

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 25 January 2008 at 10:00am at County Hall, Lewes.

PRESENT Councillor Waite (Chairman)
Councillors Elkin, O’Keeffe, Skilton, St Pierre and Taylor

ALSO PRESENT Councillor Stroude, Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Teresa Lavelle-Hill, Head of Looked After Children’s Services
Nicola McGeown, Operations Manager 0-11 Family Support
Annie Petch, Democratic Services Officer

Chris Makin, Unit Manager, Old Roar House
Graham Beale, Unit Manager, Rose Cottage and Homefield Cottages
Helen Simmons, Unit Manager, Sorrell Drive
Anthony Julyan, Operations Manager, Sorrel Drive
Martin Sutcliffe, Unit Manager, Lansdowne Secure Unit
Janet Osborne, Unit Manager, Acorns, 130 Dorset Road

23. MINUTES

23.1 RESOLVED – to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2007 as a correct record.

24. REPORTS

24.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

25. APOLOGIES

25.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dowling.

26. CARE PROCEEDINGS – A NEW APPROACH

26.1 The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services which informed it of the implications arising from the plans to replace the ‘Protocol for Judicial Case Management in Public Law Children Act Cases’ with a new practice direction from April 2008 alongside the revision of Children Act Guidance, Volume 1.

26.2 The Panel requested that an update report be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel in one year which would also provide information on the effect the new protocols have had on children and parents and the support they received from East Sussex County Council.

26.3 The Panel expressed concern over the increased fee for applying for an interim court order and agreed that it was not acceptable without greatly improved performance, which could include installing equipment for a video link so that orders could be requested without the need to travel to court. The Panel was advised that the fee was currently open to feedback and our legal department were challenging it.

26.4 RESOLVED to (1) note the report; and

(2) request an update report to the Corporate Parenting Panel in one year to include information on the effect the new protocols have had on children and parents and the support they received from East Sussex County Council

27. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STATISTICS

27.1 The Panel noted:

- A slight increase in the number of Looked After Children with an overall reduction in number since December 2006.
- A growing number of Looked After Children had been placed in-house which has had a positive impact on the budget
- A significant drop in the number of children placed for adoption. An analysis had been carried out which showed the drop in number did reflect the national picture; and courts had a reluctance to give an adoption order until kinship, residence orders and special guardianship options had been considered. The Panel noted that the statistics did not provide information on the number of children placed with residence orders and requested that all future reports under this item include a covering report providing information showing the number of children placed with residence and special guardianship orders.
- A report by the Director of Children's Services on children at risk had shown an increase in the number of children on the child protection register however provision had been made for additional resources in 2009.

27.2 RESOLVED – to (1) note the statistics; and

(2) request a covering report to the Looked After Children Statistics at future meetings, to provide statistical information on the number of children placed with residence and special guardianship orders.

28. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

28.1 RESOLVED - to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the remaining items on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in category 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to any individual. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

29. OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS

29.1 The Panel considered the following Ofsted Inspection Reports

- (i) Acorns, Dorset Road
- (ii) Homefield Cottages
- (iii) Lansdowne Secure Unit
- (iv) Old Roar Children's Home

29.2 RESOLVED – to note the inspection reports.

30. CHILDREN'S HOME REGULATIONS 1991, REGULATION 33: INSPECTION REPORTS

30.1 The Panel considered inspection reports for September, October and November 2007 for the following children's homes:

- (i) Acorns and Lansdowne (Dorset Road)
- (ii) The Bungalow, Sorrel Drive
- (iii) Lansdowne Secure Unit

30.2 The Panel expressed concern that the Unit had recently lost all telephone communication temporarily. The Panel was advised that the landline was diverted to a mobile phone to ensure a limited service was provided; however the internet connection was unavailable for a week. The Panel requested that the Deputy Director, Children and Families investigate whether the NGN telephone system could be extended to the children's homes to avert this problem in the future.

- (iv) Old Roar Children's Home
- (v) Homefield Cottages
- (vi) Rose Cottage

30.3 RESOLVED – to (1) note the reports; and

(2) request that the Deputy Director, Children and Families establish if the NGN telephone system could be extended to include the Children's Homes.