

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: STRENGTHENING THE COUNCIL'S ROLE AS A CORPORATE PARENT

Cabinet Member	Councillor David Simmonds
Cabinet Portfolio	Deputy Leader of the Council / Education & Children's Services
Officer Contact	Steven Maiden, Administration Directorate
Papers with report	Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To consider the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee's review into Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent and the recommendations contained therein.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	To improve the lives of children and young people in the Council's care.
Financial Cost	All recommendations with financial implications contained within the attached report are subject to the budget planning process.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Children, Young People & Learning
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Welcomes the report from the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee (as in Appendix 1) on the review into the Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent.
2. Endorses the recommendations of the Policy Overview Committee as set out below.

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations

- 1) Welcome the work currently being undertaken to review and revise the remit of the Corporate Parenting Board, its increased overview of the Council's wide ranging role as a corporate parent and endorse its administration by Democratic Services.

Health and Wellbeing

- 2) Ask the Health & Wellbeing Board to request that the Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Hillingdon Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) acquire, maintain and share data on the following areas:
 - a. Proportion of total budgets spent on Looked After Children (LAC);
 - b. Proportion of LAC registered with a GP;
 - c. Proportion of the CAMHS caseload that is made up of LAC;
 - d. Information on what intervention / therapy is being provided by CAMHS and what health issues are being dealt with via wider case consultation; and
 - e. The number of Tier 2, 3 and 4 assessments that CAMHS undertake for LAC.
- 3) Instruct officers to continue to work alongside colleagues from Hillingdon CAMHS to provide a designated point of contact to provide advice and assistance for all mental health issues relating to LAC, reporting to the Health & Wellbeing Board if required.
- 4) Instruct officers to continue to work alongside the Council's partner agencies to develop a comprehensive understanding of where responsibilities lie between NHS England and CCGs for all aspects of the health needs of LAC and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services, the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee and the Health & Wellbeing Board as appropriate.
- 5) In order to ensure that the mental health needs of LAC are met when placements are out of Borough, instruct officers to produce a protocol on the process of how services are brokered between CCGs and NHS England for agreement by the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services and the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Educational outcomes

- 6) Instruct officers to monitor data on the number of relevant young people up to the age of 25 approaching the Council for support in education, training and employment and report findings back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services in due course.
- 7) In accordance with the budget planning process and to ensure compliance with changes set out in the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, ask officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services, to explore the viability of providing additional general and pastoral support through the Hillingdon Virtual School to relevant young people up to the age of 25 going on to education or training and report findings back to the Cabinet.
- 8) Instruct officers to investigate the viability of building Education Residential and Respite Accommodation alongside the future development of schools in the Borough and report findings back to Cabinet in due course.
- 9) Instruct officers to monitor and report back to the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services on the success of the peer-mentoring scheme currently being trialed as a means through which to provide additional support to care leavers with a view to expanding the scheme if it leads to improved outcomes.

Sport, Leisure and Recreation

- 10) Ask officers to collect comprehensive data on LAC's use of the Borough's health, sport and leisure facilities, including their use of and engagement with taster events.**
- 11) Subject to the outcome of Recommendation 10 above, ask officers to undertake feasibility work on whether further discounted rates or incentives could be put in place to increase access to sporting and leisure facilities for LAC and report findings back to the Cabinet for consideration.**
- 12) Subject to the budget planning process, ask officers to investigate the viability of providing regular consultation and social events for LAC to offer them further opportunities to socialise and share experiences.**

Reasons for recommendations

The Committee was informed from the very outset of the review that children in care are more likely to have complex needs than those who have never been in care. Sadly, it is the case that many children entering the care system have been subject to significant trauma in their early years which often has a detrimental impact on their development at a critical stage of their lives.

Such trauma can also be seen as contributing to the increased likelihood of looked after children suffering from poorer health, lower educational achievement and poverty in their adult lives. The Committee felt that addressing the needs of this vulnerable group to whom Members act as "corporate parents" was of paramount importance. This led to the Committee seeking to bring to bear the full weight of the Council's resources and expertise in improving the lives of looked after children and young people as well as those leaving care.

From the outset of this review, the Committee was convinced that it, and the Council, should approach the issue of corporate parenting in the light of a simple statement – "What would I do if this were my child". Following on from this, Members believed that the support and opportunities offered to these children should match and even exceed parental support provided to children outside of the care system.

Consequently, the Committee emphasised that it would like to focus very broadly on the topic of Corporate Parenting as it felt that this responsibility was one of the most important within its and the Council's remit. The decision was taken, therefore, not to limit the scope of the review to a specific responsibility within the corporate parenting theme but to allow the Committee to determine the major themes as they emerged throughout the witness sessions. This led to the following areas being decided as the Committee's primary concerns:

1. Improving Health by Working in Partnership;
2. Supporting Care Leavers' Next Steps; and
3. Sport, Leisure and Recreation for our Looked After Children.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

1. The Terms of Reference of the review were as follows:
 1. To gain an understanding of:-
 - i) The profile of children and young people looked after by Hillingdon Council.
 - ii) The role of each Elected Member as a Corporate Parent and how this can be enhanced.
 2. To explore how the Council and partner organisations support looked after children / young people across all aspects of their lives which include:
 - i) how they are kept safe;
 - ii) how their views are taken into account;
 - iii) the educational needs of LAC and care leavers;
 - iv) the promotion of their health and well-being; and
 - v) their preparation for leaving care, including support for housing and training needs.
 3. To explore the performance of the Council against national trends.
 4. To understand the impact of recent legislative changes and judgments on the delivery of services to LAC and care leavers and the impact of these on current and future budget pressures.
 5. To ensure that the Local Authority's pledges to LAC and care leavers are promoted and delivered.
 6. To gain an understanding on early permanency planning for LAC
 7. To make recommendations to Cabinet based on the outcome of this review.
 2. The Committee adopted a twofold approach – firstly, seeking to put forward recommendations that would make a positive and immediate impact on the day-to-day lives of those currently in Hillingdon's care and secondly, seeking to make longer term improvements to the Council's services to improve outcomes for future generations of LAC. Given the breadth of this objective, the scope of the review was necessarily wide and explored the services provided to those in and those leaving care including education, health, housing, sport, leisure and recreation.
 3. The broad scope of this review led to wide ranging recommendations with implications for a number of service areas. In considering their implementation, the following comments are provided by officers for Cabinet to consider:
 - a. **Recommendation 1:** As noted within the recommendation itself, changes to the Corporate Parenting Board have already been implemented. Additional support has been provided within Democratic Services' existing resources to ensure that the Board has more effective oversight of the Council's role as a corporate parent.
 - b. **Recommendations 2-5:** These recommendations deal extensively with the health needs of LAC and as such, deal both with the Council's and its partner agencies' areas of responsibility. Therefore, the most appropriate body through which these changes can be realised is the Health & Wellbeing Board and, subject to Cabinet approval, a report will be produced for the Board in December 2013 to consider how best to progress working in partnership.
 - c. **Recommendation 6:** Officers have confirmed that data will be collected and reported as this emerging group become known to the Hillingdon Virtual School and Children's Services.
 - d. **Recommendation 7:** This recommendation does come with potential budgetary implications but it should be noted that these are subject to officer's viability work
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and the budget planning process. Viability work will assess how the Council can comply with the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 in a cost effective manner and Officers will present a range of options to the Cabinet in due course.

- e. **Recommendation 8:** Officers have confirmed that work to provide Residential and Respite Accommodation would sit well with existing work being undertaken with West London colleagues to develop a new residential and education service. This proposal will be developed in the coming months and would meet the expectations of more locally provided specialist provision for Looked After Children.
- f. **Recommendation 9:** The peer-mentoring scheme has already begun and is currently taking its first referrals. The scheme is being met within current resources and any expansion would also be met within existing budgets.
- g. **Recommendations 10-11:** Officers have confirmed that it would be possible to collect data on the use of leisure facilities where LAC stated that they were looked after on their LeisureLink scheme application. Subject to Cabinet approval, officers will be asked to collect this data to inform viability work on whether incentives or further discounted rates would be feasible and successfully increase engagement with sports and leisure activities and report back as appropriate to Members.
- h. **Recommendation 12:** To progress this recommendation, work will be undertaken to assess the cost and workload implications of providing additional social and consultation events for LAC and report back to the Cabinet Member.

Financial Implications

Officers have confirmed that the majority of the recommendations contained within this report can be met within existing resources. Those that have budgetary implications will require further development work in line with the budget planning process and will be reported to relevant Cabinet Members and officers through existing processes as they are progressed. This includes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 7 – providing additional general and pastoral support through the Virtual School. This could potentially attract funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Recommendation 8 – development of Education Residential and Respite Accommodation, which would incur capital and revenue costs. Potentially some of the revenue costs could be met from the DSG.

Recommendation 11 – application of discounts for access to sports and leisure facilities.

Recommendation 12 – providing regular consultation and social events.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendations?

The recommendations in this report are designed with the purpose of improving the services provided to the Borough's LAC. Consequently, it is intended that the improvements suggested here will have a positive impact on the lives of one of the most vulnerable groups in the Borough's community.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee heard evidence from the witnesses listed above and undertook an informal session with LACYP and care leavers to ensure that their experiences informed the findings of the review.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting that in order to expedite a number of the recommendations it would be necessary to identify funding streams through normal budget planning processes.

Legal

Cabinet is being asked to consider the recommendations contained in the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee's review into strengthening the Council's role as the corporate parent.

The Council's statutory duties and functions, for provision of services and support for children in need and young people in the Council's care are set out under Part III of the Children Act 1989, Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010, Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The Children and Families Bill 2013 takes forward the Coalition Government's commitments to improve services for vulnerable children and support strong families. It underpins wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background. The Bill will reform the systems for adoption, looked after children, family justice and special educational needs. It will encourage growth in the childcare sector, introduce a new system of shared parental leave and ensure children in England have a strong advocate for their rights.

Under the Council's Constitution, the Cabinet has the appropriate power to agree recommendations proposed at the outset of this report. Further, by virtue of Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 which makes provision for 'a general power of competence' for local authorities in England. The 'power' gives local authorities the power to do anything an individual can do unless specifically prohibited by law. This includes the power to act in the interest of their communities.

There are no other significant legal implications arising out of this report to bring to Cabinet's attention at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL