

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON THURSDAY 13
NOVEMBER 2014**

County Councillors:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| * I Grundy (Chairman) | * T Higgins |
| S Barker | * P Honeywood |
| * D Blackwell | R Howard |
| * J Chandler | * A Jackson |
| M Danvers | * M McEwen |
| * K Gibbs | * C Seagers |
| * A Goggin | * J Young |
| * C Guglielmi | |

Non-Elected Voting Members:

Mr R Carson

Ms M Uzzell

*present

The following Members were also present:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Councillor K Bobbin | Items 5, 6 & 7 |
| Councillor M Mackrory | Item 5 only |
| Councillor A Naylor | Items 5, 6 & 7 |

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Robert Fox | Scrutiny Officer |
| Matthew Waldie | Committee Officer |

The meeting opened at 10.00 am.

1. Apologies and Substitutions

The Chairman reported the receipt of the following apologies:

| Apologies | Substitutes |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Cllr S Barker | |
| Cllr M Danvers | Cllr J Young |
| Cllr R Howard | |
| Mr R Carson | -- |

The Chairman noted that Councillors Page and Wood were no longer members of the Committee. He welcomed Councillors Gibbs, Goggin and Guglielmi as new Committee members.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee meeting of 4 September 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. Questions from the Public

There were no questions registered from Members of the Public.

5. Essex Cares – Annual Report

Members received the Impact Report, PAF/27/14. The Chairman welcomed Liz Chidgey, managing director, and Peter Martin, non-executive director, Essex Cares Ltd, and invited them to address the meeting.

Ms Chidgey drew attention to the main points set out in a tabled presentation.

- The overall vision for the company is one that provides an integrated service to customers, with an emphasis on being part of the community
- It covers all of Essex (barring Southend and Thurrock) and all of West Sussex; this includes both urban and rural areas
- The Hub and Spoke “Community Wellbeing Centre” is a fairly new concept that involves working within communities to provide a comprehensive service. For example, it caters for all customers’ caring needs. It also draws in and involves many parties
- The Hub @ Harlow is the blueprint for this “hub and spoke “ model, providing a range of services under one roof, but also serving as a base for work going out into the community
- There is a process in hand to obtain feedback from both customers and from staff
- Essex Cares had expected 5,200 Reablement referrals in 2013, but actually received 6,680, and the work is expanding
- It is an outcome based approach, looking to get people to maximise their independence, assets and control over their own circumstances
- ECL is one of the largest equipment providers in the country, providing equipment for children as well as adults, some of which is very specialised. The company holds over 4,000 core products and makes 100,000 deliveries per annum. This requires careful planning, as demand varies a lot at different times of the year and according to specific needs.
- The sensory service provides support for those with hearing and/or sight loss; it had 415 referrals in the last financial year
- There are 29 wellbeing and activity centres, which provide a range of activities, including help for older people and those with learning difficulties
- There are 20 work based training centres that aim to maximise potential in vocational training and in providing help with finding work activity of some kind for those who are unable to carry out normal employed activities.

Members then made some comments, and Mr Martin and Ms Chidgey responded to questions:

- There is a good deal of sharing of information, but what is needed is a greater understanding of the agencies and the recognition that information should be shared if it is in the best interest of the individual
- In response to a suggestion that the company's annual accounts were not easy to find on the website, Mr Martin agreed to look into this and that appropriate action would be taken
- Essex Cares Ltd has five dormant subsidiary companies, one of which is ECL Trading and there are no plans to use it at present
- £5.3 million is listed under Debtors; this is incidental to the timing, as this represents a snapshot of the situation at a particular date. 90% of debt is to the County Council
- A dividend of £1million has been paid to the County Council over the 2013-14 period. The ECC benefits in two ways from its arrangements with Essex Cares. First, it works along with the Commissioners to provide the service at a best value rate cost – so, in effect, directly benefiting the ECC Budget. Secondly, the surplus returns to ECC according to how it would like the money invested
- £2 million additional costs are shown in the Annual Report. There are three main reasons for this: 1, six new contracts were put in place in the course of the year; 2, a higher than expected level of activity, calling for increased frontline staffing; 3, investment in new systems
- With regard to quantifying savings, Essex Cares is working with Health Providers in particular, to assess three elements: 1, actual costs and where benefits arise; 2, the quality of the service; and 3, the efficiency in dealing with demand
- The contract with West Sussex was obtained by open procurement exercise. Essex Cares regards Essex as its principal concern, particularly in respect of health & social care provision, but it may look to see if other, neighbouring authorities may provide further opportunities to expand
- The question of the company's ability to reinvest money is one that should be addressed to the County Council.
- Two particular financial needs for Essex Cares are: 1, clarity from ECC Shareholders on what financial returns it requires; 2, clarity on a long-term policy on how profit should be reinvested, to enable it to react quickly to a changing market. Regular meetings are held with stakeholders and the Shareholder (ie ECC)
- Although Southend has no contract with Essex Cares, there is some cross-border activity. A number of people come to deal with Essex Cares direct – 517 in 2013, and almost 500 already in 2014
- Transparency is becoming increasingly important – as expressly required by the Care Act – and so individual spending will have to be clearer and more careful records will have to be kept
- There is a need to reduce the costs of delivering care and to reduce the number of staff at managerial level – perhaps by 10% of the workforce. Views of staff have been sought during the current period of consultation, so that better working practices will be found. Certain principles underpin this process. Greater efficiency is not just about reducing costs but also involves maintaining quality and improving the utilisation of staff. The intention is to have a greater skillbase, more integrated working and to make necessary changes at management level. It is a complex process.

- The company has received very good feedback on what it does and who does it. They employ various techniques for getting customer feedback, eg surveys and forums. There is also a Director at Board level responsible for quality and customer feedback
- The rapid response service, which was created in response to a specific demand in the West of the County, has now been rolled out across the county. We are currently providers in Mid-Essex. The intention is to bring rapid response into the reablement team and to fully integrate it into the service
- Essex Cares aims to maximise its customers' potential in all aspects of their lives and, with this in mind, only deals with reputable firms who take a similar ethical stance, to provide work opportunities for Essex Cares customers
- In response to specific questions on how the company's finances seemed to have declined recently, Mr Martin clarified certain points:
 - over the 5-year period, the company made £6 million profit, with £5 million being reinvested and £1 million being given to ECC as a dividend
 - it is now back in operating profit
 - the recent loss came from new contracts along with unexpected rising costs
 - reserves, which were held over from previous years, were used to address the loss
- The County Council is represented by Cllr John Spence on the Board, and Jonathan Coyle, Director for Traded Development, as a non-executive director.

In conclusion, Mr Martin confirmed that he and Ms Chidgey would be happy to attend further Committee meetings, and he particularly invited Members to visit the Company, to see first hand how it operates.

The Chairman thanked Mr Martin and Ms Chidgey for their contribution. He acknowledged the enormous changes taking place in the health and social care sector, and the good work carried out by the staff of Essex Cares.

6. Essex Safeguarding Adults Board – Annual Report 2013-14

Members received the Annual Report of the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board, 2013-14, PAF/28/14. The Chairman welcomed Paul Bedwell, business manager, Safeguarding, and invited him to address the meeting.

Mr Bedwell drew Members' attention to a few salient points:

- The role of the Board is to ensure Safeguarding works efficiently across the County. Inter alia, this involves working with certain interested partners (eg NHS, CCGs and Police). The Care Act has served to focus the Board's activities, and has created a new statutory duty to work with these partners
- Much work has been carried out on training and development, using DVDs and e-learning as well as more traditional courses
- An audit was conducted on those key statutory organisations working with adults. The results were mostly good, although some areas needed more work (eg child sex abuse and honour-based abuse). The audit has just been sent out to relevant parties for this year and results will be available

on the website from January 2015. Mr Bedwell hopes to see improvement this year

- Performance is a key area. They want to look at safeguarding from a broader perspective, eg considering crime data from the police and community safety information
- The Board has carried out a governance review, to ensure that it complies with Care Act requirements
- Another area is that of Serious Case Review systems. Following a lack of serious case review activity during 2013-14, there has been an increase in activity here; six have come forward in the past three months.

Mr Bedwell then responded to comments and questions from Members, as appropriate:

- The Board does cover a wide range of activities – it picks up most issues through its partnership agencies (eg, Police); but it is keen to get feedback from local communities
- Certain bodies, such as Housing Associations and Independent Care Providers, have expressed an interest in assessing their safeguarding levels, and this is an area the Board are interested in developing. A web-based audit system is used, which makes it both more widely available, and it carries out analysis of the figures as well
- District and Borough councils have become more active in the last few years. They have been training certain individuals, who are then able to train others. There is also a move toward taking it more to a grassroots level, in leisure centres, for example
- The Safeguarding Adults Helpline is for those who may have a concern but are not confident about contacting the police. It provides information and advice, and it receives approximately 600 calls per year
- Members then made some comments, and Mr Martin and Ms Chidgey responded to questions:
- Making people aware of the Safeguarding Board's activities across the County is challenging, especially in the light of the cost involved. Various campaigns have been used, viz billboards, cinema and buses. A communications officer has now been recruited to assist in this process. Mr Bedwell is always pleased to speak about the Safeguarding Board and its work.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bedwell and hoped that he would have plenty of opportunities to inform people and organisations of the work of the Board.

7. New operating model for the Youth Service

Members received report PAF/29/14 on the progress the Youth Service has made since February 2014. Cllr Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, and Michael O'Brien, Head of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning, were in attendance.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Cabinet Member had been asked to report back on the progress made by the new operating model, six months after presenting it to the Committee. He welcomed Cllr Gooding and Mr O'Brien and invited them to address the meeting.

Cllr Gooding began by pointing out to Members that the consultation that had already taken place had been very helpful, and had led to a more practical approach. He intended to seek out the views of young people again, and would be prepared to report back to the Committee again, if wanted.

Mr O'Brien took Members briefly through the main areas/activities covered by the Youth Service:

- 1) The Senior Leadership Team has been reduced from 9 to 5 people, with some of these being new
- 2) The Service Redesign is underway, with a staff consultation being undertaken at present. The outline business plan suggested there would be a reduction of 25 FTE; this is more likely to be 17-18
- 3) Youth Work Outcomes. Members were referred to Appendix B of the paper, which set out Outcomes against Indicators and Measures. This aims to be a meaningful way of looking at and articulating good outcomes from what is being done. Work is ongoing on producing actual numbers on these. One positive outcome noted so far is the significant number of people who have expressed an interest in working with young people.
- 4) Duke of Edinburgh Award. Essex is consulting with schools, colleges and relevant parties to operate the scheme while retaining it within the Youth Service
- 5) Young Carers – the procurement process has started to provide young carers' provision in all 12 districts across the County. Assessments will be carried out by the Targeted Youth Adviser team. They are aiming to ramp up the number of these assessments
- 6) Youth Strategy Groups – these are generally seen to have been successful overall, although a few are still finding their feet, and some have membership issues
- 7) National Citizen Service scheme has been very successful, creating a positive view of young people. Essex is hoping to build this up during the year, and the ambition is for all Year 11's to participate in time
- 8) The TCHC contract has not been as successful as had been hoped. A different approach is now being sought: £3 million funding through social impact bonds. Essex is in the final short list for projects being considered
- 9) Young Inspectors. Several groups are already trained, to inspect services for young people, and more are being trained.

Cllr Gooding and Mr O'Brien then responded to Members' questions:

- 1) Senior Leadership Team. This is made up of 4 Commissioners and 1 Operating Delivery Manager. The Commissioners are each responsible for different elements: 1, Curriculum and delivery of provision; 2, Health & Safety, Safeguarding and Business Continuity; 3, Accreditation, Learning & Development; 4, Line management of district based commissioners.
- 2) Service Redesign. The reduction to a likely 17.89 has been achieved by some of the savings this year that have left the Service in a better position. The emphasis is on saving costs, not necessarily reducing posts.
- 3) Youth work Outcomes. These are determined by the district based commissioners and would be broad in scope – eg any assessment of outcomes from "Rock School" would not be limited just to musical development, but would look at elements such as impact on an individual's

self-esteem or ability to deal with social situations. This applies to all groups (from bell-ringing groups to education sessions in sexual health)

- 4) Duke of Edinburgh Scheme. Cost neutrality will be achieved by charging schools for the service (at present it costs them virtually nothing). It normally would cost a school about £1,000 per annum to obtain a licence from the Scheme, whereas Essex has borne most of the cost in the past. In future the intention is to charge a slightly reduced rate.
- 5) Young Carers. There are three groups external to the Council, with the rest run by the Council; in future, all will be external. Historically, often the assessment would overestimate the service needed, so committing Essex to providing more than was required. So in future the assessments will all be carried out in house, and so will be more carefully managed.
- 6) Youth Strategy Groups. With regard to the provision of youth services, it was noted that the stated aim of the new scheme had been for 100% of provision to have been through 'community capacity building' – ie through the working of local young people alongside youth workers. When the scheme was introduced, the proportion was 30%; it is now about 68%. Mr O'Brien acknowledged that this was short of the target, but it did represent progress. Furthermore, a further 131 community based groups were now in existence, which had not been there at the outset, which impacted on these percentages.
- 7) National Citizen Service. It was suggested that this should be given particular attention when this was next considered by the Committee.
- 8) TCHC. The initial percentage return was 11% and this has only risen to 14-15%. This is not due to the inability of Essex to deliver against the contract, but because the provider has over-estimated its ability to provide funding. The process of getting funding through the Youth Engagement Fund has been very complicated, but they hope to know the outcome of their application by Christmas.

It was noted that, although the Consultation Reserve had not yet been drawn on, it was likely that approximately £0.5 million would be drawn from it in due course.

In response to the suggestion that £800 thousand had been taken out of the budget at the most recent Cabinet meeting, Mr O'Brien pointed out that £1 million has been set aside to fund Youth work, as follows:

£200 k to improve the IT infrastructure in youth centres

£300 k to improve buildings

£500 k to support capital projects.

He was unaware of any of this being taken out of this pot. The Cabinet Member agreed to confirm the precise position.

When queried about the impact of the change from having "youth workers" to having "district based youth commissioners", Mr O'Brien pointed out that their workload had expanded, as they were no longer simply based in youth centres but were now out in the community, working with local people and liaising with other youth workers to deliver a better service.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Gooding and Mr O'Brien for their input and asked that they return in May 2015 to provide the Committee with a further update.

8. Updates from Task & Finish Groups

Members received a brief oral report on the status of Task & Finish Groups:

Commissioning Services for Young People. Cllr Naylor will be joining this Group. Next meeting date to be confirmed.

Carers. Next meeting confirmed as 28 November.

Educational Attainment. A group of Young Essex Assembly members provided input at the last meeting (13 October) and these will be fed into the Group's final report. The Committee is awaiting a briefing pack from the Educational Commissioners.

Cllr Grundy added that HOSC had invited a member of this Committee to sit on their Obesity Task & Finish Group. Member to be confirmed.

9. Date of next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting:

Thursday 15 January 2015, in Committee Room 1.

The meeting closed at 12:25 pm.

Chairman