

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at
10.00 am on Wednesday, 23 September 2020

Present:

Members: Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member)
 Councillor J Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Service):

S Bennett, Law and Governance
J Gregg, Director of Children's Services
U Patel, Resources Directorate
K Robinson, Fostering
P Smith, Looked After Children
L Walsh, Looked After Children

Apologies: Councillor B Gittins

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2020 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. Coventry Fostering Service Annual Report 2019-20

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which presented the Coventry Fostering Service Annual Report 2019/20. The report informed the Cabinet Member about the work undertaken by the Fostering Service between April 2019 and March 2020.

The performance of Coventry's Fostering Service is critical to delivery of high-quality local placements that can meet the diverse needs of Coventry's looked after children.

The report summarised the activity of the service over the past 12 months, it highlighted the continuing success of the service in increasing both the number and the proportion of looked after children who are placed with foster carers approved by Coventry City Council as part of the ongoing work of the Fostering Transformation Project. The report also highlighted the ongoing development of the work of the Connected Persons Teams.

The Fostering Transformation Project which has been ongoing since April 2016 aimed to enable more looked after children to be placed within or close to Coventry and to decrease the reliance on more expensive externally commissioned placements. The number of children placed in internal mainstream

placements rose from 225 on 31 March 2019 to 259 on 31 March 2020. This was a fourth annual rise in this number from a baseline of 149 in April 2016.

The Cabinet Member thanked the officers for the report and congratulated the team on their ongoing work and achievements in terms of recruiting, training and supporting the city's hidden workforce of foster carers right across the city. The Cabinet Member acknowledged and thanked the foster carers for the truly amazing job they do in looking after all of the looked after children in the city.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member accepts the Fostering Service Annual Report 2019/20.

4. Coventry City Council Annual Adoption Report

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which presented the City Council's Annual Adoption Report.

The Annual Adoption Report is required by National Minimum Standards, which are applicable to the provision of Adoption Services. The National Minimum Standards form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 in relation to the conduct of Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Services. It was crucial that the adoption performance in Coventry is examined on an annual basis to ensure that children who are adopted get the best possible outcomes.

Each local authority in England is obliged by National Minimum Standards to formally approve the statement of purpose and children's guides, and to review these at least annually. The Annual Report was provided to meet this obligation. Coventry City Council is currently in a partnership arrangement with a Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption Central England (ACE). This is a shared services arrangement hosted by Warwickshire County Council. ACE is responsible for recruiting and assessing adoptive families. It is also involved in matching children with adopters in partnership with the child's social worker. ACE is also responsible for administering the Adoption Panel. Therefore, the Annual Report consisted of a report from Coventry City Council regarding children, a report from ACE regarding adopters and a report from ACE written by the Adoption Panel Chair.

The report stated that an adoption dashboard had been created to enable the tracking and monitoring of children's progress. The dashboard would be used to drive performance at the clinic improving timeliness for children's plans.

The report highlighted that in the last twelve months there had been no placement disruptions, compared to four in the previous year. It was noted that the service had built on the significant learning from the previous disruptions, developing practice and action plans to try and prevent children having similar experiences.

The Cabinet Member thanked everyone involved in this work. She acknowledged how challenging the work was and recognised that everyone was working above and beyond in supporting and finding forever families for children with adoption plans.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member having analysed the report, endorses the work completed in this area of work.

5. Corporate Parenting Board - Activity Report 2019-20

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which documented the activity of the Corporate Parenting Board for 2019 to 2020 and the impact it had had to improve outcomes for Coventry's looked after children.

The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) is constitutionally required to oversee the outcomes of children and young people who are looked after by Coventry City Council. It provided a forum where the voices of children could be heard about the services they receive, and the work that goes on with partners to ensure that looked after children in Coventry get the best possible outcomes. The report also provided an opportunity for members of the public to see the improvements.

The Corporate Parenting Board activity report highlighted a section headed "You said: we did" which outlined issues raised by looked after children and care leavers and that were considered and resolved by the CPB.

The report concluded that the CPB had had a very successful year. It had expanded the voice of looked after on the Board. There had been a focus on improving outcomes for children and care leavers, taking account of what was important to them. The CPB would continue to use this approach with a view to making the board completely relevant to children and young people.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the contributions of children and young people, as well as foster carers and partners who continue to work across the city to improve the outcomes for the City's looked after children and care leavers. The report provided an opportunity to bring this work into the public domain.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member, having noted the content of the report, endorses the work of the Corporate Parenting Board from 2019 to 2020.

6. Outstanding Issues Report

There were no outstanding issues.

7. Any Other Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.35 am)