

## **CABINET MEMBER (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE)**

16<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

Cabinet Member

Present: Councillor O'Boyle

Employees Present:

V. Castree (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
J. Cunningham (Local Safeguarding Children Board)  
C. Green (Director of Children, Learning and Young People)  
N. Hale (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)  
A. Hook (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
J. Lawrence (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)  
J. Newman (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)  
U. Patel (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)  
A. Weir (Chair of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board)

Apologies:

Councillor Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

### **Public Business**

#### **17. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **18. Minutes**

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012, were signed as a true record.

(b) There were no matters arising.

#### **19. Coventry Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) Annual Report 2011-2012 Business Plan 2012-2015**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which presented the annual report of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) which sets out the activity and the performance of the Board. The document also reported on the financial resilience of the CSCB and key issues arising from recent Serious Case Reviews.

In December 2010, the CSCB reviewed its governance arrangements with the Children's Commissioning Board (CCB). It was noted that the alignment between the Board's priority setting and business planning processes had improved. The communication and linkage arrangements were beginning to embed and would mature over time. Further alignment and communication would be required in respect of the relationship with the Health and Well Being Board and the CSCB.

The 2012/15 Business Plan of the CSCB outlined the following priorities:

- To monitor and evaluate the development of Early Help Services for children, young people and their families.
- To monitor the reduction of the number of sexually exploited young people and make them safer.
- To monitor the further development of multi-agency services to prevent domestic abuse and support children and their families.
- To further review the CSCB performance framework to enable the Board to monitor the effectiveness of current services with a view to shaping priorities for the CSCB.
- Develop an engagement policy and programme with young people.

This was the first year where the Board had had an Independent Chair and ensured the Board's compliance with Working Together to Safeguard Children and Young People 2010. This provided the CSCB with an additional independent monitoring and scrutiny capacity. Two lay members were also appointed in September 2011 who were now beginning to contribute to the work of the CSCB and provide a different perspective from their own experiences and knowledge of the local community.

The CSCB and CCB reviewed the staying safe outcomes and the CSCB maintained responsibility for assuring the effectiveness of the following:

- Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation, including children subject to Common Assessment Framework
- Safe from accidental injury arising from neglect only
- Safe from death.

The report outlined the strategic goals for the CSCB, the financial challenges that still remained and provided information on the serious case reviews.

**RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People):**

- 1. Noted the annual report of the CSCB and the Business Plan.**
- 2. Considered the financial resilience of the CSCB including the updating information on the financial gap identified in the last report submitted in October 2011 as well as the funding arrangements and forecasted expenditure over the next financial year.**
- 3. Agreed, together with the Chair of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board to write to the Chairman of West Midlands Police Authority and the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police to express concern about the inadequacy of the West Midlands contribution to the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board.**
- 4. Considered from within the report the progress of the most recent Serious Case Reviews.**

## **20. Adoption Service Annual report and Statement of Purpose**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People on the work completed by the Directorate in respect of adoption during the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

The aim of Coventry's Adoption Service was to provide a comprehensive adoption and post-adoption service, including the provision of adoption Support Services to all parties affected by the adoption process consistent with best practice and national standards and requirements.

The Council was committed to achieving the greatest number of adoptions with the best outcomes for the children concerned. In 2011-2012, 25 children were adopted with 32 adopters approved over this period.

The Adoption Service regulations required the Statement of Purpose to be reviewed, updated and modified where necessary at least annually. In the case of Local Authority Adoption Services it requires that the Statement of Purpose is formally approved by the Elected Members.

Officers reported that by Christmas, they would have managed to place three groups of three children for adoption. The Cabinet Member praised the officers for having accomplished such a difficult task.

**RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People):**

- 1. Accepted the 2011/2012 Report.**
- 2. Approved the Statement of Purpose.**
- 3. Requested that the revised Statement of Purpose reflecting the new organisational structure and priority to adoption, including numbers and the speeding up of the process of adoption within the authority, be presented to the Cabinet Member at the earliest opportunity.**

## **21. Fostering Service Annual Report including Statement of Purpose and Family and Friends Policy**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which provided information on the work completed by Coventry Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate in respect of fostering during the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

Coventry's Fostering Service has supported 117 internal foster care households providing placements for 213 of Coventry's looked after children (at March 2012) during a period of high demand for foster placements, with a significant number of looked after children in the city (580 by March 2012).

Under the Fostering regulations every Fostering Agency had to produce a Statement of Purpose which was considered by the executive of the authority on an annual basis.

Coventry Fostering Service was responsible for the recruitment, training, assessment and support of a full range of carers and the placement of children in in-house foster care.

In March 2012, the Coventry Fostering Service provided 47% of looked after children's placements in the city, compared to external placements (excluding friend and family placements). These placements were provided by a wide and diverse range of carers.

The development of Residence Order and Special Guardianship policies, with associated financial support, has assisted the department to offer an alternative to children being placed in long term care through being placed with 'friends and family' carers. This can reduce the length of time such carers continue to be registered as foster carers.

Children may be brought up by members of their extended families, friends or other people who were connected with them for a variety of reasons and in a variety of different arrangements.

The Local Authority has a statutory obligation to ensure that family and friend carers were aware of relevant support services, and that these could be readily accessed by those caring for children whether or not they were looked after by the local authority.

The Family and Friends Care Policy sets out the local authority's approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of such children and covers the assessments which would be carried out to determine the services required and how such services would then be provided.

The Cabinet Member noted that the foster carers budget and expenditure as listed at section paragraph 5.1.1 of the report should indicate an underspend and not an overspend.

**RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People):**

- 1. Accepted the Fostering Annual Report 2011/2012.**
- 2. Approved the Statement of Purpose.**
- 3. Endorsed the Family and Friends Policy.**

## **22. Any Other Items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(The meeting closed at 3.20 p.m.)