

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON MONDAY 7
JANUARY 2013**

County Councillors present:

T Chapman (Chairman)
S Barker (Vice-Chairman)
A Brown
I Grundy
E Hart

T Higgins (Vice-Chairman)
S Hillier
D Morris
T Sargent
J Young

Non-Elected Voting Members present:

Mr R Carson

Rev R Jordan

The following Members were also present:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Councillor J Pike | Items 1-6 |
| Councillor C Riley | Items 1-6 |
| Councillor R Madden | Items 1-8 |

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Graham Redgwell | Governance Officer |
| Matthew Waldie | Committee Officer |

The meeting opened at 10.00 am.

1. Death of Former Member

The Chairman announced with sorrow that Mr Leslie Double, a former County Councillor from Harwich, had passed away at the weekend, following a prolonged illness. She noted that he had been very active in matters concerning the wellbeing of young people. The Committee observed a minute's silence in his memory.

2. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

| Apologies | Substitutes |
|------------------|-------------|
| Cllr R Callender | |
| Cllr J Deakin | |
| Mr S Geddes | -- |

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Barker declared that she is a member of Uttlesford District Council, which may in future contribute funding to Family Solutions.

Councillor Young declared that she is chair of Greenstead Community Association, which owns the premises used by Greenstead Green Children's Centre; and that she also accommodates a Care Leaver.

These were both personal interests.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 December 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Families with Complex Needs

Members received report CYP/01/13, providing information on the development of Family Solutions and the Community Budget Family with Complex Needs programme, including the planned procurement of a targeted volunteer service. The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Alastair Gibbons, Director of Local Delivery - North, Philippa Bull, Head of Locality Commissioning – Mid, and Sharon Longworth, Senior Commissioning Manager. Mr Gibbons then drew Members' attention to a few salient points.

Introduction

The national "Troubled Families" programme aims to help 120,000 families across the country and the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has estimated that 2,200 of these families will be from Essex. It is part funded by the Government, with the balance being sought from local partnerships. Additional funding, based on results and successful outcomes, will also be available.

Three criteria are used in defining "Troubled Families":

- youth crime/antisocial behaviour
- persistent school non-attendance
- adult unemployment.

However, actually identifying families may prove difficult. Of a likely group of 1,800 families, identified on the basis of matching the first two criteria, only 487 (27%) were found to fit the third.

Essex will work with 370 families in the initial phase and is calling its proposal "Family Solutions". There is one team per Quadrant at first, developing into two each, when this activity merges with Families with Complex Needs work, inform October 2013. These teams will be multi-agency, with staffing from district councils, health, and police as well as the County Council. Another feature of this community budgets programme will be the use of volunteers, to provide longer term support to families.

Discussion

Officers responded to a wider range of points made by Members.

Finance. About £1.8 million annually for the Family Solutions element. In the community budgets business case the full proposal is to have 12 teams in 2015 and the full annual cost once completely developed would be £8 million, including input from all partners. However, it may well be that we just develop a smaller programme, staying at 8 teams and thus a smaller volunteer programme as well. The intention is not to seek new money, but to reshape old ways of operating. This is a relatively small figure, compared to the £100 million annual social care budget.

Criteria. Locally, the aim is also to create teams that will deal with *all* families with multiple problems. There will be a particular emphasis on identifying and dealing with problems before they become too significant.

Families' Position. At present, each professional works in his/her own area of expertise; the new arrangements will encourage a more family centred approach; the intention is to give families the opportunity to make changes in their lifestyles, etc, before the imposition of any statutory requirements. Sometimes, even small changes can have a significant impact. Families will be engaged on a voluntary basis without penalty if a family drops out.

Volunteers. The business case referred to a full-year cost of about £1million, to support 1500 volunteers, which was predicated on the full commitment from district councils and other partners. The intention is to aim to start with 250 volunteers over the next two years, to see how this develops. They will be unpaid, but will receive expenses, training and supervision. In time, it is hoped that some of those who have been through the programme will themselves become volunteers.

The intention is to award a contract to an external organisation or organisations experienced in recruiting and supporting volunteers who can work with families and build positive relationships. The contract will be let in 2013 with the first volunteers likely to come through in early 2014.

It will be important to use local volunteers – Essex intends to work closely with local volunteer .

Members made specific enquiries, to be answered subsequent to the meeting, once the specification is clearer:

- How will the effectiveness of volunteers be measured?
- Who will be responsible for their safety?
- How will this recruitment process be managed, (ie to avoid duplication with the recruitment of volunteers for prisons?)

Mr Gibbons reminded the meeting that this is a long-term project and many elements are still being discussed. He agreed to circulate a copy of the draft specification, as it becomes available.

Officers made two particular points, in response to Members' concerns about the position of volunteers. The first is that the full specification for the programme is yet to be worked through; and that this will clarify several aspects of the role. The

second is that the multi-agency staffed teams will form the central core of the programme. The volunteers will operate in a follow-up capacity and their involvement is additional.

Timeframes

With regard to a timeframe, it is envisaged that a family will stay on the programme from between 3 to 12 months. There is no intention to keep any on longer than this as, if no improvement is shown by the end of this period, it is likely that another approach may be needed. Volunteers may be able to work alongside a family for a longer period.

The Chairman asked that Officers return with a progress report in several months' time. In the meantime, all Councillors will receive regular updates on the progress of Community Budgets.

Mr Gibbons, Ms Bull and Ms Longworth left the meeting at this point.

6. Children's Centres

Members received report CYP/02/13, providing an update on the contract award and implementation of the revised service implementation. The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Tim Coulson, Director for Education and Learning, and Carolyn Terry, Interim Lead, Early Years and Childcare Service.

Mrs Terry reminded Members that, since April 2012, delivery of the service from Essex Children's Centres has been managed under four Quadrant-based contracts, which is much more efficient than the previous approach. The Council has the responsibility of securing premises, either through use of their own buildings or by making local lease arrangements. There has been consistent branding, in the signage at the centres, and on the paperwork used.

Over the summer, each Centre received a visit from a local Councillor by Quadrant (Councillors Pike, Madden, Gooding and Riley being involved), which were greatly welcomed by staff..

To date, there have been 31 inspections of Centres, distributed fairly evenly about the Quadrants. For "Overall Effectiveness", 68% of the Centres were rated Good or Outstanding, and none were Inadequate. For "Capacity for Sustained Improvement", 75% were rated Good or Outstanding and again, none were Inadequate.

She drew attention to the specific successes and challenges of each Quadrant and concluded by setting out the Next Steps for the Centres, which include improving internet access for the public, better targeting of resources and raising attainment levels of the Centres themselves. The development of a data sharing protocol across the County is the biggest and most important challenge; it works well within pockets, but ideally should encompass all Centres.

Officers then responded to Members' questions and made the following comments:

- It was confirmed that there are close links with Family Solutions. There is also a volunteering element, which will be part of ongoing discussions.
- Information sharing with the health sector is a priority, particularly relating to pregnant women. It was pointed out that the relationships involved made up the most important element of this. Good practice is another area where Quadrants can and do share information.
- It was noted that HomeStart no longer receives funding from the Children's Centres budget. However, the County Council works with Home Start where possible and encourages other groups to do so. It also encourages local groups to work alongside the national bodies administering the Quadrant contracts.
- Concern was expressed over the potential for segregation created by the policy of targeting certain groups. In response, Mrs Terry pointed out that the Centres do cater for all who wish to use their services but will clearly look to *target* resources on the most appropriate families.
- The number of health visitors across the county has increased recently. Centres have a good working relationship with health visitors and are sharing examples of good working practice
- KPIs. Members requested more information on these. Officers will provide a list of these and will aggregate the figures to give a countywide position. This will be circulated after the meeting.
- The relevance of the "Community Right to Challenge" provisions was queried. Further information on this will be circulated to Members after the meeting. *[Circulated by Governance Officer on 7 January 2013 – GJR]*
- Members are encouraged to visit Centres. Any Member wishing to do so is asked to contact Mrs Terry in the first instance.
- Mrs Terry undertook to speak to two Members regarding specific issues in their electoral divisions.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Terry and Mr Coulson for their input. Members appreciated the changes that have been made and the consequent progress achieved. She asked that they return in the autumn to give another update.

7. Special Educational Needs and Disability T&F Group

Members received a brief oral report from Councillor Higgins, as Chairman of the Task & Finish Group.

Papers had been circulated for the first meeting, which it was hoped would take place in the week commencing 21 January. Further meetings will be held in February and March. Appropriate officer support has been confirmed. A questionnaire had been circulated to Group Members, and it was agreed that it should also be circulated to the full Committee, for Members' information. *[Circulated subsequently by Governance Officer – GJR]*

Subject to one small variation, the Committee agreed the Scoping Document for this work (CYP/03/13), as circulated with the agenda.

8. Safeguarding

Members received an oral report from Councillor Dick Madden, Chairman of the Families Safeguarding Sub-Committee.

The last meeting was held on 20 December 2012. Three items were considered:

- A report from Basildon Hospital on Safeguarding issues. This was followed up by a detailed letter to the Hospital
- A quarterly report on performance. It was noted that performance had improved, for example, in the reduction of outstanding cases
- Review of the Tracker – this shows a reduction in the number of items as, because of the work being carried out, items could be removed as having been resolved..

9. Forward Look

The agenda items already agreed by the Committee for the next two meetings were reaffirmed.

For February 2013 it was agreed that there would be two substantial items:

- Domestic Violence
- Children's Partnership Review.

For March 2013 it was agreed that there would be three substantial items:

- Youth Centres
- Youth Strategy Groups
- YEA work streams.

It was noted that this meeting would probably require an afternoon session to cover all items, and that some representatives of the YEA would be in attendance for some of the time.

10. Date of next meeting

The Committee confirmed the date of the next scheduled meeting as Thursday 7 February 2013. This will be held at 10.00 am in Committee Room 1, with a Members' pre-meeting at 9.30am.

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm.

Chairman