



Leicester
City Council

**MINUTE
EXTRACT**

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: TUESDAY, 2 MARCH 2010 at 5.30 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Corral – Chair
Councillor Bajaj – Vice-Chair

Councillor Naylor

Councillor Senior

Councillor Newcombe

Councillor Suleman

Councillor Scuplak

Co-opted Members

Mr Edward Hayes – Roman Catholic Diocese

Also In Attendance

Councillor Dempster – Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Schools

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70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Newcombe declared a personal interest in item 6, “Introduction by Helen Ryan, Divisional Director, Learning Environment”, as he was a Governor at a school included in the Primary Capital Programme.

79. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT

The Strategic Director, Children, submitted a report that informed Members of developments around Corporate Parenting.

It was noted that the Council usually had responsibility for approximately 470 – 480 children who were in the care system. The City Council’s work on Corporate Parenting had a good reputation nationally, its methods having been adopted by several other local authorities. For example:-

- regular meetings were held between senior officers, the Strategic Director, Children and the Cabinet Lead Member for Children and Schools, to make sure that children’s views were taken in to account;

- a Children in Care Council had been established, of which various children in care were members;
- as part of the Council's Beacon Authority legacy, an establishment post had been established within the Council for an ex-care leaver. This post recently had been appointed to and it was hoped it would be successful in helping to steer the Council's work forward; and
- the Flying Fish project had seen an increasing number of looked after young people taking up work experience programmes across the Council, which in turn had seen more of them moving in to education, employment and training. This was one of the "golden threads" that had been identified when the Council had submitted its Beacon Status application.

The Committee welcomed the initiative to encourage more elected Members to become involved in the Corporate Parenting Forum, noting that up to 6 key Members attended this regularly. It was noted that it was hoped to write to all Members shortly, to see if any others were interested in attending, or wished to receive papers for the meetings. Alternative arrangements for Forum meetings also were being considered, to enable more people to attend, such as holding them at different times of day, although it was recognised that Members with child care, or other, responsibilities could be unable to attend at certain times.

Some concern was expressed that the report recommended that compulsory corporate parenting training be introduced for all elected Members. It was recognised that the report suggested that Cabinet could recommend to Council that Groups be asked to impose this training, but it was felt that the recommendation would confer upon Council a power that it did not have, namely to impose mandatory training upon all elected Members. This would in turn confer upon Groups a power to impose mandatory training, which could not be enforced in practice.

Councillors stressed that the reason for their concern was not to avoid compliance with the aims of the recommendation, (some of the Members present were regular members of the Corporate Parenting Forum and the Committee fully supported the training obligations), but to comply with the law / Council Constitution, and especially to avoid promoting a set of mandatory arrangements which, if unenforceable, could undermine the drive to promote training.

As an alternative, it was suggested that all Groups could be asked to sign a Charter demonstrating their commitment to Corporate Parenting and ensuring that all their members were suitably trained.

Councillor Suleman endorsed this view as, for example, if one Group did not support the original recommendation, it could not be enforced. He stressed that training was important and should be provided to all Members, but could not be enforced. Encouraging Groups to sign a Charter therefore would

emphasise their commitment to ensuring that all Members received this training.

Members suggested that another way of delivering this training would be at Group meetings. For example, this could be low-level training, with further training provided at different times for those with additional responsibilities. The possibility of asking the Member Development Forum to consider this matter also was discussed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Corporate Parenting Annual Report be noted;
- 2) that, with the exception of that contained at paragraph 2.3 of the report, the recommendations to Cabinet be endorsed; and
- 3) that Cabinet be recommended to recommend to Council an approach whereby Groups (or Independent Members) are asked to demonstrate their commitment to Corporate Parenting by agreeing:-
 - a) to strongly recommend training for all of their Group (or Independent) Members as set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report, coupled with more specific training for Members with additional responsibilities; and
 - b)** that each Group (or Independent Member) sign a Charter demonstrating this commitment.