

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at
1.00 pm on Thursday, 21 January 2021

Present:

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

Employees Present:

J Gregg, Director of Children's Services
U Patel, Law and Governance
M Rose, Law and Governance
P Smith, Looked After Children

Public Business

8. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2020 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

10. The House Project

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which outlined proposals to operate a local House Project for children in care and care leavers and sets out the impact it could have on the outcomes for young people.

The City Council, as corporate parents, was always looking to better its offer to looked after children to improve their outcomes. Every year, young people aged between 16 and 18 in England leave local authority care and move to independence from 16 and living alone from 18, which as a care leaver was daunting. Unfortunately, without the support of close family and at such a young age, independence and living alone did not always work for many young people.

It was against this backdrop that the House Project framework was developed. The project takes a ground-breaking approach through its commitment to young people's ownership to enable young people leaving care to achieve successful independence. The process would focus on maximising young people's ownership of all aspects of the project, so they felt proud of what they had developed and have confidence in themselves and their futures.

The National House Project, which is a national charity, has developed the framework and provides the expertise and support to enable any group of young people and the adults working with them to apply to set up their own House

Project. The National House Project also provides support and guidance to local authorities through a paid membership arrangement to establish a local House Project.

A House Project works with approximately ten young people aged 16 and above who have successfully applied to be part of the project. Links are built with local housing providers which enables the House Project to have access to properties. Links are also developed with companies and training providers engaged locally in building and associated trades. Through these connections, young people learn to project manage and participate in any works necessary to make their allocated property a home.

When the young people have refurbished their property, they move into their home, initially on an introductory license, with a view to them having a long-term tenancy.

In general, the House Project works with young people who are shortly due to leave care and empowers them to achieve successful independence. A group of young people come together and offer each other peer support. They work together to make sure that they can all maintain a successful tenancy into adulthood. By agreeing to be involved with this nationally accredited third sector initiative, Coventry will be expanding the local offer for care leavers.

Consultation was undertaken with young people who are looked after in a variety of ways; via social media platforms, through established focus groups; individually and attendance at a national conference, which provided a valuable opportunity to hear the experiences of young people from outside of Coventry.

A few local authorities had already signed up with the scheme, including neighbouring Warwickshire.

For the project to be self funding or to create financial savings, the running costs of the project would need to be lower than the placement savings. Apart from the membership fee that would decrease over the first three years, most of the running costs were fixed. However, the placement savings were more sensitive to change and would depend on various factors which were explored in more detail in Appendix 1 of the report. The running costs and placement savings shown in the appendix outline a likely scenario.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, having considered the report:

- 1. Approves that Coventry City Council, in partnership with the National House Project delivers a local House Project for young people in care and care leavers.**
- 2. Approves that Coventry City Council enters into a contract with The National House Project to adopt The House Project model.**
- 3. Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services to undertake all necessary due diligence required and to enter into the associated legal agreements to give effect to the above recommendations.**

11. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

12. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 1.15 pm)