fostering and agreed that this be conveyed to her in a letter.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note progress made against the recommendations agreed by the Board in March 2015.**
- (b) That a letter be sent to the operational Lead for Fostering, on behalf of the Board, to thank her and acknowledge the progress that has been made to improve the fostering service.**

5. Regional Adoption Agency Progress

The Board considered a briefing note setting out progress towards establishing a Regional Adoption Agency.

In the paper Regionalising Adoption in 2015, the Government gave clear direction to all local authorities that they were to participate in the development of a Regional Adoption Agency. Coventry City had joined with Solihull MBC, Warwickshire and Worcestershire County Councils. The arrangement was approved by Cabinet on 31 October 2017 and Adoption Central England (ACE) became operational on 1 February 2018.

The briefing note indicated that as it had only been operational since 1 February 2018, there was not a full quarter data set available yet, however, key indicators were set out in the briefing note.

The Board noted that it was anticipated that initial benefits associated with the implementation of ACE included:

- Improved outcomes for children including access to a wide pool of adopters and an ability to better match children to a new family.
- Reduction in bureaucracy as interagency fees between Local Authorities are avoided.
- Better links across the region
- Ability to learn best practice from colleagues in other areas
- Consistency of approach across all four Local Authorities

RESOLVED that the Board:

- (a) Note the content of the briefing note and agree that the continued progress of the Regional Adoption Agency be reviewed through the Corporate Parenting Board.**
- (b) Agreed to receive a progress report in 12 months' time.**

6. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

7. **Work Programme**

The Board noted the 2018-19 Work Programme with the following additional items:

- Secure provision
- Supported Internship (July meeting)
- Evaluation of the “family of schools”
- Allocation of school places (to include LAC when exclusions are considered in January)

8. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 3.15 pm)