

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON THURSDAY 4
SEPTEMBER 2014**

County Councillors:

* I Grundy (Chairman)	* R Howard
* S Barker	A Jackson
* D Blackwell	M McEwen
* J Chandler	M Page
* M Danvers	* C Seagers
* T Higgins	A Wood
* P Honeywood	

Non-Elected Voting Members:

* Mr R Carson	Rev R Jordan
* Mr M Christmas	Ms M Uzzell
*present	

The following Members were also present:

Councillor K Bobbin	
Councillor A Brown	Items 5, 6 & 7
Councillor T Cutmore	
Councillor R Madden	Items 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 A Jackson	
Cllr M McEwen	
Cllr M Page	
Cllr A Wood	
Rev R Jordan	--

The Committee noted that Cllr Roger Lord had resigned as a county councillor and so was no longer a member of the Committee.

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 10 July 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. Questions from the Public

There were no questions registered from Members of the Public.

5. Member visits to care homes

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Terry Cutmore and Councillor Anne Brown, Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care, Public Health and Wellbeing. Councillor Cutmore was invited to address the meeting.

Cllr Cutmore began by suggesting there were three prime benefits to Members from making visits to residential homes:

- They fostered relationships at a local level
- They provided feedback on the homes, from staff, residents and their families
- They raised and addressed issues of concern.

Although the responsibility for overall standards in homes lies with the Care Quality Commission, the Members' remit is to ensure a good quality of life for residents and to see if they are treated with appropriate dignity and respect.

Members made several points:

- In response to one Member, who pointed out that on one visit she had been asked by the manager why she was there, it was suggested that no staff in homes should have this attitude; they should feel perfectly at ease with such a visit
- It was suggested that visits would best be made unannounced, as there would inevitably be a measure of sanitisation otherwise. The point was noted, but Councillor Cutmore suggested this was not the ideal approach. Visits should be organised through the County Council; in return, Members would receive a briefing on the home, which would highlight any issues or concerns. Consulting relevant CQC reports was also recommended
- Another suggestion was that any visit would be too brief to get a full picture of everything going on at the home. Again, the point was noted, but it was pointed out that it was possible to catch a flavour of what is happening, to sense feelings and undercurrents within a home, in even a short time. A Member could only serve as another pair of eyes and of ears and could report on what they observed.
- Members were informed that their comments on their home visits were on occasions redacted by Councillor Bill Dick, District Councillor at Castle Point and member of HOSC. One Member questioned the protocol here and Councillor Brown agreed to look into this further.

- Councillor Cutmore confirmed that Members would shortly be circulated with details of homes and would be given appropriate support in respect of making visits.

6. Urgent business – Statement on Rotherham abuse case

Councillor Dick Madden, Cabinet Member for Families and Children, addressed the meeting.

Referring to recent developments in the case involving the sexual exploitation of children in the care of Rotherham Social Services, Councillor Madden confirmed that no Essex looked after children were being cared for by Rotherham during this period. At present, there are some, with particular needs, who are housed outside Essex; their situation is reviewed every three months.

Although Essex must not be complacent, Councillor Madden believes that Essex has appropriate systems in place to help it to avoid the problems experienced by Rotherham. For example, many meetings are held with relevant agencies, especially the Police, and there is an extensive training package in use, which helps to raise awareness of these issues. The number of investigations being carried out has increased. The Safeguarding Reference Group will consider the report on the Rotherham case at its next meeting, which will be attended by Paul Secker, Director for Safeguarding. And once the Group has considered it, Councillor Madden will bring it to this Committee, if the Committee wishes. The Chairman confirmed he would liaise with Councillor Madden over this.

The Cabinet Member pointed out that Essex had moved on considerably over the past few years and he will try to make the public more aware of this.

In response to a query from a Member, the Cabinet Member confirmed he would consider the issues raised by the recent Aysha King case.

7. Social Impact Bond funded Multi-Systemic Therapy

Members received report PAF/22/14 on the progress and outcomes to date of the Social Impact Bond (SIB) funded Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST). Cllr Madden and Tanya Gillett, Head of Youth Offending, were in attendance.

Ms Gillett introduced the item by reminding members that using an SIB is a way of raising funds that statutory services may not otherwise be able to find. It is a relatively new concept, involving up-front funding by a third sector provider, which is paid off by the subsequent savings made by the Council. The programme funded by the bond targets those children most likely to end up in the care system and uses MST, which has already undergone substantial trials in the USA, Australia and across the United Kingdom. It is controlled by MST Inc., which provides training and evaluation.

One downside is that there are some exclusions, eg those on the autistic spectrum. However, as this programme is part of a menu of services, those

affected by autism are still dealt with. And Essex has asked MST Inc to challenge these assumptions and Essex hopes to be able to influence their thinking in due course.

The estimated savings will be in the order of £10 million. £3.1 has been put up by the investors to set up the system, and the amount Essex will pay out has been capped at £7 million. There has been considerable scrutiny of the financial side, involving Cllr Madden and several senior officers. It is quite complex and recruitment of staff is not easy, as staff are required to be on demand around the clock. Furthermore, Essex no longer has a large in-care population, so those who remain tend to be very challenging.

However, there is much interest in what we are doing from local authorities across the country and the programme is evolving to produce positive outcomes for the children, Essex and the providers.

Ms Gillett responded to some questions and concerns aired by members.

Relating to actual numbers, at present 60 families go through this programme per year. As this has now been running for a full year, of the 60 families so far, 20% have disengaged themselves from the programme and 10% have still had children going into care. This means that children have not been taken into care in about 40 families where this had seemed likely.

The intervention is family based; the teams work with parents to recognise problems and work out ways of dealing with them. Goals are often relatively simple, with the intention of achieving greater ends.

Staff themselves have varied skills. They are not necessarily social workers, but have received specific training from MST Inc, and undergo ongoing training and supervision from them.

There are two teams, each comprising four therapists, a team manager and a business administrator. They have four cases each at any one time, on a rolling basis.

Payment is based on £120 per day of care avoided. When each case closes, there is a three-month monitoring period, to ensure that the child has not subsequently gone into care.

This is run separately to the Government's 'Troubled Families' scheme, which is managed through the County Council's own Family Solutions programme.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Madden and Ms Gillett and asked that the Committee should receive an update on this scheme in 12 months' time.

8. Occupational Therapy

Members received report PAF/23/14 with regard to progress on improvements to the Occupational Therapy service. Cllr Anne Brown, Cabinet Member for Adult

Social Care, Public Health and Wellbeing, Mike Boyle, Executive Director for Adult Operations, and Jayne Smith, Head of Adult Operations, were in attendance.

Cllr Brown introduced the item by pointing out that recent changes implemented in this area have had a dramatic impact, from having people on waiting lists for over a year to be assessed, to the current position, where nobody has to wait more than 28 days.

Mr Boyle explained that practices have changed over the past three years. Many occupational therapists no longer work directly for the County Council, so are able to carry out their assessments in their own time. This has increased the number being carried out, from 4,500 to 7,000 per annum. Essex was no longer the bottleneck it once had been.

In response to a member's query on the number of repeat assessments, Mrs Smith confirmed that a long term view was taken and those people who came back to be reassessed were immediately sent to experienced therapists.

In response to another query, Mr Boyle confirmed that the service made no distinction by place of residence. He added that an extra demand for assessments had been created by the move toward shorter hospital stay times. He also confirmed that, with these new practices now well established, he was confident of maintaining this high level of service.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brown, Mr Boyle and Mrs Smith for their positive report. He noted that this Committee had been keen to see improvements in the past and he was pleased to hear that the districts also are cooperating with the County on this.

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that he had been liaising with Communications, with a view to getting this released as a good news story for the Authority.

9. Educational Attainment in Essex

Members received scoping document PAF/24/14 (previously circulated as PAF/19/14). It was suggested that it would be particularly important for the Group to know exactly what powers of intervention the Council retained.

Membership of the Task & Finish Group was agreed as follows:

Cllr Barker
Cllr Bobbin
Cllr McEwen
Mr Carson
Mr Christmas

Monday 13 October at 5.30 pm was proposed as initial meeting date. Time and venue to be confirmed by the Scrutiny Officer.

10. Commissioning Services for Vulnerable People

Members received scoping document PAF/25/14 (previously circulated as PAF/20/14). It was noted that the first task of the Task & Finish Group would be to pare down the terms of reference.

Cllrs Blackwell and Cutmore volunteered as members of the Task & Finish Group. The Scrutiny Officer pointed out that he would liaise with HOSC, about drawing members from that committee. He would also circulate members about potential meeting dates.

11. Carers Strategy

Cllr Cutmore introduced the item by drawing members' attention to the huge contribution carers make to the community – much of which is almost unnoticed and very hard to measure. He had just received a scoping document for this. He suggested two further areas of investigation: benefits advice and the help health professionals could give to carers. He also suggested adding Citizens Advice Bureaux to the number of charitable organisations involved.

The Chairman pointed out that this provided a good opportunity to provide pre-scrutiny feedback to the Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care, Public Health and Wellbeing, for when she considers the Care Bill.

Membership of the Task & Finish Group was agreed as follows:

Cllr Chandler
Cllr Cutmore
Cllr Danvers
Cllr Higgins
Cllr Howard

The Scrutiny Officer would circulate members about potential meeting dates.

12. Scrutiny recommendations tracker and work programme

The Committee noted the updated tracker and work programme, PAF/26/14.

The Committee noted that Ageing Well (page 43 of 52) would be on the agenda for the November meeting

13. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted meeting dates to May 2015:

Thursday 13 November 2014
Thursday 15 January 2015
Thursday 12 March 2015
Thursday 14 May 2015

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Committee Room 1.

The meeting closed at 12:03 pm.

Chairman