

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING**

Thursday, 28 March 2019

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Hall, B Clelland, S Craig, D Bradford, P Craig, L Kirton, K McCartney, C McHugh, M Ord and G Haley

CP56 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors McMaster, Weatherley, Oxberry, Davison, Bradford, Penny St Bernard, Jill Burrell and Malcolm Hedley.

CP57 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- (i) The minutes of the last meeting held on 17 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

CP58 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRESENTATION

The Committee were provided with a demonstration of the new Care Leavers App. The app has been developed by a company based in Bristol and is to be used to provide relevant and current information, advice and guidance to care leavers.

Three care leavers were also present at the Committee and had an opportunity to speak with members about their experiences and to answer questions.

It was asked how much the app was costing the Council; it was noted that the current costs are £5,000 per year but that this cost is covered by the a digital skills programme grant for the first year.

The Committee noted their praise for the app highlighting that the idea was good to connect with a younger demographic. The Committee were also advised that there are plans to develop the app so that it can be used as a tool to connect to the Council.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the presentation.

CP59 CARE LEAVERS OFFER - QUALITY AND IMPACT

The Committee received a report and presentation providing information on the Care Leavers Offer, highlighting what has been achieved, what else is needed to be done and how care leavers are being supported.

It was highlighted within the report that progress has been made since to introduction of the Care Leavers Offer which now includes:

- Council tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25.
- An end to housing pathway.
- Free leisure passes.
- An improved employment, education and training offer.
- A commitment from a range of Council departments to offer shadowing days and mentoring.
- Support for young people to move home.
- A greater understanding from partners about their role as corporate parents.

It was further noted that it is of importance to get the offer right for care leavers to ensure a smooth, planned transition when leaving care.

The Committee were advised that there have been challenges in developing and implementing the offer; it was noted that some care leavers who have been keen to have their own home have taken up tenancies for properties requiring repair. Councillors were advised that should a care leaver contact them for support regarding their housing they should get in touch with The Gateshead Housing Company. It was also confirmed that care leavers are given a priority banding when bidding for homes.

A copy of the full Care Leavers Offer was provided to the Committee within the agenda pack. The Committee also passed on their thanks to the staff within the care leavers team.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive a further report regarding the Local Offer at a future meeting.

CP60 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

The Committee received a report providing statistics relating to looked after children in Gateshead covering the period up to the end of February 2019.

It was highlighted from the report that at the end of February 2019, 384 children and young people were classed as being looked after. It was further stated that the 384 children came from 263 different families.

The report provided the Committee with an overview of those entering care and leaving care; it was noted from the report that the most prominent reason for children entering care was abuse or neglect. It was also highlighted within the report that of

the children leaving care, the largest majority left to return to their home.

The report provided detail of the characteristics of Gateshead's current looked after population in addition to ethnicity and legal status. From the presentation the Committee were also advised of the number of out of borough placements. Both the report and presentation also provided an overview of performance for the Committee's information.

It was asked that whether siblings were separated when being removed from their homes; it was stated that efforts are always made to keep siblings together in their placements whenever it is safe and practical to do so. It was also noted that some children can have up to five siblings and in these cases, it is difficult to have them all placed together with foster carers; siblings who do have to be separated are kept in frequent contact with each other.

The Committee requested for the next report that information relating to the duration that children and young people stay in their care placements be provided. The Committee also requested that case studies be provided to provide some context to the statistics presented at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report
- (ii) The Committee requested further information relating to the duration of children and young people's care placements and case studies.

CP61 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the report setting out the provisional work programme for the Corporate Parenting OSC for the municipal year 2019/20.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee endorsed the OSC provisional work programme.

CP62 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

CP63 REGULATION 44 REPORT

The Committee received a report outlining Ofsted regulation 44 independent visits and inspection outcomes carried out in the Council's children's homes between January 2019 and March 2019.

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.