

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee: 24 March 2010

Subject: Consultation on the West Dunbartonshire Corporate Parenting Strategy

1. Purpose

1.1 This report seeks to draw to the attention of Members of the Committee, the draft West Dunbartonshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and to seek the views of Members on the Strategy.

2. Background

2.1 In September 2008 the Scottish Government published the document "These Are our Bairns – A Guide for Community Planning Partnerships on Being a Good Corporate Parent". The guidance acknowledges the historically poor outcomes for children who have been Looked After and stresses the key role that local authorities have as corporate parents, and the vital contribution of Community Planning partners as members of the wider corporate family.

2.2 As outlined in the Guide, Corporate Parenting operates at the strategic, operational and individual level. The three key elements are:

- i) the statutory duty on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people who are Looked After by them, and a duty on other agencies to co-operate with Councils in fulfilling that duty;
- ii) co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life, and taking a strategic, child-centred approach to service delivery;
- iii) shifting the emphasis from 'Corporate' to 'Parenting' by developing activities to promote and support the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from infancy to adulthood. The local authority generally delegates this function to those providing day to day care for the child or young person.

2.3 The definition of a 'good corporate parent' from the Guide is as follows:

- Accepting responsibility for the Council's Looked After children and young people;
- Making their needs a priority;
- Seeking for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

2.4 A paper on Corporate Parenting and the plans to develop a Corporate Parenting Strategy was approved at the Council meeting of 25 February 2009.

3. Main Issues

3.1 In order to meet obligations in relation to Corporate Parenting, West Dunbartonshire set up a Corporate Parenting Executive Group chaired by the Chief Executive, supported by senior officers from all Council departments. This group met to establish the vision for Corporate Parenting for West Dunbartonshire Council and to oversee the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

3.2 The Executive Group was supported by the Corporate Parenting Implementation Group and a range of short life working groups.

3.3 The draft Corporate Parenting Strategy for West Dunbartonshire currently focuses on the roles and responsibilities of Elected Members and the Council. Further work will be required in the future to develop the Strategy to encompass all Community Planning partners.

3.4 The Executive Group took the decision to consult on the Strategy with Elected Members through the formal committee structure. Consultation will also go ahead through Directorate meetings and with the Corporate Management Team.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 The development of the Strategy has been supported by the Corporate Parenting Development Officer. This is a temporary post funded by additional Scottish Government resources which will come to an end in February 2010. The Corporate Parenting Strategy will be implemented by Council personnel.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy will be implemented within Council resources. There are no financial implications stemming from this report.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The Council is required to develop a Corporate Parenting Strategy and to meet its statutory obligations in relation to children and young people who are Looked After. Failure to carry out this duty effectively would be a risk to the reputation of the Council.

7. Conclusions and Officers' Recommendations

- 7.1 The West Dunbartonshire Corporate Parenting Strategy has been developed to articulate the Council's responsibility as a corporate parent, with specific regard to Looked After children and young people. There is a commitment in the Strategy to ensuring that every child and young person in the care of the Council has the opportunity to achieve the outcomes that we would wish for every child. The Corporate Parenting Executive Group has agreed to consult with service committees of the Council prior to presenting the Strategy to the full Council. This report presents the opportunity for Members of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee to express their views on the West Dunbartonshire Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 7.2 Members are asked to consider the West Dunbartonshire Corporate Parenting Strategy and give approval for the Corporate Parenting Executive Group to take account of consultation responses from Council service committees and submit a final draft of the Corporate Parenting Strategy for approval by full Council in March 2010.

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Appendices: Appendix A - West Dunbartonshire Corporate Parenting Strategy

Background Papers: "We Can and Must Do Better": Information for Elected Members on Looked After Children and Young People in West Dunbartonshire

Wards Affected: All Wards