

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

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| Decision Maker: | Cabinet |
| Date: | 3 February 2020 |
| Title: | Corporate Parenting Board |
| Report From: | Director of Children's Services |

Contact name: Stuart Ashley

Tel: 01962 846370

Email: stuart.ashley@hants.gov.uk

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out proposals for revised arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) following recommendations made by Ofsted and a review of its first two years of operation.

Recommendations

2. To consider the draft Terms of Reference for a newly constituted Corporate Parenting Board and recommend to the County Council that a new Board is established as an advisory Committee of the County Council and nine Members are appointed to it in accordance with the County Council's proportionality.
3. Subject to agreement of 2, above to consider the draft update to the Children and Families Advisory Panel (CFAP) Terms of Reference and recommend to the County Council that these be agreed.

Executive Summary

4. This report seeks to set out future options for the Corporate Parenting Board in light of the Ofsted recommendations and the experience of its first two years of operation.
5. The Board was originally established as a sub-committee of CFAP and the recommendations to Cabinet follow consideration of the proposals by CFAP and the sub-committee's formal dissolution.

Contextual information

6. The CPB was established as a sub-committee of CFAP in October 2017 with the purpose of promoting the best outcomes for our children in care and care leavers. This was in line with the remit of CFAP and the sub-committee facilitated a specific focus on this area. The Board has enabled Member led engagement and advice to the Children and Families Advisory Panel and subsequently to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services on the key area of corporate parenting.
7. In the most recent inspection for Children's Services, Hampshire County Council were judged by Ofsted to be Outstanding in all areas, only one of two local authorities to achieve this. They found that "*Children in care benefit from high-quality support, which is making a real difference to their outcomes*" (Ofsted April 2019). Only two areas were identified as areas needing to improve;
 - The proportion of children who are offered, and take up, a return home interview when they have been missing from home or care.
 - The Corporate Parenting Board's rigour in holding partners, including health providers and district councils, to account to ensure that they prioritise services for children and young people more effectively.
8. Ofsted found that "*The corporate parenting board effectively seeks to build a well-informed understanding of the experiences, concerns and achievements of children in care. The board is energetic in taking steps to ensure that all children receive good services. The board's ongoing engagement with children is an essential, primary focus of its work and is gained through a wide variety of sources, including the involvement of an expanding number of children in care, engaged as care ambassadors.*"

"The board has not extended its membership to include partner agencies due to concerns about the impact this might have on the engagement of children in care and care leavers. While the board effectively scrutinises all the important areas of services for children in care, it does not have a systematic way of ensuring consistent collaboration with key partners, such as health services, district councils or foster carers. This dilutes its ability to ensure a joined-up response to areas for development, such as ensuring timely health assessments and delivering a more consistent approach to council tax exemption for care leavers."

Developing the Corporate Parenting Board for the Future

9. Every County Councillor has a responsibility as a corporate parent, to act for the children and young people in the council's care as a parent would their own child. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do. Corporate parents have the responsibility to ensure that children in care and care leavers are supported well for them to achieve their full potential.
10. It is clear that the Corporate Parenting Board has achieved a great deal in its first two years and above all has set the foundation of direct Member engagement with corporate parenting. In light of the Ofsted findings, an opportunity exists to develop the Corporate Parenting Board function for the future. This should seek to achieve stronger engagement with partners and to further broaden the engagement of Members.
11. The arrangement whereby the Board was a sub-committee of CFAP was successful in establishing the purpose of the Board but had limited reach and impact on the County Council as a whole. It is therefore proposed that, on the basis of this experience, a new structure is recommended to form a Corporate Parenting Board as a committee of the County Council. This would better reflect the direct relationship between all Councillors and their corporate parenting responsibilities. It would furthermore hold greater prominence within the Council and with partners in order to be able to carry out its functions.
12. Corporate parenting is a singular focus to improve the outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers whereas the Children and Families Advisory Panel (of which the Board was until recently a sub-committee) has responsibility for advising the Executive Member in relation to all children and young people. Establishing the Corporate Parenting Board in its own right would enable a complete focus on this area and furthermore allow CFAP to fully engage with its own remit.
13. As a sub-committee of CFAP, the current Corporate Parenting Board had a membership of three, drawn from the membership of CFAP. There would be scope under new arrangements for the size of the Board to be increased to give greater capacity for partner engagement. It is proposed that the new Board consist of nine County Councillors appointed proportionately.
14. The original Corporate Parenting Board also comprised three co-opted members, who were drawn from the County's group of "Care Ambassadors". Historically, attendance by the co-opted members at Board meetings was low. This is believed to have been for a number of reasons, including the timing and location of meetings. The requirement for a co-opted member of the Council to be over the age of 18 limited the ability to appoint representative Care Ambassadors. It is proposed that going forward, individual Care

Ambassadors are not co-opted on to the Board, but instead the Board's remit includes engaging with Care Ambassadors as a group along with other relevant partners through a programme that is managed by the Children's Services department.

15. As an advisory Committee the Corporate Parenting Board would not have decision making powers.
16. Draft terms of reference for a newly constituted Corporate Parenting Board are appended to this report at Appendix 1.
17. Should the Corporate Parenting Board be established as a committee of the Council in its own right, to avoid an overlap of responsibilities with CFAP, the CFAP Terms of Reference should also be reviewed and revised where necessary. A draft revision of the CFAP Terms of Reference is appended to this report at Appendix 2.

Next steps

18. In accordance with Part 1, Chapter 4 of the Constitution, County Council has responsibility for:
Appointment of and agreeing and/or amending terms of reference for Committees and Standing Panels of the County Council, in accordance with the proportionality rules and legislative requirements.
19. Therefore any proposed changes to the County Council's governance structure are to be considered by Cabinet and recommendations made to a future meeting of the County Council.
20. At its meeting on 15 October 2019 the Children and Families Advisory Panel received a report detailing the above Ofsted recommendations and proposed way forward. CFAP accepted the recommendations in the report and resolved to dissolve the existing Corporate Parenting Board as a sub-committee of the Children and Families Advisory Panel with immediate effect. Draft Terms of Reference for a newly constituted Corporate Parenting Board and subsequent updates to CFAP's own Terms of Reference were considered and recommended to Cabinet and County Council for adoption.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:

The existing Corporate Parenting Board was established by CFAP as a sub-committee and therefore dissolving the sub-committee and recommendations about its future structure require a decision of CFAP.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:

| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| Establishing a Corporate Parenting Board (CFAP) | 17 October 2017 |
| Corporate Parenting Board (CFAP) | 15 October 2019 |

Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives

| <u>Title</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|--------------|-------------|
| n/a | |

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

| <u>Document</u> | <u>Location</u> |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| None | |

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The recommendations in this report relate to the governance structure of the County Council with regard to its corporate parenting responsibilities and do not impact on groups with protected characteristics.