

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 9 September 2015

Attendance

Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Welcome Koussoukama
Cllr Peter O'Neill (Chair)
Cllr Arun Photay (Vice-Chair)
Cyril Randles
Cllr Martin Waite
Cllr Daniel Warren
Cllr Richard Whitehouse

Employees

Emma Bennett	Service Director - Children and Young People
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Alice Vickers	Corporate Parenting Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following member(s) of the panel:

Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Rosalie Watkins
- 2 Declarations of interest**
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre and Cllr Daniel Warren declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 Wolverhampton Youth Zone
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting (8.7.15)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8..7.15, subject to the agreed changes, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Minute 6 – Role of local authority in raising school standards of attainment

Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that a briefing paper on the number of children leaving school with no qualifications will be published before the end of September 2015.

Scrutiny Officer advised that a briefing paper on the monitoring arrangements for children being educated at home was sent to panel members on 27.8.15.

Minute 7 Wolverhampton Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015 25

Scrutiny Officer advised that a briefing paper on the achievements to date of the Children and Young People Plan 2011-14 was been sent to panel members on 31.7.15.

5 **Corporate Parenting, Children in Care Council and the role of Councillors**

Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer, presented the report. Corporate Parenting Officer explained that Kyron Hughes was unable to attend the meeting. Cllr O’Neil suggested that the presentation be deferred to a future meeting.

Corporate Parenting Officer outlined the responsibilities of the Council and local partners to meet work together to meet the needs of Looked After Children.

Corporate Parenting Officer outlined the important role of Councillors to support young people to get the best outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC). Corporate Parenting Officer encouraged Councillors to think about the impact of policies, initiatives and services on LAC in their meetings.

Corporate Parenting Officer updated the panel on the positive impact on Children in Care Council members who have their monthly meetings in the Council Chamber. The meetings are used to talk about policies and procedures and interview heads of service. Corporate Parenting Officer commented on the links between members Children in Care Council and Wolverhampton Council and work being done to build relationships. Corporate Parenting Officer commented on the range of work being done to support Looked After Children, for example, six weekly joint meetings with Youth Council to get their voices heard.

Representatives of the Children in Care Council are attending a conference in Birmingham

Panel welcomed the report.

The panel made the following comments about the report.

- The panel commented on concerns about how LAC cope with the number of professionals who would typically be in contact during the year and also the work done to reduce the number of changes in social worker allocated to their case. Corporate Parenting Officer explained the Total Respect training is an opportunity to share their feelings. In addition, links are being made with Wolverhampton Council to encourage LAC to talk to other young people. Emma Bennett, Service Director Children and Young People, outlined the range of work done to review the number of people who are in contact with LAC. Service Director outlined the work done to minimise the number of changes in social workers in contact with the LAC.
- The panel queried evidence to show progress in meeting the corporate parenting priorities listed in the report. Corporate Parenting Officer explained that a range of representatives from different agencies are involved in delivering the priorities. In the commissioning process organisations are asked how they can support care leavers. Organisations will have to provide evidence that they are delivering on their commitments to LAC. Members of CIC have been involved in drafting a set of bank questions that bidders will be asked to respond. This work is part of wider efforts to involve LAC in decisions that will affect them and get services to think about their needs.
- The panel queried progress on achieving priorities set by the Children in Care Council. Corporate Parenting Officer gave examples of the work done to deliver priority 9 – making placements more positive and commented on the work done with representatives of the voluntary sector and school to look at opportunities to promote the needs of children in care.
- Cllr Val Gibson, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, commented on her positive experience of the Total Respect training session and encouraged Cllrs to attend to get a better understanding of the issue.
- The panel queried the reference in the report that the role of corporate parenting was not focused on forming personal relationships with individual children. Corporate Parenting Officer commented that Councillors should think about the needs of young people and the opportunities to influence and support children in care. Corporate Parenting Officer commented on building resilience. Independent Reviewing Officer role is to evaluate the thoughts and wishes of young people. Corporate Parenting Officer outlined the other work done to support children in care and the important role, where possible, for the young person to still have contact with siblings and parents. Service Director Children and Young People commented that a key part of the work of the service is stabilising the workforce. Service Director Children and Young People commented on the planned recruitment campaign as an important part of achieving this.
- Panel queried if young people felt comfortable enough to talk about issues of concern when meeting in the Council chamber for meetings of the Children in Care Council. Corporate Parenting Officer commented that young people are very comfortable when meeting professionals and raising issues of concern. Members

of the group also meet at other venues such as Red Lion Street and the Beldray Building.

- Emerson, Youth Council, commented on the good relations between with members of the Children in Care Council.

Resolved:

- Representatives of the panel invited to attend a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- An open invitation to panel members to attend Total Respect training

6 **Wolverhampton Youth Zone**

Philippa Gregory, Development Manager – The Way, gave a presentation to update panel on the current progress of the building work and the key themes that will be used to structure activities. The building is based on the idea first developed in Bolton to provide a range of facilities to young people. Development Manager explained that the building will aim to provide young people with somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to.

Development Manager gave examples of specific plans and activities that will be delivered at the centre. The building will open to young people aged 8-19 years. The building will be open every day and young people will be charged 50p per visit to take part in 20 different activities on offer.

Development Manager commented on the support provided by local sponsors and the work being to recruit more local business. Development Manager commented on the important role of volunteers to the future success of the building and there will be a focus on encouraging adults to either act as a mentor for young people or to provide sessions. Young people will have the opportunity to take part in a range of taster activity sessions such as basic first aid, apprenticeships.

Development Manager explained that the building will be open on 16 January 2016. 18 local businesses have agreed to sponsor the building. The target is to recruit 50 local businesses in total.

A range of work is being done to involve young people in developing core values of the Youth Zone.

Development Manager outlined work done to learn the lessons from the first Youth Zone building that was developed in Bolton. There was concern before the building young people coming into the city centre and from parents about children aged 12 - 14 and the public transport. In response to concerns a direct bus service to the building was introduced. Development Manager explained that discussions are on-going with Bromford Homes and the provision of a dedicated shuttle bus service.

The panel queried the opening times. Development Manager explained that the centre will be open from 4pm to 10pm. Young children will be have to be dropped off and collected.

The panel queried if there will be a security presence at the Youth Zone. Development Manager explained that security staff will not have an identified look. The aim will be to provide a low key presence at the building. Development Manager outlined the range of measures to create a safe and positive environment for young people and staff. For example, youth workers will be involved in tackling behaviour issues by building trust with young people and talking about issues. The police will also be involved in working with staff to deal with anti-social behaviour. The aim will be to encourage young people to treat the building with respect. There will be system used to monitor people entering and leaving the building.

Service Director Children and Young People commented that targeted youth workers would also be involved in supporting the staff in dealing with issues at youth zone building. The experience since the opening of the Epic Café showed the positive impact on young people's behaviour of having youth workers available to deal with issues.

The panel queried if the building will be offering mentoring programme and apprentice opportunities. Development Manager explained that both issues are an important part of the offer to young people. An opportunity for a young person to attend a free five day residential course.

The panel commented on issue of child sexual exploitation and the risk to young people being in the city centre. Development Manager explained that all staff and volunteers would be checked against the DBS register and also their qualifications.

The panel queried if young people would have the opportunity to take part in taster sessions. Development Manager explained that the sessions would be arranged so that people can take part in taster sessions. Young people would be encouraged to try different activities.

Youth Council queried the long term aims of youth zone. Development Manger explained that sessions would be organised around the three themes - of offering young people somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk. Development Manager explained that the activities would be decided by young people.

Development Manager explained that there will be 'soft' opening events in November and December to test facilities before the formal opening day on 16.1.16.

The panel queried the facilities for children with disabilities. Development Manager gave examples of the facilities, for example the inclusion room. A local group has contacted the centre to ask about facilities for children with disabilities and they are involved in development activities on offer to young people.

Resolved:

The panel welcomed the report and progress made.

The panel to be invited to a visit of the Youth Zone for a tour of the facilities.