

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**2 AUGUST 2007**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION/COUNCIL DECISION**

**Children & Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cunningham**

#### **CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY**

1. Summary

To share a revised draft Corporate Parenting Strategy and Statement with Cabinet (Appendix A).

To propose a series of actions which should improve the quality of corporate parenting and impact positively on outcomes for looked after children and young people in Stockton.

2. Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approve the proposal to seek Council ratification of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Corporate Parenting Statement with the aim of implementation as Council policy in Autumn.
2. That Cabinet approve the proposal to include the MALAP in the list of groups requiring named Councillor membership.
3. That Cabinet approve the proposal that MALAP report to Children's Trust Board as a standing agenda item and subsequently to Cabinet.
4. That Cabinet approve the addition of "Corporate Parenting Implications" as a consideration for all appropriate Council reports, with immediate effect.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

The principle of corporate parenting was first encapsulated in the "Quality Protects" programme. The Quality Protects Programme was about improving the well-being and life chances of those children who were looked after by local authorities. As part of that programme, the Secretary of State for Health announced that:

"One of the aims of the Quality Protects programme is to assist councils to adopt a truly corporate outcome oriented approach to parenting children who are looked after by them and supporting the parenting of other children in need."

The roles of Council's Executive and Scrutiny functions were stipulated in the Department for Education and Skills publication, "If This Were My Child" in October 2003. (A Councillor's Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent").

The White Paper 'Care Matters : Time for Change' 2007 highlights the need to improve the role of the corporate parent by expecting every local authority to set out its pledge to children in care, to make clear that the DCS and lead member for Children's Services should be responsible for leading improvements in Corporate parenting and by introducing an annual stocktake of the outcomes for children in care.

The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children. Once a child is in care, all Members and Officers of the council, as their corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements. This concern also extends to providing appropriate support once young people have left care to enable them to achieve independence in the community. This continued support should include looked after children's educational support post 16 years old.

Corporate parenting is a whole authority enterprise. It is not directed solely at those services targeted at children, but requires all services across the Council to work together corporately and with partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for their looked after children and care leavers.

#### 4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the**

**business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**CABINET/COUNCIL DECISION**

**CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY**

**SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To share a revised draft Corporate Parenting Strategy and Statement with Cabinet (Appendix A).
- 1.2 To propose a series of actions which should improve the quality of corporate parenting and impact positively on outcomes for looked after children and young people in Stockton.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the proposal to seek Council ratification of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Corporate Parenting Statement with the aim of implementation as Council policy in Autumn.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the proposal to include the MALAP in the list of groups requiring named Councillor membership.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approve the proposal that MALAP report to Children's Trust Board as a standing agenda item and subsequently to Cabinet.
- 2.4 That Cabinet approve the addition of "Corporate Parenting Implications" as a consideration for all appropriate Council reports, with immediate effect.

**3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The principle of corporate parenting was first encapsulated in the "Quality Protects" programme. The Quality Protects Programme was about improving the well-being and life chances of those children who were looked after by local authorities. As part of that programme, the Secretary of State for Health announced that:

"One of the aims of the Quality Protects programme is to assist councils to adopt a truly corporate outcome oriented approach to parenting children who are looked after by them and supporting the parenting of other children in need."

- 3.2 The roles of Council's Executive and Scrutiny functions were stipulated in the Department for Education and Skills publication, "If This Were My Child" in October 2003. (A Councillor's Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent").

- 3.3 The White Paper 'Care Matters : Time for Change' 2007 highlights the need to improve the role of the corporate parent by expecting every local authority to set out its pledge to children in care, to make clear that the DCS and lead member for Children's Services should be responsible for leading improvements in Corporate parenting and by introducing an annual stocktake of the outcomes for children in care.
- 3.4 The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes that every good parent would want for their own children. Once a child is in care, all Members and Officers of the council, as their corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements. This concern also extends to providing appropriate support once young people have left care to enable them to achieve independence in the community. This continued support should include looked after children's educational support post 16 years old.
- 3.5 Corporate parenting is a whole authority enterprise. It is not directed solely at those services targeted at children, but requires all services across the Council to work together corporately and with partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for their looked after children and care leavers.

#### **4.0 STOCKTON'S CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY**

- 4.1 Stockton's corporate parenting strategy has been developed at a time of unprecedented partnership activity with regard to responding to the needs of children, young people and their families. Meeting the needs of looked after children, as a particularly vulnerable group, is key to ensuring that the Council (Members & Officers) and its partners can respond effectively to their needs. It will also support meeting two of the Council's corporate priorities, Promoting Achievement and Tackling Disadvantage.
- 4.2 This strategy outlines how Stockton Borough Council and partners will meet and address its corporate parenting responsibilities and improve the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The strategy will be reviewed annually in August.
- 4.3 The Corporate Parenting Strategy uses the "Every Child Matters" outcomes framework as a vehicle for identifying what needs to be done and the progress the Council and its partners are making in improving the life chances and outcomes for looked after children. These outcomes will enable organisations and stakeholders to reflect on the actions and work necessary to bring about improvements in the lives of all children in the context of that Framework.
- 4.4 The strategy builds on the Council's corporate parenting pledge. The pledge outlines and forms an undertaking and commitment from the Council to the principles of corporate parenting.

#### **5.0 CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGE**

- 5.1 "Every good parent knows that children require a safe and secure environment in which to thrive. We protect and support our children against the perils and risks of life. We are ambitious for them; we want them to reach their potential. We celebrate and share in their achievements. A child who is cared for by the Local Authority has the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good parent.

## 5.2 As a Local Authority:

- we accept the responsibilities and challenges of being corporate parents;
- we are committed to providing efficient, effective and caring quality services;
- we will creatively meet the needs of children and young people in public care and enable them to achieve their full potential.

5.3 We as elected members and employees within the borough being corporate parents, will take responsibility for working collaboratively to support children and young people in public care and care leavers to ensure we enable them to reach their potential emotionally, educationally, physically, psychologically and socially.

5.4 Above all, as Corporate Parents we will preface all our thinking, planning, actions and decisions with:

“If this were my child I would ....”

5.5 The strategy outlines the Council’s shared understanding of corporate parenting and clarifies the ways in which Officers and Councillors will work together to discharge their corporate parenting duties, aligned to the 5 outcomes of the Every Child Matters Framework.

## 6.0 REPORTING, MONITORING AND GOVERNANCE

6.1 The strategy includes key areas for development and an overview of action plans collated from across the range of services and partners providing services for LAC. This plan informs a monitoring schedule which forms the basis of one of the Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) group’s workstreams. It is proposed that MALAP report this monitoring through to the Children’s Trust Board as a standing agenda item.

6.2 Currently two groups meet to discharge a monitoring role in respect of provision of services for LAC. The MALAP, whose membership is predominantly Council Officers, colleagues from partner agencies and recently two self nominated Councillors. In addition an informal Corporate Parenting group, open to all Councillors, meets. It is proposed to join these groups together, and increase the accountability of the MALAP, by revising membership to include Senior Officers and by requiring Councillors to join as names with an expectation to report back to Party colleagues. Terms of reference have been prepared for a re-formed MALAP and an Advisory Group of children and young people is being developed to work alongside this group to shape decision making and service design.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Children Act 2004 gives local authorities the duty to make arrangements for local co-operation which will include integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of children’s services. From 2006 local areas have been required to use Children’s Trust arrangements to deliver integrated Children’s Services.

7.2 The development of a Corporate Parenting approach to meeting the needs of some of our most vulnerable children and young people sits well within this vision of service development and delivery.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial**

Start-up funding to establish the Virtual School has been secured through discussion with the School Forum for year one, 2007-2008. Should an element of continued funding be required in year 2 and subsequently, it is proposed to seek continued support from School Forum. There are no further financial implications to this decision.

### **Legal**

The White Paper 'Care Matters : Time for Change' 2007, requires Councils to address the issues raised in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, in order to improve the outcomes for looked after children.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

"This Corporate Parenting Strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk."

## **COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environment**

### **Community Safety and Well-Being**

### **Health**

### **Economic Regeneration**

### **Education and Lifelong Learning**

### **Arts and Culture**

The strategy impacts across all six key policy platform areas. Corporate Parenting is a whole authority enterprise and responsibility.

It is not targeted solely at those services focused on Children, but requires all Services across the Council to work together Corporately and with partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

All Councillors are affected by this Strategy, as Corporate parents. The Children, Education and Social Care Scrutiny panel have considered the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy as their first scrutiny of the new administration, and their recommendations have been included in the final draft document.

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### Background Papers

The Draft Corporate Parenting Strategy, (Appendix A).

### Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

### Property

The report does not have any implications in relation to the Council's property, neither will it impact on the Capital Programme or Asset Management Plan.