

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at
10.00 am on Thursday, 7 October 2021

Present

Members: Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member)
Councillor P Male (Shadow Cabinet)

Employees Present:

J Gregg, Director of Children's Services
U Patel, Law and Governance
H Rennocks, Children's Services
K Robinson, Children's Services
P Smith, Looked After Children

Apologies: Councillor B Gittins

Public Business

6. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

8. Coventry City Council Annual Adoption Report

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which outlined the work undertaken in this area of work over the past year.

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 200 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. This Annual Report was provided to meet this obligation. Coventry City Council is currently in a partnership arrangement with 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 consists 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 Cabinet Member enquired about the rise in the number of relinquished babies and requested that the outcome of the current work considering this be submitted for information in due course.

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

9. **Coventry City Council Annual Fostering Report**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which presented the annual report of the Fostering Service.

The purpose of the report was to inform the Cabinet Member of the work undertaken by the Fostering Service between April 2020 and March 2021. The performance of Coventry Fostering Service is critical to the 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 and highlighted the challenge of adequately recruiting and retaining the number and type of carers who can meet vulnerable children's needs. The report also emphasised the challenge of developing, supervising and supporting approved foster carers to meet the often complex range of needs that looked after children have.

The report identified the growth in the number of children placed in the internal foster care estate resulting in a decrease in external placements. The report also outlined an increase in connected persons fostering arrangements and details the ongoing work of the Fostering Transformation Project.

Coventry City Council is committed to ensuring that, wherever possible, children are supported to live with their birth parents. Where this has not been possible and children become looked after, it is preferable that they are placed within a family setting. The council aimed that wherever possible, this would be within a foster placement approved by Coventry rather than through commissioning an external placement.

The fostering Service sits within Children's Services as part of the looked after Children Service. It comprises of 6 teams and has responsibility for the recruitment, assessment and support to foster carers and the assessment and support of special guardians.

The Fostering Transformation Project which ran from April 2016 to March 2021 had an overarching target to increase the proportion of looked after children placed with foster carers approved by Coventry. This enabled to place more looked after children within or close to Coventry and decreased the reliance on more expensive externally commissioned placements.

The number of children placed in internal mainstream placements rose for the fifth year from a baseline in April 2016. The number was below the targeted growth for

the year, with the reduction in growth being largely attributed to the impact of the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member having considered the report, commended the team for the amazing work undertaken during a particularly difficult period of time.

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

10. **Corporate Parenting Board - Activity Report 2020-21**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which documented the activity of the Corporate Parenting Board for 2020-2021 and the impact it has had to improve outcomes for Coventry's looked after children. The report of the Corporate Parenting Board 2020-2021 was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Corporate Parenting Board is constitutionally required to oversee the outcomes of children and young people who are looked after by Coventry City Council. It provides a forum where the voices of children can 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 meetings and work of the Corporate Parenting Board is private and therefore often goes unnoticed. The purpose of the report was to bring the work of the Board into the public domain and to give opportunity for public scrutiny, accountability and acknowledgement of the work that takes place.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member having noted the content of the report, endorses the work of the Corporate Parenting Board from 2020 to 2021.

11. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

12. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 11.05 am)