



CABINET – 25 JUNE 2019

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL ON CORPORATE PARENTING

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the key findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Panel on Corporate Parenting which is appended to this paper.

Recommendation

2. The Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) Accept the Final Report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Panel;
 - (b) Request the Chief Executive ensure that the recommendations of the Review are acted upon.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The Panel has made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet which it considers would strengthen the Council's Corporate Parenting Offer, particularly focused on the role of elected members.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

4. On 18 July 2018 the Scrutiny Commissioners appointed a Scrutiny Review Panel to consider the strength and weaknesses of the County Council's current approach to corporate parenting, in particular the role of elected members as corporate parents, to ensure that this duty is discharged in the most effective and appropriate way.
5. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4th June 2019 resolved that the Panel's Final Report be supported and referred it to the Cabinet for consideration.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

6. The Panel met on six occasions between 3 October 2018 and 22 May 2019 and its report was presented to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Mrs Seaton CC on 4th June 2019.

Resources Implications

7. The recommendations in the report can be met from within existing budgets.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

8. None.

Officer to Contact

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PART B

Background

9. Every Council has a legal duty to act as a 'corporate parent' for looked after children as set out in the Children Act 1989. The act put forward the basic framework and defined local authorities' responsibilities towards the care of children.
10. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined in law the responsibilities of corporate parents to ensure that, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for Children in Care and Care Leavers. All elected members and officers share corporate parenting responsibility.
11. The law does not expect local authorities to work alone; housing, education services, the Police and the NHS are all required to assist children's social care services in carrying out their functions under the Act. This was augmented by the Children Act 2004, with a focus on achieving good outcomes for children and young people.

Scope of the Panel

12. The following outcomes for the Review were identified by the Scrutiny Commissioners:-
 - To consider the strengths and weaknesses of the County Council's current approach to Corporate Parenting;
 - To consider best practice from other local authorities, including centres of excellence;
 - To inform the refresh of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and implementation plan;
 - To develop the role of elected members as Children in Care Champions;
 - To ensure that the Council's approach to Corporate Parenting reflects the different age groups of children in care;
 - To consider the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Membership of the Panel

13. The following members were appointed to serve on the Panel:

Mrs H. Fryer CC

Mrs B. Seaton CC (Chairman)

Mr. S. Sheahan CC

Mrs M. Wright CC

Mr. G. Welsh CC

Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel

14. The Panel's Final Report is appended and outlines the key findings of the Review.
15. At this stage the proposals for a Member Champion as outlined in the Report require further development to ensure that there is clarity of scope, achievable targets, and that they are properly supported and expectations managed.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

16. All children in care and care leavers are vulnerable and have specific needs due to their being in care. The recommendations within the attached Report aim to improve the support provided to all children in care and care leavers, enabling young people to have positive outcomes regardless of their protected characteristics.

Background Papers

Report to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 4 June 2019 – Scrutiny Review Panel, Corporate Parenting.

Appendix

Final Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on Corporate Parenting