

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

| | | |
|--|---|--------|
| REPORT: | General Purposes Committee | |
| DATE OF DECISION | 03 March 2024 | |
| REPORT TITLE: | Proposed Changes to the Constitution Relating to the Corporate Parenting Panel | |
| CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR: | DEBBIE JONES, CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION | |
| LEAD OFFICER: | JANE SCOTT, TRANSFORMATION LEAD, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE Jane.Scott@croydon.gov.uk | |
| LEAD MEMBER: | CLLR MARIA GATLAND CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE | |
| CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION? <i>(* See guidance)</i> | NO | Public |
| WARDS AFFECTED: | 'N/A' | |

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1** This report addresses the new terms of reference (TOR) for the Corporate Parenting Panel. The changes include an expanded membership and responds to the Department of Education's recommendations that the Corporate Parenting Panel has a broader inclusion of members to affect change at pace. The membership includes a care experienced young person as a Co-Chair and Ambassadors to advise the strategic developments and link with the operational activity required to achieve and translate the objectives in making a positive impact upon children in care and young people leaving care. There is flexibility to change the membership should this be required by the Board.
- 1.2** Given the more robust nature of the Corporate Parenting function, oversight, and governance, we propose that the name is changed to the Corporate Parenting Board, which is the title used in most Local Authorities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons set out in the report and its appendix, the General Purposes Committee is recommended:

- 2.1** to review and comment on the proposed changes to the Constitution discussed in the report and detailed in the **Appendix**; and
- 2.2** to recommend to Full Council the adoption of the proposed changes.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1** To provide a new term of reference to create a robust framework to develop the strategic and shared approach to responding to the range of needs and support of children and young people in and leaving care.
- 3.2** To change the name to the Corporate Parenting Board to reflect the broader reach, oversight and governance of the Corporate Parenting work and function.

4. BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

- 4.1** While there is no legal requirement for local authorities to appoint a Corporate Parenting Panel, many local authorities have established a group of elected members to oversee the corporate parenting function of the local authority and it is widely considered to be good practice.
- 4.2** The general role of Corporate Parenting Panels is to lead on ensuring that a local authority's corporate parenting responsibilities (including multi-agency involvement) are being met in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and Children and Social Work Act 2017. The panel sets the priorities for children/young people in its care. it monitors and scrutinises service delivery by reference to the authority's corporate parenting strategy.
- 4.3** The Croydon Corporate Parenting Panel was established in 2007 and has operated as an Informal advisory body to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. The Panel is not established as a formal committee of the Council or as a Cabinet committee. Eight Elected Members are appointed to it at Annual Council: four Conservative and four Labour. Formal political balance rules however do not apply. The membership of the Panel includes partner representatives and other stakeholders. The Panel is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- 4.3** Following the Ofsted inspection of Children's Social Care in Croydon in 2017, a review was undertaken to identify good practice that could be adopted by the Corporate Parenting Panel to strengthen the overarching governance arrangements as outlined in the 2017-2018, Croydon Children's Social Care Improvement plan.

In 2020 Croydon Council received a 'Good' overall judgement whilst highlighting the need for further improvement in the care and services to Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

The Corporate Parenting approach was described as committed across the council and evidence of good engagements from Elected members and young people.

In February 2023, Mark Riddell MBE, Department for Education, National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers reviewed the Councils approach and delivery to Care Leavers. He highlighted the significant changes and buy-in from elected members. It was noted that the first strand of a Champion Model Approach was being developed to strengthen the Corporate Parenting Whole Council and Partnership approach. Mark Riddell made three specific recommendations to drive a robust improvement to services for Care Leavers. These included a review of the membership of the panel with internal and external partners, the implementation of themed subgroups and the employment of Care Leaver Ambassadors and Champion. These changes are in progress.

The diversity and plurality of views gained from the expanded membership combined with the dynamic engagement and scrutiny through the themed subgroups add value and enable traction in achieving the strategic aims of the Croydon Corporate Parenting Strategy which was approved by full council in October 2023.

- 4.4** The proposed changes were considered and supported by the Constitution Working Group (CWG) on 15 February 2024. As suggested by CWG, wherever appropriate, the new Board will liaise with Scrutiny on matters of common interest.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1** The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced the seven principles of corporate parenting for local authorities. Whilst not requiring this to be a duty of partners, it is incumbent upon local authorities to engage with key partners to deliver the most holistic, robust care and services to children and young people in their care and who have left care up to the age of 25 years. The application of corporate parenting principles to improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people in and leaving care provides a framework to measure challenges and improvements, identifying mitigating activity where required. It is considered by Ofsted and the DFE that robust Corporate Parenting governance is required in the form of a panel/board to create the best conditions for oversight and scrutiny of the strategic objectives and positive impact being achieved for our children in care and young people leaving care people.
- 5.2** Therefore, an alternative is not considered a viable solution to meeting the requirements of the 2017 Children and Social Work Act Corporate parenting principles.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken across the council and with partner agencies, children, and young people during 2022-2023.

7 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 7.1 The proposals contained within this report contribute to the following outcome in the Mayors Business Plan for 2022- 2026.
 - 7.1.2 Children and young people in Croydon have the chance to thrive, learn and fulfil their potential.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1.1 There are no financial implications related to the recommendations.

8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.2.1 The law relevant to the proposed changes has been referenced in the body of the report.
- 8.2.2 Adopting changes to the Council's Constitution is a non-executive function reserved to full Council after the General Purposes Committee has considered the proposed changes and made a recommendation.
- 8.2.3 According to s9P of the Local Government Act 2000 the Council must keep its Constitution up to date.

8.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.3.1 There are no additional equalities implications related to these recommendations.

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 Terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Board

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 10.1 None