

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON THURSDAY 4 JULY 2013

County Councillors:

* G Butland (Chairman)	* P Honeywood
* A Bayley	* R Howard
* D Blackwell	* N Hume
* K Bobbin	* M McEwen
R Boyce	M McGeorge
* J Chandler	* C Seagers
R Gadsby	* A Wood
* T Higgins	

Non-Elected Voting Members :

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

*present

The following Member was also present:
Councillor V Metcalfe

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Robert Fox	Governance Officer
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 2.00 pm.

1. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Cllr R Boyce	
Cllr R Gadsby	
Cllr M McGeorge	Cllr K Bobbin
Mr M Christmas	--
Rev R Jordan	--

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3. Minutes

a) People and Families Scrutiny Committee

The minutes of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee meeting of 11 June 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

b) Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee

The minutes of the Children and Young People PSC meeting of 7 March 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

c) **Communities and Older People Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the Communities and Older People PSC meeting of 11 April 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Personal Budgets Audit. The Governance Officer informed Members that the Scrutiny Board would decide whether this issue should be taken forward by this Committee or the Audit Committee.

4. Consultation on the closure of The Deanes School, Benfleet

Timing. The Chairman noted that the Committee should aim to produce a report prior to the decision being made; so the target would be late August or early September. Given that the school holidays begin shortly, he decided to bring this meeting forward a week, to permit the scrutiny process to get underway. This will allow the bulk of the evidence to be taken before schools break up.

10 July: Council puts forward its case

17 July: School puts forward its case (venue, the school itself)

29 July: input from local Members

30 July: evidence from Castle Point BC, and possibly from Southend BC.

Witnesses will be asked to provide bullet point summaries of their case before relevant meetings and all Committee Members should receive a copy of these.

It was noted that the process must be open and perceived to be so, as there was some concern among parents that it was a fait accompli.

Make-up of the Task & Finish Group Local Members should not be members of the Group itself, but would have the opportunity to give their input to the process.

In response to a suggestion that perhaps local members would be well placed to be part of the Task & Finish Group, the Chairman pointed that any local Member sitting on the Group could be put in a difficult position, serving both as judge and advocate. He reiterated the importance of public perception of impartiality.

Proposed T&FG Membership:

Cllr Butland (Chairman)

Cllr Higgins and Cllr Hume (experienced Members)

Cllr Chandler and Wood (Members new to the County Council)

Mr Carson (nominated member - parent governor)

It was noted that Mark Christmas, the other school governor Committee member, had originally been proposed, but he lives in the Benfleet area.

5. SEND Scrutiny update

Councillor Higgins informed Members that, although the SEND Task & Finish Group had had little time to scrutinise in the past, it would benefit from more time now. 862 online responses had been received – a good number.

Membership was agreed as follows:

Cllr Higgins (Chairman)
Cllrs Gadsby & Honeywood
Rev Jordan.

With regard to timescales, it was noted that there will be national changes coming into effect in September 2014, but Essex intend to initiate their own changes from autumn 2013, so that certain changes will have filtered through by autumn 2014. The Group will provide a time frame for its work, as well as a strategy document, to the Committee after its first meeting.

6. Outstanding Items

The Committee received report PAF/05/13, which provided an update on the following items:

- 1) Children's Partnership Board
- 2) All Age Disability Strategic Framework

The Committee noted the report.

7. Future Work Programme

Members noted PAF/06/13, which set out the Committee's work programme as a Tracker document. This now served as a "Forward Look".

Task & Finish Group memberships were agreed as follows:

Children in Care

Cllr Hume (Chairman)
Cllrs Blackwell, Gadsby, McEwen & McGeorge
Rev Jordan

Children's Centres and Early Years

Cllr Butland (Chairman)
Cllrs Chandler & McEwen
Mr Carson & Rev Jordan

All Age Disability Framework

Cllr Higgins (Chairman)
Cllrs Blackwell, Gadsby & Wood

Carers Strategy

Cllrs Chandler, Gadsby & Howard

Sensory Services

It was agreed to put this on hold until the autumn.

8. Dates of next meetings

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting:
12 September 2013, Committee Room 1, at 10.00 am.

The meeting closed at 2.50 pm.

Chairman