

CABINET MEETING – 17 APRIL 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

Proposed changes to the membership of Sunderland’s Corporate Parenting Board

Author(s):

Executive Director Children’s Services

Purpose of Report:

To seek the agreement of Cabinet to agree changes to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board

Description of Decision:

That Cabinet:

- a) note and consider the outcome of the recent review of the Corporate Parenting Board; and
- b) agree recommended changes to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board, as set out in section 5 of this report, and recommend these to Council

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes/No

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

The proposed changes to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board will maximise the contribution of Members from across the City and directly involve members of Scrutiny Committee in the corporate parenting arrangements.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected: The alternative option would be to reject the options set out in the review or arrangements, and to retain the current membership of the Corporate Parenting Board.

Impacts analysed:

Equality Privacy N/A Sustainability N/A Crime and Disorder N/A

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? Yes/No

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes/No

Scrutiny Committee

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF SUNDERLAND'S CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES****1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To seek the agreement of Cabinet to amend the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board.

2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)

- 2.1 That Cabinet:
 - a) Note and consider the outcome of the recent review of the Corporate Parenting Board; and
 - b) Agree recommended changes to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board, as set out in section 5 of this report, and recommend these to Council

3. Background

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Board is the formal way in which Sunderland City Council exercises its Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The term Corporate Parenting was described in 1998 by the then Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, who outlined the duties of Members towards children in care: *"For children who are looked after, your council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children."*
- 3.2 Sunderland's Corporate Parenting Board was first convened in September 2006 and has met quarterly since that date. At the first meeting the terms of reference were confirmed as set out in the Council's Constitution. The Constitution makes it clear that the Corporate Parenting Board has an advisory role to:
 - *"Oversee the exercise of the Council's responsibilities as Corporate Parent and ensure that the interests of Looked After Children are appropriately reflected in all Council policies and the work of the Children's Trust";* and
 - *"inspect Children's Homes and make and consider reports on such visits."*
- 3.3 The Corporate Parenting Board receives and considers reports which cover the regular Ofsted Inspection of Children's Homes, updates on the educational attainment of Sunderland's looked after children, and wider performance reports detailing all aspects of the lives of the city's 450 looked after children.
- 3.4 There are currently 12 Elected Members who sit on the Corporate Parenting Board, including the Cabinet Secretary, Public Health, Wellness and Culture Portfolio Holder, Children's Services Portfolio Holder,

City Services Portfolio Holder. Young people from the Change Council attend the Board and play an active role.

- 3.5 The Lead Member for Children's Services and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, Councillor Pat Smith, commissioned a review in September 2012. It was agreed that Councillor Paul Stewart, Children's Policy Lead, would lead on the review, assisted by Councillor Linda Williams and Councillor Doris McKnight. Young people from the Change Council were invited, and accepted the invitation, to be members of the review group.
- 3.6 The terms of references for the review were agreed by the Corporate Parenting Board at its November 2012 meeting, and were to:
- Look at how the Corporate Parenting Board operates – what works well and what could be improved.
 - Consider how Corporate Parenting Boards/Panels work elsewhere.
 - Report their recommendations back to the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2013, with a view to reporting to Cabinet in April 2013.

4. Current Position – the Findings of the Review

- 4.1 At the November 2012 meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, members took part in a development session to look at what works well at the Board and what could be improved. Aspects identified as working well included: Member attendance since the open invitation to attend meetings was issued; young people's attendance, which includes young people from all care settings including foster care, children's homes and care leavers had improved also.
- 4.2 The review also recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board should agree an annual work plan, with items against each date in the calendar, to ensure a wider spread of topics. In addition, young people from the Change Council should be involved in setting the work plan for the year, in an annual event for Members and young people. Other agenda items could be added by Members or young people to augment the work plan.
- 4.3 The review further recommended that the make-up of the Corporate Parenting Board be amended as set out in paragraph 5.1.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the formal membership of the Corporate Parenting Board be amended to include two members of Scrutiny Committee and a representative from each of the People Boards, as well as the Lead Member and Policy Lead for Children's Services. This would actively promote Corporate Parenting responsibilities of Elected Members across the Council.
- 5.2 It is also recommended that all other Elected Members should be invited as participant observers to the Corporate Parenting Board, as all Members have corporate parenting responsibilities.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 In order to make changes to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board, it is necessary for Cabinet to refer the proposals to Council for approval. The membership of the Board must be politically balanced, and this will be achieved through allocation of People Board representatives.

8. Reasons for the Decision

- 8.1 The proposed changes to the membership of the Corporate Parenting Board will maximise the contribution of Members from across the City and directly involve members of Scrutiny Committee in the corporate parenting arrangements.

9. Alternative Options

- 9.1 The alternative option would be to reject the options set out in the review of arrangements, and to retain the current membership of the Corporate Parenting Board.

10. Relevant Considerations/Consultations

- 10.1 All members of the Corporate Parenting Board have been invited to contribute to this review through the discussions at the Board in November 2012 and February 2013.

11. Impact Assessment

- 11.1 An equality impact assessment will be completed and it is not anticipated that any group will be adversely affected by any agreed changes.

12. Background Papers

Corporate Parenting Board Review

