

## **Cabinet - 1 March 2006**

### **Corporate parenting - Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for elected members**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Eddie Hughes, Children's Services

**Service Area:** Children's Services

**Wards:** All

**Forward Plan:** No

#### **Summary of report**

In July 2005 cabinet received a report advising them of progress in relation to the corporate parenting strategy which supports looked after children.

The strategy ensures that through elected members the council puts looked after children first, keeps them safe, listens to them, meets their physical, social, cultural, psychological, health, education and emotional need and supports them through to independence, i.e. that the council is a good parent to its children.

Cabinet recommended that the children and lifelong learning performance and scrutiny panel review the role of elected members in visiting the children's residential units in Walsall and the panel received and discussed a report in October 2005.

Following this a training and awareness schedule was agreed and an evaluation report is being prepared by officers and members who have previously visited children's homes to capture the positive messages for the new members taking on this role.

The scrutiny panel discussed the corporate parenting role and agreed that all members should be aware of the implications of their role in improving outcomes for Walsall children, ensuring they stay safe and healthy, enjoy and achieve in life, make a positive contribution to their communities and achieve economic and social wellbeing.

Scrutiny panel considered the range of services that could positively impact on children and young people's lives through regeneration initiatives, community safety, leisure and cultural services, environmental improvements, housing as well as social care, youth and education services.

In order to ensure all members were equipped to undertake the corporate parenting role, the member development induction and development programme includes sessions on both 'every child matters' and 'effective corporate parenting'.

Panel resolved to recommend to cabinet that all elected members undergo an enhanced CRB check to ensure children are properly protected as members develop the corporate parenting activity in the borough.

## **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to agree that all elected members undergo enhanced CRB checks.

## **Resource and legal considerations**

The Children's Services budget for 2005/06 contains the financial resources to support the corporate parenting proposals. This includes DfES grant funding initiatives, particularly in terms of raising the educational attainment of looked after children. Most of the proposals within the action plan are contained within the Council's medium term financial strategy. The strategy fulfils the duties and expectations of local authorities as laid down in current legislation and statutory guidance, in relation to vulnerable children.

## **Citizen impact**

The corporate parenting strategy will maximise the life chances of children and young people so that they are equipped to become independent, mature adults.

## **Community safety**

The corporate parenting strategy seeks to create strategies to reduce offending behaviour by looked after young people and promote social inclusion.

## **Environmental impact**

None directly arising from this report.

## **Performance and risk management issues**

The initiatives within the corporate parenting strategy are embedded in service plans within all relevant council service areas. They are further included in individual staff performance monitoring. For instance social workers are expected to review personal education plans to timescales and thereby help to raise educational attainment. Therefore via service planning and individual performance monitoring, we intend to progress towards vision 2008.

The commitment of elected members and senior officers in all service areas will ensure that progress is made towards the agreed actions.

Finally, the Children's Services plan specifically monitors the overall strategy and the risk register reflects the assessed risks.

### **Equality implications**

The corporate parenting strategy will provide enhanced opportunities to children and young people at risk of social exclusion, enabling them to participate more productively in their local communities.

### **Consultation**

The strategy was originally launched in consultation with elected members, staff groups and children and young people. Consultation continues with relevant partners upon initiatives contained within the action plan as they are developed.

### **Vision 2008**

The strategy supports the Walsall vision. In particular it contributes to the priorities in relation to making Walsall a healthy and caring place (5), encouraging everyone to feel proud of Walsall (6), strengthening the local economy (8), listening to what people want (9), thereby helping Walsall to transform itself into an excellent authority by 2008 (10). Members have made specific pledges to give Walsall's children, including looked after children, better opportunities to achieve potential and to involve service users in planning and improving the way we deliver services.

### **Background papers**

If this were my child – Frank Dobson's letter to all councillors 1998.  
Corporate Parenting Strategy Action Plan.

### **Contact officer**

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**Signed**  
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**Portfolio Holder: Councillor E. F. Hughes**

**Date: 17 February 2006**

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