

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee membership and attendance at meetings

Reasons for the Report

1. To enable the Committee to consider its membership and meeting attendance arrangements to ensure that there is appropriate provision for the inclusion of all relevant advice, views and information.

Background

2. This report has arisen from discussion at the November 2016 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meeting, where it was agreed that young people and Health services should be represented at the Committee's meetings.
3. Currently the Committee consists of nine Elected Members nominated by Council. Seats on the Committee are allocated to reflect the political composition of the Council.
4. The following officers regularly attend Committee meetings to present reports, provide professional advice and information:
 - The Director of Social Services
 - The Assistant Director Children's Services
 - The Operational Manager for Specialist Children's Services
 - The Education Achievement Leader for Outcomes & Partnerships
 - The National Youth Advocacy Service representative.
5. The Committee's 2015-16 annual report included recommendations to co-opt new members on to the Committee in order to build upon the year's consultation experience and to extend participation beyond Council Members and Officers. It was proposed that those individuals would represent:

- Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
 - The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
 - Academic advisors
6. At the 13 September 2016 meeting the Committee requested that officers seek the nomination of a Health representative and subsequently Cardiff and Vale University Health Board nominated the Head of Operations and Delivery for the Community Child Health Directorate.
 7. The annual report also recommended increased engagement with young people at meetings. Further to the presentation of findings from the 2016 care leavers listening event the Committee requested that two young people were sought to attend meetings.
 8. Two young people who attended the Committee's listening event during March 2016 expressed an interest and attended the November 2016 meeting to observe.

Issues

9. Further consideration has been given to the possible co-option of new members to ensure that the Committee's decisions are properly informed by all relevant views, advice and information. As Members may recall, the law allows full Council to appoint non-elected Members as Co-opted Members of an Advisory Committee, with or without voting rights. However, the Committee may also invite any individuals or organisations with an interest in its work to attend Committee meetings to contribute views, advice or information to inform the Committee's decisions.
10. In determining the Committee's approach to this issue, factors to be considered include the following:
 - (i) The Committee must ensure that any organisation represented on the Committee or advising the Committee has no conflicting interest.

(ii) The statutory disqualification rules which apply to elected Members (under section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972) also apply to Co-Opted Members. Under these rules, any Council employee is disqualified from being a co-opted member of the Committee.

(iii) Committee members are usually elected members who have full decision making rights and are accountable for their decisions to the electorate.

(iv) It is the usual role of officers to advise, assist, present information and answer questions for the Committee.

(v) Care is needed to ensure that any confidential, exempt or personal information is not improperly disclosed to third parties; and that DBS checks are carried out as necessary.

(vi) A Co-Opted Committee Member would be entitled to claim expenses under the Members' Remuneration Schedule (set out in the Constitution, Part 6); would be bound by the Members' Code of Conduct if they were given voting rights; and should be offered any appropriate training opportunities.

(vii) Careful consideration should be given to identifying which individuals and organisations should be invited to contribute to the work of the Committee, with a fair and transparent selection process if necessary, in particular, for individuals who are to be appointed as Co-Opted Committee Members.

(viii) The roles and responsibilities of Advisors to the Committee should be clear, along with a clear procedure for their contribution to Committee meetings. Members may wish to instruct officers to prepare a draft protocol for this purpose.

Proposed Way Forward

11. The views of children and young people have until now been informally represented at Committee meetings by a representative of the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). NYAS is a commissioned service provider under contract to the Council. The current contract is due for renewal during 2017. In view of the potential conflict of interest or perceived preferential treatment of NYAS as a current and prospective contractor, and given that there are now two young people to present the perspective of young people to the Committee, it is recommended that NYAS should not be invited to continue in this role. It is important to note that the value of having two young people as advisors is to allow the Committee to seek a young person's perspective on any matter discussed.

12. Whilst the young people who attended the November 2016 meeting are appropriate representatives by virtue of their maturity and experience (being over 18 years of age, former looked after children and care leavers), they are currently employed by the Council as Corporate Apprentices, and cannot therefore be formally Co-Opted onto the Committee (please see statutory disqualification provisions referred to in paragraph 10 (ii) above. It is therefore recommended that these young people be formally invited to act as Advisors to the Committee. Members may wish to specify a suitable time period for this, with provision for subsequent renewal.

13. In relation to the role of the nominated Health Service representative it is recommended that this individual be given the same status to that of any other professional advisor to the Committee, e.g. the Education Advisor.

14. As the Committee routinely receives sensitive and confidential information pertaining to the Council's registered children's home, it is recommended that all Advisors except the Operational Manager and Assistant Director from Children's Services, who will present and take questions on this item, be asked to withdraw from the Committee meeting during discussion of such items.

15. The Committee may wish to instruct officers to bring a further report on this issue to a future Committee meeting following the May 2017 elections, to review

the arrangements and include potential future options for the selection and co-option of young people onto the Committee, a draft protocol for Advisors to the Committee and a review of best practice in other authorities.

16. The Committee may also wish to take this opportunity to reflect on how effectively the Committee is discharging its role, as set out in its terms of reference (attached at **Appendix A**), and any other improvements that may be recommended for the Committee to take forward after the May elections.

Financial Implications

17. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal Implications

18. The relevant legal provisions are set out in the body of the report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

19. Agree that the two young people referred to in paragraph 8 of the report be invited to act as Advisors to the Committee for a specified period, subject to renewal.

20. Agree that the following officers be requested to attend Committee meetings in an advisory role:

- The Director of Social Services
- The Assistant Director Children's Services
- The Operational Manager Children's Services, Specialist Services
- The Education Achievement Leader Outcomes & Partnerships
- Head of Operations and Delivery for the Community Child Health Directorate of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

21. Instruct the Assistant Director for Childrens Services to report back to a future meeting of the Committee on the issues set out in paragraph 15 of this report.

22. Comment on how effectively the Committee is discharging its role, as set out in the Committee's terms of reference (**Appendix A**), and any suggested improvements that may be made.

IRFAN ALAM
Assistant Director of Children's Services

11 January 2017

APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Terms of Reference

Background Papers:

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee Annual Report 2015-16

Minutes of the 22 November 2016 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meeting

Minutes of the 13 September 2016 Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee meeting