

<b>Report of:</b>	Executive Director of Children’s Services: Sue Butcher Deputy Mayor and Lead Member for Children’s Social Care: Councillor Antony High
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive - 16 March 2021
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<b>Subject:</b>	The Corporate Parenting Strategy
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**Summary**

<b>Proposed decision</b>
That Executive ratifies and supports the Corporate Parenting Strategy

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Key decision:</b>	<b>Confidential:</b>	<b>Is the report urgent?</b>
Information	No	No	No

<b>Contribution to delivery of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan</b>		
<b>People</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Business</b>
<p>We will contribute to promote the welfare of our children, young people and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm, abuse and neglect.</p> <p>We will transform children’s services to allow more families to stay together where it is safe for them to do so and reduce the need for children to be looked after by us</p>		

<b>Ward(s) affected</b>
All wards affected but not directly.

## **What is the purpose of this report?**

1. The purpose of this report is to ask Executive to ratify and support the Corporate Parenting Strategy

## **Why does this report require a Member decision?**

2. The Corporate Parenting Strategy was accepted by the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) in December 2020. However, the CPB does not have any decisions making powers so the strategy is being brought to Executive for ratification and support with particular regard to the role of members as corporate parents.

## **Report Background**

3. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the vision and action plan for how the Council and our partners will support children and young people who are in our care, and our care leavers, to achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives. Transforming our approach to corporate parenting is a key priority for the Council as part of our wider improvement programme across our whole system of support for children and young people in Middlesbrough. Our progress in delivering positive change for children in care and care leavers is a particular focus for our Strategic Multi-Agency Improvement Board, with support and challenge from our colleagues in DfE and Ofsted.
4. At a time when all children and young people face huge personal, social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities, we know that children in care and care leavers can face significant additional obstacles as they grow up and move towards independence and adult life. We also know from experience that with the right support, encouragement, love and nurturing, that children who have come through our care system will make a unique and invaluable contribution to all aspects of society, our culture, our economy and our communities. It is the responsibility of corporate parents to create the conditions for these vulnerable children and young people to thrive and excel in their lives.
5. In order to most efficiently and effectively coordinate our activity, the Corporate Parenting strategy has been combined with our 'Permanency' and 'Sufficiency' plans for children and young people. This reflects the strong belief that improvements to social work practice are central to driving more effective strategic commissioning of placements. We are confident that the delivery of the priorities set out in the strategy will deliver progressively improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers. It is our ambition that an increasingly cost-effective system of support will enable us to refocus our resources towards early help and prevention for children and young people on the edge of care. Within this context, our Corporate Parenting strategy is critically aligned with the Futures for Families Programme in Middlesbrough (part-funded by the Department for Education).
6. The strategy is directly informed and shaped by the active involvement of local children and young people who have contributed their views and ideas based on their personal experiences, their aspirations and ambitions. This includes outputs from the work undertaken by our partnership with the innovative national Care Leaders' organisation to develop our vision 'Middlesbrough Children Matter'. This has directly influenced our principles and priorities. Importantly, the governance and performance management arrangements for corporate parenting will ensure that children and young people will be engaged with the ongoing monitoring of our performance and will be persistently challenging the Council and our partners to deliver on the priorities we have agreed.

## **What decision(s) are being asked for?**

7. That the Executive ratifies and supports the Corporate Parenting Strategy

## **Why is this being recommended?**

8. Devising and implementing the Corporate Parenting Strategy and subsequently evidencing its impact is a fundamental part of delivering Middlesbrough's Children's Services improvement plan and therefore improving outcomes for our Children who are looked after (CLA). There is a clear expectation that whenever a decision is made the question is asked 'Is good enough for my Child?'
9. CLA will not achieve permanence i.e. move to their forever homes in as timely a way as possible. This will increase the number of CLA and Children's Services will be perpetuating the poor practice that was at the centre of the Ofsted rating of inadequate in December 2019.
10. There will not be a plan to ensure that children can be cared for in placements that meets their needs. This will impact on the availability of placements. This will affect planning for CLA, which will adversely affect their outcomes.
11. The number of CLA will rise which adversely impacts on children and council resources.

## **Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended**

12. If the strategy is not ratified by Executive then there would not be a strategic overview of the work with Children who are Looked After and Care Leavers. This may leave them vulnerable and impact on their life chances.

## **Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)**

### ***Legal***

13. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children in care, and care leavers. Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Guidance on the Act highlights that corporate parenting is a 'task that must be shared by the whole local authority and partner.
14. There is also an expectation from the Department of Education that Sufficiency Strategies are published on a council website. This will be done on the Children's Services' Middlesbrough Children Matter website if the strategy is ratified.

### ***Financial***

15. The report suggests that there are not any issues from a financial point of view. All of the demand figures in here indicate a long-term downward trend, which is consistent with our MTFP and budget strategy.

## ***Policy Framework***

16. The report aligns with the policy framework and the Children's Services Improvement Plan

## ***Equality and Diversity***

17. Although Children Looked After and Care Leavers are not protected groups they council has a significant responsibility towards them as their corporate parent.

## ***Risk***

18. If the strategy is not ratified it will adversely affect the Children's Services' progress against the Improvement Plan. This will be brought to the attention of the Department of Education and if the risk continues, it could ultimately lead to a decision that Middlesbrough loses control of its Children's Services.

## **Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)**

19. The actions are set out in the strategy and in the Improvement Plan, which is monitored by exception at the Multi-Agency Strategic Improvement Board.

## **Appendices**

The Corporate parenting Strategy 2020-2023

## **Background papers**

None

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