

TITLE OF REPORT: **Additional Non-Voting Member - Corporate Parenting Sub Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)**

REPORT OF: **Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance**
Alison Elliott, Interim Strategic Director – Care, Wellbeing and Learning

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet's approval to recommend Council to agree to an additional non-voting member being appointed to the Corporate Parenting Sub OSC.

Background

2. The Council's Corporate Parenting Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee was established in 2000. The Sub-Committee maintains a comprehensive overview of the progress of children who are looked after and for care leavers, scrutinising the quality, effectiveness and performance of services that support them. Since 2000 the importance of the Council's responsibility for children who are looked after has continued to be emphasised in successive government initiatives, with specific emphasis being placed on life chances and on educational achievement.
3. On 23 October 2014, the Families OSC reviewed the membership arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Sub OSC and considered examples of best practice in other local authorities across the UK with a view to further strengthening the scrutiny challenge and leadership of the corporate parenting role.
4. The OSC identified that it would strengthen the robustness of those arrangements, if the number of non-voting members on the Sub-Committee with knowledge and experience of services provided to Looked After young people and care leavers was increased. The OSC therefore recommended to Cabinet that the non-voting membership be extended to include a representative of the Foster Care Association, a care leaver, a school governor, a representative of the Gateshead Housing Company and a representative from the third sector.
5. In light of the OSC's recommendations, Cabinet agreed to increase the non-voting members appointed to the Corporate Parenting Sub OSC on 16 December 2014 and noted that the Families OSC would review the effectiveness of the revised arrangements in twelve months' time.
6. The current membership comprises an elected member as a chair person and vice chair from the majority party and a further 7 cross party elected members and four co-opted members.

Proposal

7. The Families OSC, at its meeting on 21 January 2016, reviewed the revised arrangements and noted that, due to challenges in seeking a third sector representative because of the need to avoid potential conflicts of interest and in gaining increased involvement from care leavers in the scrutiny arrangements, it had not been possible to fully implement the proposals to increase the non-voting membership as originally anticipated. Whilst benefits had clearly been derived from having the views of those non – voting members who had been appointed, these had been more limited due to the lack of additional representation from a care leaver and a representative from the third sector.
8. Whilst it has recently been possible to appoint a representative from the third sector, the Chair of the Sub Committee suggested and the OSC agreed that it would be useful to recommend to Cabinet that the non- voting membership be extended to also include a co-opted member from the Families OSC to increase continuity and cement links between the Sub-Committee and the parent Committee.
9. The Looked After service is continuing to discuss representation from a care leaver with young people and offer full support to enable them to attend as a non-voting member.
10. It is proposed to formalise the arrangements for all the non- voting members by setting a specific term of office which will be for a period of 3 years from the date of appointment. In addition, as work is still ongoing to fully implement the original recommendations, it is also planned that a further review of the effectiveness of these arrangements be carried out by the Families OSC in 12 months' time.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended that the Council be recommended to agree to a member of the Families OSC being appointed as an additional non-voting member of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee to increase continuity and cement links between the Sub Committee and the parent Committee.

For the following reason:

In order to improve/strengthen the robustness of the current scrutiny/governance arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Sub–Committee.

CONTACT: Angela Frisby

extension: 2138

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. Section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989 sets out the duty of a local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people who are looked after. This duty is exercised through the role of the “corporate parent” a responsibility which is placed on the local authority as a whole, rather than a specific service. The role of the Corporate Parent is to ensure that all services that the Council provides contribute to achieving positive outcomes for looked after children and young people. It also recognises the key role that schools and partners have to play as well as Council services.

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Consultation

3. The Cabinet Members for Children and Young People have been consulted.

Alternative Options

4. The alternative option would be to leave the current membership unchanged.

Implications of Recommended Option

5. Resources:

a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that there are no financial implications arising from this report.

b) **Human Resources Implications** – None

c) **Property Implications** - None

6. **Risk Management Implication** - None

7. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - None

8. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None

9. **Health Implications** - None

10. Sustainability Implications - None

11. Human Rights Implications - None

12. Area and Ward Implications - None

Background Information

13. The report and minutes of the Families OSC meeting held on 21 January 2016.