

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE**

**4.00pm 17 OCTOBER 2012**

**COMMITTEE ROOM 1, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor Shanks (Chair)

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Bennett, Jarrett, Gilbey and Hyde

**PART ONE**

**11. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**11a Declaration of Substitutes**

11.1 Councillor Jarrett was present in substitution for Councillor Rufus.

**11b Declarations of Interests**

11.2 There were none.

**11c Exclusion of Press and Public**

11.3 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the Act”), the Planning Committee considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

11.4 **RESOLVED** – That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of Item 18 onwards.

**12. MINUTES**

12.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair be authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2012 as an accurate record.

**13. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

13.1 There were none.

**14. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

14.1 There were none.

**15. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT**

15.1 There were none.

**16. FOSTER CARERS CHARTER**

- 16.1 The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, People in relation to the Brighton & Hove Foster Carers' Charter. The Foster Carers' Charter was a government initiative launched in April 2011 as part of the move to improve outcomes for children and young people in care. The Charter enshrined the role of the foster carer as being of key importance, and provided a means for the City Council to work together with foster carers and to build professional and respectful relationships that would lead to positive outcomes for children.
- 16.2 In response to a query from Councillor Gilbey it was explained that there was a dedicated phone line for support, and the Council worked with East Sussex County Council to provide out of hours support and carers appreciated this service. It was also explained that the young advisors had contributed to training and recruitment and were keen to see educational training form part of the Charter. Officers went on to note that there was a value for money training programme being undertaken for one year through the virtual school, and it was expected that recruitment and training would form part of the aspirations project operating in East and West Sussex.
- 16.3 Following queries Councillor Shanks, the Chair, explained that Fostering Panels had membership from current foster carers and those who had been fostered in the past, and Officers added that foster carers had to go through a very prescriptive process with strict legal requirements that dictated the makeup of Panels. It was also noted that Officers exploring more ways in which young people could become involved with in this process.
- 16.4 Councillor Jarrett suggested that stakeholder engagement activity could be undertaken, and board members could meet and give feedback.
- 16.5 Councillor Shanks welcomed the report and noted that further work could be undertaken to strengthen some of the language. It was agreed that the Charter would be brought to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for further comment.
- 16.6 **RESOLVED** – That the Committee notes the Charter, and requests that it be brought to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for further comment.

**17. FAMILY FIRST POLICY**

- 17.1 The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, People in relation to the Family First policy. It explained that there was now a requirement from Central Government for local authorities to refocus social work intervention and planning in accordance with explicit Family First principles. The high numbers of looked after children in the city required a robust approach to achieve emotional, physical and legal permanence for children in a way that either avoided them coming into care or moved them out of care in a timely way. The principle of Family First prioritised children remaining with or returning their family, or being secure in the care of family and friends. The principles must inform all social work practise and decision making in the city.
- 17.2 Following a query from Councillor Shanks it was explained that foster carers would be able to apply for Special Guardianship and the biggest change related to the status of the child as they would no longer be considered a child in care; it also demonstrated that a lot of children did not want to be recognised as a 'children in care'. In relation to savings it was highlighted that there would be administrative savings if there were less children in care, and there would also be the recognition and sense of belonging for the children through the legal permanence of Special Guardianship.
- 17.3 Following a query from Councillor Hyde it was explained that it would be expected that foster carers would not make an application for Special Guardianship until they had arrived at a point where it was clear that a child staying with them long-term was the most appropriate situation. This could be a more difficult position for some agency carers as they had a vested financial interest in being foster carers.
- 17.4 Councillor Gilbey asked questions in relation to the legal status of the birth parents, and situations where adoptions broke down. In response it was explained that after the adoption the parental rights of the birth parents were extinguished; there were adoptions that broke down and in these circumstances the parents could ask the local authority to place the children in care, but they remained that legal parents of the child. It was also noted that adoption had a very high success rate in the city.
- 17.5 Following a further query from Councillor Gilbey bin relation to support for special guardians it was explained that this area of work was currently being progressed, and meetings had been held with some carers to consider what level of support they would need. The biggest areas that had been identified were financial support, and support for those leaving care at aged 18. The Council was currently working on a package that would be similar to that offered to foster carers; when carers ceased to be an employee of the City Council the courts had to consider an agreed plan of support before Special Guardianship could be granted; guardians would be entitled to have this reviewed every few years. It was also highlighted that none of these changes would alter to entitlement to be treated as a 'child in need' which would continue regardless of their status.
- 17.6 Councillor Shanks asked question in relation to 18 plus and university support, and it was explained that the same level of support had been agreed as would be offered to a child in care, and they would be entitled to the same loan structure as all students attending university. Councillor Gilbey went on to ask if the guardian would receive any financial support at this point and it was explained that these kinds of details would be agreed in the support plan.

17.7 Councillor Shanks expressed concern that removing the status of a child in care could remove some of the access that they would otherwise be offered, and Officers reiterated that the status as a 'child in need' would remain, and went onto add that the Special Guardianship was important for some children to help them achieve a greater sense of integration, and the power to grant Special Guardianship lied with the courts not the local authority. The decision would be the result of a joint conversation between all parties and the birth parents would also be notified and be able to feed into this.

17.8 **RESOLVED** – That the Sub-Committee endorses the 'Family First' approach to social work as detailed in the report.

**18. PART TWO MINUTES**

18.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair be authorised to sign the Part 2 minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2012 as an accurate record.

**19. MISSING CHILDREN POLICY UPDATE**

19.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Sub-Committee agree the recommendation in the Part 2 report.

**20. PART TWO PROCEEDINGS**

20.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Part 2 item remain exempt from disclosure from the press and public.

The meeting concluded at 5.07pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of