

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Panel:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	13 March 2024
Title:	Corporate Parenting Board - Terms of Reference Review
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) with a summary of the context, background, and rationale in relation to the revision of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the CPB.

Recommendation(s)

2. That the Corporate Parenting Board agree the revised Terms of Reference and endorse it being presented to the County Council for approval.

Executive Summary

3. Vulnerable children lie at the heart of our corporate priorities, and we are determined to innovate and continuously improve our services to children. Following the last full inspection of Children's Services, the Corporate Parenting Board was re-constituted in 2020 as a full committee of the County Council, to reflect the importance of Member scrutiny and involvement as Corporate Parents.
4. We received an Ofsted Focused Visit on Children in Care in January 2023. One of the areas for improvement was for the local authority to strengthen the representation of children's voices at the CPB. We had already identified this as an area of focus prior to the visit and were in the process of commissioning an independent organisation to facilitate our new children in care and care experienced adults' councils.
5. Work has been undertaken in the last 12 months in partnership with the members of the CPB and the Lead Members for Children's Services and Education to strengthen the impact of the CPB in shaping services to children in care and care leavers. Lead members and the Chair of the CPB have also met with Chairs of CPBs (Corporate Parenting Board) in other local authorities like Essex and North Yorkshire to understand how Boards in other

outstanding authorities work effectively. The Chair of the CPB in Essex is their Lead Member for Children's Services.

6. The CPB acts strategically to ensure that children looked after and care leavers are effectively supported to reach their potential through the provision of excellent parenting, high quality education, opportunities to develop their talents and skills, and effective support for their transition to adulthood.
7. The CPB has a responsibility to oversee and review the quality and effectiveness of services for CLA (Children Looked After) delivered by Corporate Parents, this includes the council, partner agencies and commissioned services, to ensure that every child and young person looked after is supported to be safe, happy, healthy and to achieve their full potential.
8. The revised TOR outlines an increased frequency from three to four meetings per year to ensure there is regular strategic oversight of our services to children in care and care leavers and the opportunity for members of the Board to hear directly from children and care experienced people about their priorities.
9. We recognise the unique role the CPB plays in hearing, acting and responding to the voices of children in care and those who are care experienced. There is a commitment from the CPB to sharpen its focus on impact of hearing the voice of children and this informing the business of the Board. Members of the CPB have heard of the extensive work happening in various areas of the directorate through updating reports from officers. But importantly and perhaps more crucially, members have and will continue to hear directly from children and young people resulting in action to ensure their views are reflected in the strategic priorities of the council.

Contextual information

10. In July 2023 independent training took place for all CPB members to explore more fully:
 - Their role and responsibilities as CPB members
 - The journey of children into care
 - Meaningful participation
 - How to engage with young people.

The feedback from this training was excellent and an increase in attendance and engagement in CPB was noted following this event.

11. In September 2023, Councillors met with care experienced adults and children in care to hear their views on what they considered to be priorities for the council's officers and members to work on.
12. Young people informed us that they wished to be more involved in shaping our priorities but also in being able to communicate regularly with senior

leaders and councillors. They were clear that they also expected to hear back about the suggestions and concerns they shared with us.

13. The Leader of the Council, the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services all agree that the CPB would benefit from a revision of its Terms of Reference, including a greater focus on the Chair and membership of the Board.
14. The commitment to enhance the status of the Board to reflect its importance and key position in the democratic structure of the council is reflected in the proposal for the Lead Member for Children's Services to become the Chair of the CPB.
15. The other key emphasis in the revised TOR is on membership of the Board which includes representation from the Care Experienced Adults Council, and from a foster carer.
16. Setting clear expectations of partners agencies including Housing, Health agencies and the Police, of their corporate parenting responsibilities, will be the responsibility of the Chair and strategic and political focus will be placed on this.
17. A central function of the Corporate Parenting Board is to listen to the voice of children and young people looked after and leaving care and ensure that their views influence service design, delivery, and improvement. The Board should be able to clearly demonstrate its impact and communicate this to children and young people.
18. Further work is planned to support members of the Board in engaging with children in care and care leavers. Members have requested guidance on how to engage with young people so that they feel able to share their experiences and views with members. Members will work closely with officers on an ongoing basis (not just in Board meetings) to translate what they hear from children into a strategic vision and a high-level action plan.
19. The Chair of the Board along with members will continue to gain a full understanding of the needs of the children we look after and are responsible for agreeing the precepts of the strategic vision for children in care and care leavers in Hampshire.

Finance

20. There are no direct implications in relation to the CPB Terms of Reference from a finance point of view.
21. The CPB will be sighted on the costs related to children in care and care leavers through agreeing the Children's Services budget in Full Council.

Performance

22. The effectiveness and impact of the CPB will be part of the inspection process and any Ofsted judgement of the Local Authority.
23. It may be pertinent for us to discuss a set of key performance indicators in relation to the CPB and its effectiveness and impact once the TOR are agreed.

Consultation and Equalities

24. No specific implications in this area for this report.

Climate Change Impact Assessment

25. No specific implications in this area for this report

Conclusions

26. The Corporate Parenting Board has made a positive journey in the last 12 months in relation to coming closer to the core activities carried out by social workers in relation to children in care and care leavers.
27. The Corporate Parenting Board is well informed on the transformative work we have undertaken in core areas of practice, in relation to ensuring we have sufficient good quality placements for children who need to be looked after, creating networks of support for children and their carers, ensuring that the educational support our children receive is excellent, ensuring we make transition into adulthood as smooth as it can be, and several other areas.
28. The key change to the TOR is in respect of the Chair of the CPB. It is intended for this role to be undertaken by the Lead Member for Children's Services.
29. The CPB will meet at an increased frequency of four times a year to ensure that children in care and care leavers have their views heard in a timely manner and so that members and officers can work together to meet agreed outcomes.
30. We recognise that there is a lot more to be done, most importantly, improving our mechanisms to listen to children and act on their views and wishes. The revised terms of reference document are an important cog in the system to help us achieve this successfully.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u> None	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u> None	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>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.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

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 regarding 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 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.

Equalities Impact Assessment: