Item No. 11.	Classification: Open	Date: 7 July 2021	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Corporate Parenting Committee – Work Plan 2021-22	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director, Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee agree the approach and work plan as set out in the report.

2. That the committee review and identify any further items for consideration in the work plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Role and function of the corporate parenting committee

3. The constitution for the municipal year 2021-2022 records the corporate parenting committee's role and functions as follows:

    a. To secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children, and to work within an annual programme to that end.

    b. To develop, monitor and review a corporate parenting strategy and work plan.

    c. To seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised in terms of health, educational attainment, and access to training and employment, to aid the transition to a secure and productive adulthood.

    d. To develop and co-ordinate a life chances strategy and work plan to improve the life chances of Southwark looked after children.

    e. To recommend ways in which more integrated services can be developed across all council departments, schools and the voluntary sector to lead towards better outcomes for looked after children.

    f. To ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable looked after children and young people to play an integral role in service

planning and design, and that their views are regularly sought and acted upon.

g. To ensure performance monitoring systems are in place, and regularly review performance data to ensure sustained performance improvements in outcomes for looked after children.

h. To receive an annual report on the adoption and fostering services to monitor their effectiveness in providing safe and secure care for looked after children.

i. To report to the council's cabinet on a twice yearly basis.

j. To make recommendations to the relevant cabinet decision maker where responsibility for that particular function rests with the cabinet.

k. To report to the scrutiny sub-committee with responsibility for children's services after each meeting.

l. To appoint non-voting co-opted members.

National and local context for care leavers

4. There is national momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers. The government introduced 'Keep on Caring' strategy in 2016, increased council statutory duties to care leavers in the Children and Social Work Act in 2017, appointed a national Adviser for Care Leavers who produced a report in 2018, alongside the national launch of the Care Covenant. The council has responded to the various recommendations, for example by prioritising education, employment and training outcomes for care leavers in the Council Plan and developing the care leaver local offer as well as increasing service capacity for the extended personal adviser duties to 25.

5. Although much has been done to improve services and outcomes for care leavers, the council has an ambition to go above and beyond, by creating the best Leaving Care Service possible, by co-designing this with young people, learning from other organisations and trialling new ideas to test what works best.

6. In 2017 the council and Catch22 received funding from the DfE Social Care Innovation Programme to work in partnership to design and test new ways of working to support care leavers. The Care Leavers Partnership (CLP) works to improve outcomes for young people in Southwark by working across boundaries, reshaping the service delivery model, unlocking capacity in the community, and co-designing solutions. There are a number of strands that the CLP is working on to achieve our goals.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. The corporate parenting committee review and update the work plan each

meeting. Following the beginning of the municipal year 2019-20, and reflecting on the momentum towards improving outcomes for care leavers, the opportunity has been taken to review how the committee works and present proposals to refresh this in relation to: non-voting co-opted members; committee approach; and work plan and suggested agenda items.

Non-voting co-opted members

8. It is recommended that the committee is supported and enhanced by adding a number of non-voting co-opted members. By bringing perspectives, knowledge and experience from young people, practitioners, subject matter experts, council and local community representatives together with elected members, there will be more opportunity to add value to the committee in its work to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. This will promote wider ownership of the important work of the service and enhance plans developed to improve its work.

9. A **representative of Speakerbox**, Southwark's Children in Care Council, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by bringing expertise by experience about how the system of support works around children in care and care leavers (3f above). The committee would recognise the person would preferably be consistent through the year, but may change. The council would support this person in that role, as well as Speakerbox, through its Childrens Rights and Participation function, to enable as far as possible the Speakerbox member to be representative of the voice of children in care and care leavers.

10. A **representative from Southwark's frontline workforce**, who works face to face with children in care and care leavers, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by giving a sense of the reality of work on the frontline to enable it to better seek to ensure that the life chances of looked after children are maximised (3c above). This committee member would be supported by the Children and Families Principal Social Worker to enable them to be a representative voice for those that work everyday with children in care and care leavers.

11. A **subject matter expert** who has undertaken extensive research and/or improvement work in the area of children in care and care leavers, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by adding knowledge and experience that is outside the day to day ambit of those working within the Southwark system to help the council better secure real and sustained improvements in the life chances of looked after children (3a above). The committee member would be supported by the Quality Assurance Unit to ensure they provide a valuable and relevant contribution to every committee.

12. A **critical friend** from an area of the council outside children and adults

service, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by adding knowledge and experience of the council outside social care and education areas to aid the development of a cross council approach to corporate parenting (3e above). The committee member would be supported by the quality assurance unit to ensure they provide a valuable and relevant contribution to every committee.

13. A **critical friend** from the local community, should be formally designated a non-voting co-opted member. This person would help the committee perform its role and function by adding knowledge and experience of the community and its assets and to aid the development of a wider community ownership of outcomes for children in care and care leavers. (3e above). The committee member would be supported by the Quality Assurance Unit to ensure they provide a valuable and relevant contribution to every committee.

Corporate Parenting Committee approach

14. The traditional way of managing the committee has been for officers to prepare reports and then members to scrutinise this at committee meetings. It is proposed that the agenda is split into two halves: children in care and care leavers. The children in care section would continue in a more traditional way as described.

15. The care leaver section could be managed differently with a thematic approach where officers responsible for those areas would attend. A presentation would be made about the area, and then a workshop approach would be taken whereby committee members would be invited to question and discuss, with an aim of developing recommendations for improvement. The workshops will produce targeted actions that thematic groups can take away to put into practice to make lasting change for care leavers.

16. The suggested main themes would be housing; education, employment and training; health and wellbeing. Others could be developed depending on the areas that might be considered important at the beginning of the year “kick off” meeting (see 17 below), and capacity of the committee. It would be expected that those attending for the themed areas would be at Director level within the council, and at a most senior level from other organisations.

17. The municipal year would start with a ‘kick-off’ meeting. This will present performance data about the outcomes for care leavers and plans for improvement. This will help the committee look at what is happening in Southwark, in comparison to neighbours and nationally. Quality and performance analysts could be available at the meeting to respond to detailed questions to deepen understanding. The whole approach would help the committee develop its plan for the year with areas of focus for the year ahead as well as being a place to question the whole approach to improvement.

18. The committee may develop, as part of its agenda, engagement with some

areas between committee meetings. For example historically the committee has sometimes taken the opportunity to meet with SpeakerBox during some school holidays at focused events. These engagement opportunities could still be planned as an important aspect of the work of the committee that builds there knowledge and understanding, and thus the committee's capacity to deliver its role and function

Corporate Parenting Committee work plan

19. **3 November 2021**

Children in care

- Independent Review Officers (IRO) Annual Report
- Sufficiency strategy update
- Annual Fostering report 2019-20.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – To be agreed

20. **2 March 2022**

Children in care

- Children in Care Annual Health Report 2020-21
- Item to be agreed.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – to be agreed

21. **20 April 2022**

Children in care

Agenda to be agreed.

Care Leavers

Workshop theme – to be agreed.

SpeakerBox

22. SpeakerBox, established in 2005, ensures that the views of looked after children and care leavers are used to influence decision making that affects their care and support particularly service planning and design. Representing children and young people between 8 and 24 years the group also provides a peer to peer networking support system for looked after children. The programme is operated independently and run by the young people themselves, although it is supported by the council's Children

Services and councillors.

Community impact statement

23. The work of the corporate parenting committee contributes to community cohesion and stability.

Resource implications

24. There are no specific implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Minutes of meetings of Corporate Parenting Committee	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Paula.thornton@southwark.gov.uk
Web link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=129&Year=0		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
Report Author	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families	
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CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	**Comments Sought**	**Comments included**
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
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