

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON WEDNESDAY 12
MARCH 2014**

County Councillors:

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

Non-Elected Voting Members:

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

The following Members were also present:

Councillor J Aldridge (<i>item 6</i>)	Councillor I Henderson (<i>item3</i>)
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor D Kendall (<i>item 3</i>)
Councillor A Brown (<i>item 3</i>)	Councillor S Robinson (<i>item 3</i>)
Councillor J Deakin (<i>item 3</i>)	Councillor J Young (<i>item 3</i>)

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Robert Fox	Scrutiny Officer
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 1.00 pm.

1. Apologies and Substitutions

The Chairman reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Rev. R Jordan	

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr T Higgins:

- Board member of Colchester YMCA (*item 3*)
- Part-time carer for an adult with complex needs (*item 5*)
- Trustee of St Mary Magdalene Almshouses, New Town, Colchester (*item 5*)
- Chairman of the Hard of Hearing Sensory Planning Group which received and commented on this consultation (*item 5*)

3. Call-in on Decision on the Youth Service

Members received PAF/07/14, setting out the notification of the call in and the Paper on the New Operating Model for the Youth Service, which was agreed at Cabinet on 25 February 2014.

Before asking those Members calling in the decision to speak, the Chairman invited comments from the public gallery; but there were none.

A. Member 1 making a Call-in (Cllr Danvers)

Councillor Michael Danvers then addressed the meeting. He stated:

- There are inaccuracies in the modelling used. When the Cabinet Member met the Labour Group to clarify the model, the Labour members were not convinced about how comprehensive this was across the county
 - The level of contribution by the voluntary sector is already very high; it is unlikely that large numbers of extra volunteers will come forward
 - The community capacity building will be unable to deliver the “curriculum”. He cited the example of Harlow College, which has taken over the responsibility for delivering education on sexual health, but has struggled to provide a service, which previously had been very well done
 - At present, youth workers provide valuable input on the best use of buildings, which will be lost. Also there are other important elements such as the licensing and insurance of premises that will need appropriate consideration
 - More consultation is needed – a delay of several months is required, to allow all schools to be made fully aware of the proposals and their implications
 - The situation in relation to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, for example, needs to be looked at and assessed
 - An annual review of the position, post implementation, seems inadequate; a six-monthly review should be scheduled into the Scrutiny work programme
 - Another suggestion is that County Council professional youth workers be retained at eight key locations around the county, to ensure that the most vulnerable still have access to these services.
- i) Jack Swan, a member of the Chelmsford Youth Council and Youth Essex Assembly, as second witness, addressed the meeting. He considers these proposals too optimistic:
- Volunteers cannot give the same amount of time as professional workers
 - It takes several years of training to become a fully trained youth worker – but these proposals create an expectation that all these volunteers will take up position immediately
 - There may not be the commitment or the ability to fill the roles currently held by the professionals, e.g. teachers, who are among those best qualified to assist in this process, having been teaching all day, may not be in the best position to do this work in the evenings; nor would they, as

fully employed individuals, normally be able to attend activities usually held during the day, such as those held at drop-in centres.

- ii) Councillor Julie Young, Member for Wivenhoe St Andrew, as second witness, addressed the meeting. She pointed out that many groups use ECC facilities and it was not clear if they would survive if the premises were no longer available. Also, the figures cited in paragraph 8.4 of the paper, suggesting an £800,000 increase in income, were not realistic.
- iii) Councillor Ivan Henderson, Member for Harwich, as third witness, informed the meeting that concerns had already been expressed in Tendring, for example, about how resources were already stretched. A local organisation "Team Talk" did good work but would possibly be left behind if support was withdrawn. He added that neither the schools nor the voluntary sector were consulted about these proposals. He suggested that they should have the evidence first, before reducing the service in this way, to see if these groups would be able to cope, and he suggested that the Committee withhold its decision until further information is received from officers.

B. Members' Questions to the first Caller-in

The Chairman invited Members' questions.

One Member suggested finding ways of achieving the required cost cuts were not easy and asked how else these might be achieved.

- In response Cllr Danvers insisted that the idea of reducing the Youth Service budget from £12 million to £3 million in only a few years was wholly inappropriate
- Cllr Young pointed out that it was not the job of this meeting to find alternatives, but to judge whether this model is viable and sustainable – which in her view it is not. The success of the model relies on several elements, for example, a financial package that requires a level of contribution from schools – but the schools have not been approached about these
- Also, the expected level of increased income is based on a large number of people coming forward; but the numbers were still low (bringing in only £42,000, instead of £800,000)
- At the moment there is no evidence that the voluntary sector will be able to deliver on this
- There are also job losses here, and there will be more, if the schools do not provide funding.

C. Member 2 making a Call-in (Cllr Higgins)

Councillor Theresa Higgins, Member for Parsons Heath & East Gates, then addressed the meeting. Having suggested that the timing of this meeting meant

that most young people would find it difficult to attend, Cllr Higgins raised points relating to two of her stated reasons for call-in:

- Relating to the first, the business case, she only received the business case the preceding Friday, after the Cabinet meeting. This has not given the Committee the opportunity to conduct effective Scrutiny. And under the proposed new operating model on page 37, it reads “Direct delivery will only be maintained ... where there is an organisational appetite and there is a potential for a surplus to be made.” This demonstrates that the new arrangements are already looking at how to make money, which is inappropriate
 - Relating to the fifth, the “Curriculum”, she voiced the concerns of those involved in voluntary work, that volunteers do not have the level of in-depth knowledge or expertise of professional youth workers; and many organisations struggle to find volunteers in any case.
- i) Councillor David Kendall, Member for Brentwood South, as first witness, addressed the meeting. He raised several points:
- He already asked Council that this should be put on hold. He accepts that the contribution made by the voluntary sector is important – but this goes too far
 - It seems extraordinary that Essex should pay out £19 million in consultancy fees over the past three years, whereas it is reducing its Youth budget to £3.4 million, particularly as some other county councils (eg Hertfordshire and Suffolk) are increasing their provision
 - The volunteers themselves have real concerns about whether they will be able to fill the gaps left by the professionals – and once these individuals have gone, their expertise is lost to the Service. Any consideration of the Youth Work Curriculum will show how much there is for the professionals to do, let alone any volunteers. Where will these volunteers come from? How will they be trained? And how will the ongoing service be monitored?
 - This is a very important decision, with a huge potential impact if we get it wrong. The Scrutiny Committee has shown itself able to ask hard questions in the past – eg with regard to the Deanes Consultation – and so it should do so on this occasion.
- ii) Councillor Jude Deakin, Member Chelmsford West, as second witness, addressed the meeting. He raised several points:
- It is hard enough finding people to do this work in any case; the impact of asking people to have to pick up these many threads may result in the loss of some good people
 - The future position of Youth Strategy Groups is unclear – will they continue to have an advisory function, making recommendations to the Cabinet Member or will they move toward a commissioning role? In either case, YSG members rely heavily on the expert input provided by youth workers – which will be lacking. The YSGs may very well find themselves being held responsible for what is perceived to be going wrong in the service

- The timespan for all these changes is very short – with the staff themselves being asked to make suggestions on how these proposals may best be achieved, by the end of March. This is not reasonable.

Drawing on her own experience with young people, as a trampolining coach, Cllr Higgins finished by pointing out that you would not let an untrained person take charge of trampolining coaching, as this would be dangerous; the same applied here – why ask untrained people take over this role, when there are fully trained workers to do the job?

The YSGs' role is a strategic one, not operational; and yet this model pushes them toward the operational side, to which they are not suited. And how will there be monitoring of the YSGs themselves in future?

D. Members' Questions to the second Caller-in

Members had no questions.

E. Response of Cabinet Member

Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, addressed the meeting.

He made several points about the new operating model and the consultation process:

- The Council needs to contain its budget at an acceptable level, and this model is the latest part of a journey begun in 2010. Everybody wants to see a sustainable youth service and these proposals should deliver this
 - In this case, necessity has led to a better solution. There are different needs for different groups, eg some sessions are purely social in nature, others provide help to individuals dealing with certain lifeskills or personal issues. These are all met by this new model and there will be a number of professional youth workers still available.
 - The historical and projected figures show how the work has expanded and should continue to do so: in 2010, 249 youth work sessions were held across the county every week. In 2013 this had risen to 422, and was expected to exceed 500 by 2015
 - The consultation process has been extensive and there has been a very high return rate from young people themselves
 - Regarding provision in Tendring, specifically the work of Team Talk. They have received funding from the local YSG, to employ someone to carry out the work. This demonstrates the significant role of the YSGs, as they provide local knowledge, leading to local needs being met. This package gives greater allowance to the YSGs.
- i) Michael O'Brien, Head of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning, as first witness, addressed the meeting, providing further information and addressing some issues that had been raised:

- The YSGs' role is to identify needs and to make things happen, by engaging all organisations with interests in young people
 - Youth workers will still have a role in galvanising local groups. The County Council will not become merely a landlord but it will assess skills and needs of organisations, will provide guidance and helps with bids. They are hoping to keep buildings open for longer, to produce material for workers and provide training – as they have already been doing for some time
 - The intention is not to sub-contract work out to large organisations, but to base work on local needs, centred on YSGs
 - There is a potential reduction in staff of about 25 (out of 206)
 - The Council has already approached the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme, to see how it may be run. There does seem to be potential to grow this in Essex
 - Regarding sexual health, some youth workers may have training in this area, but there are a number of sexual health professionals, who provide a service
 - Safeguarding is an area that will not be given up; Essex County Council is accountable for this and has given assurances
 - Youth workers are looking at all aspects of what they do at the moment. The result of this exercise will doubtless be that some activities will carry on, very much as before; whereas others will need to be given close scrutiny.
- ii) Tim Coulson, Director for Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning, as second witness, made three brief points:
- The youth service provides a small but still important contribution to the provision of education the round, so conversations have been held with head teachers on the changes
 - The role of the YSGs will be pivotal and so a robust relationship is maintained with them
 - There has been a lot of internal challenge on the deliverability of this. Dr Coulson confirmed that he would be very happy to see a regular scrutiny of the implementation of these proposals.

Councillor Gooding concluded by pointing out that many other local authorities were considering going through this process. Kent had done so already, although they did not do as much as Essex. He also believed regular scrutiny would be good. He added that added that he believed this model was sustainable, provides everything they have in the past, and does so more efficiently.

F. Members' Questions to the Cabinet Member

The Chairman invited questions from Members.

In response to a number of questions, Mr O'Brien and Dr Coulson gave the following responses:

- The voluntary sector has not got the capacity to cope. The model requires commissioning according to local needs and training of individuals accordingly. It is similar to the model already operating with the organisations such as the Scouts, but the County Council provide a level of safeguarding
- There will be a restructuring of senior management shortly (involving nine individuals). The actual number in the current workforce is fluid, but is between 160 and 180. It is not expected that staffing numbers will drop below 150.
- Essex carries out the CRB checks
- Regarding the impact on schools' budgets, Essex is one of a number of providers of a service – schools are under no obligation to accept what is being offered. Across 20 schools offered the service at present, only 6 purchase it; but it will be offered to a greater number of schools in future. The extent of increase will be £2,000 per pupil
- The actual income figure of £42,000 instead of the anticipated £800,000 represented underachievement. Figures are based on discussions held so far, and it was difficult to look very far ahead
- There are already organisations that have fallen below the radar of the existing arrangements – the County Council needs to ensure these are picked up
- These proposals put the emphasis on a community response to the needs of local people; this is likely to involve not only parents but also others who wish to make a practical contribution. The Model is still within the spirit of the Albemarle Report in the 1960s (which sought a shift away from volunteer-led services), as it advocates state support and facilitation of local groups
- This is not an emergency service for young people. It is more about personal development, and a lot of the time involves working alongside other groups as well (eg, sexual health). And If a local YSG identified the need for a venue where young people could do little more than congregate, then the service would try to facilitate the provision of this need
- There are national outcomes, which provide targets for the service. These can be measured against local needs
- The Cabinet Member believed that there is a substantial number of already active volunteers whose work is not acknowledged. He pointed out that this is part of an ongoing process, and the reductions are scheduled over several years, with a reserve in place to ensure they are achieved without detriment to the service in the meantime. He did not believe that anything positive would be achieved by delaying the adoption of the Model by several months.

G. Members' Comments and Decision

Various views were expressed by Members. Particularly, concern was expressed over:

- Scrutiny issues

- Implementation
- The decision making powers of the YSGs
- The financing, especially in relation to the anticipated £800,000
- Ability of the voluntary sector to take this on

However, it was recognised that there was a need for change, and it was felt by some Members that officers were working along the right lines. There is a risk involved and if it were implemented, scrutiny would be required.

It was also pointed out that, unless it were implemented, any views on its ability to deliver, etc, would be speculation.

The Chairman pointed out that it was hard for Members to assess the proposed Plan without evidence, ie without its implementation.

He reminded Members that they had three options before them:

- i. Committee to accept the decision
- ii. Committee to refer it back to the Cabinet (as the decision-taker)
- iii. Committee to refer it back to the Council, with a view to the Council referring it back to Cabinet.

He proposed that Members might consider accepting this decision, but that the Committee must ensure it exercised timely scrutiny on the outcome, based on evidence gathered and presented to it.

A motion that the decision be implemented was proposed and seconded and was carried by 11 votes for, with one against, and one abstention. It was DECIDED that the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning should return to the Committee in October 2014 to give a six-month report on the implementation of the new delivery model. The Chairman pointed out that the Committee would REQUEST the Cabinet Member to attend, as the majority of Committee Members have concerns and doubts about certain aspects of the decision.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.05 pm and reconvened at 3.15 pm.

Councillors Boyce, Danvers and McEwen left the meeting at this point.

4. Minutes

- a) The minutes of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee meeting of 16 January 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.
- b) The minutes of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee meeting of 4 February 2014 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. Overview of 2013 Educational Achievement in Essex

Members received report PAF/08/14 on the educational outcomes for children and young people in Essex schools for the academic year ending summer 2013, as well as information on absence levels, on those young people not in education, employment or training, and Ofsted inspection outcomes. A further document, providing an Overview, was tabled. Tim Coulson, Director for Commissioning, Clare Kershaw, Head of Commissioning, Pippa Shukla, Lead Strategic Commissioner for Intelligence, all Education and Lifelong Learning, and Mark Gant, Analyst, Performance & BI, were in attendance.

Dr Coulson drew Members' attention specifically to three slides on the Overview document:

- i. Slide 1, Primary, which shows Essex to be on a par with the Eastern Region, but less good than the rest of the country, including the statistical neighbours group
- ii. Slide 8, Secondary, which shows that, in relation to all other groups, Essex is broadly on an overall par at Key Stage 4, and better at Key Stage 5
- iii. Slide 12, Inspection performance, which in the results for 2012/13, when compared to those of 2011/12, shows an overall increase in the number of primary schools in the top 2 categories, but also a slight increase in those deemed "Inadequate". The number of secondary schools in the top 2 categories also has increased and those deemed "Inadequate" has also decreased. Dr Coulson pointed out that there were still about 30% of Essex schools not rated good or outstanding; so there was no reason to be complacent.

Dr Coulson responded to questions and concerns from Members:

- The single entrance in September for those starting school may disadvantage those born in the summer months, as they will be very young; but this is now almost universally applied across the country. It may have particular significance for those children with Special Educational Needs. However, Essex is looking at a pilot scheme, the "Education, Health and Care Plan," which is intended to replace statementing. Dr Coulson offered to present a report on this to the Committee in the autumn
- The figures have not been affected by the transition of schools to academies, as the figures include all schools. It was noted that 90% of secondary schools in Essex now have academy status
- There is no distinction made between schools adopting different teaching techniques or philosophies (eg, innovative methods as opposed to more "traditional ones). The quality of the teaching itself is the biggest factor – what matters most is how successful the teaching is
- In Dr Coulson's view, Essex should be achieving more; progress has been made recently, but we are only at the level of the national average. Good management and leadership is seen as crucial to this process and £1,000,000 has been set aside to establish the Essex Primary Leadership Academy.

Dr Coulson also acknowledged that the Educational Task & Finish Group would have some challenging issues to look at; and he had already been in contact with the Scrutiny Officer in anticipation of this.

The Chairman thanked Dr Coulson and his colleagues for their work.

The Committee

- i. noted the report, which was a good starting point; and
- ii. noted and accepted the scoping document for the Task & Finish Group (found in PAF/10/14, under agenda item7). The Chairman reminded Members that the membership of this Group would be determined in the new fiscal year.

6. Increasing Independence for Working Age Adults

Members received report PAF/06/14 on the CMA relating to the Increasing Independence for Working Age Adults Transformation Project. Councillor J Aldridge, Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care, addressed the meeting. Nick Presmeg, Director for Integrated Commissioning & Vulnerable People, was in attendance.

Councillor Aldridge informed Members that the final business case had been approved by the Outcomes Board in February and would go to Cabinet on 25 March (deferred meeting date). He reminded Members that the total spend on Adults Social Care is almost £0.5 billion per annum, and both demographics and costs are working to increase this figure all the time. However, this is not primarily about economics – the aim is to achieve the best outcome for those individuals involved, and through them, their families (although this should also represent the best value for council tax payers). Over the next three years, the aim is to achieve an improvement in the lives of those in Adults Social Care as well as a saving of £23 million.

The intention is not for individuals to become institutionalised, but to come into the community more, by focusing on people's abilities to the full extent. In some cases, they will be given independence, some even with the chance of employment – an aspiration that many do not have at present.

Workstreams have been set up, to allow the separation of the more difficult from the easier cases. There is a move toward day care where possible. Another area is the greater provision of respite care, as it is felt that parents deserve this assistance, although it was noted that the Care Law will make this compulsory, when it becomes effective in 2015.

£4.7 million was being sought to drive this through.

Members raised some issues:

- these measures are aimed at working age people, so, although the likelihood is that people will work for much longer in future, these are not intended for those who develop conditions in later life (eg Alzheimers)

- with regard to the employability element, Essex does not have a strong relationship with government agencies; the Business Plan looks to forming stronger bonds with local businesses
- In response to the observation that such cost-cutting transformations only seem to happen when money is short, the Cabinet Member suggested that it was a benefit of austerity, as it forced the Council's hand. But he believed that it would have been necessary in any case.
- the last government attempt to bring people into the community had not been successful; but there has been a major culture change since then, particularly among staff working for Social Services, who in the past had been guilty of treating those who had come into the community in the same way as they had when they were in institutions
- with regard to housing, there is a premium on the kind of housing that will best suit these needs; but the Council sees the change to independent living for many as a vital element and is working with district councils, charities almshouses, etc, to see how resources can be best utilised and developed.

The Committee noted the ongoing developments in the Increasing Independence Working Age Adults Transformation Programme.

7. Scoping Documents

The Committee noted the scoping documents in respect of:

- a) Educational attainment in Essex (already considered under Item 5, above); and
- b) Commissioning services for vulnerable people.

The Chairman reminded Members that the membership of both these committees would be determined after the appointment of Council in May.

8. Scrutiny recommendations tracker and work programme

The Committee noted the tracker and work programme.

9. Date of next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting: Thursday 8 May 2014. Committee Room 1.

The Chairman pointed out that the Young Essex Assembly would have an item on the 8 May agenda and he suggested that the meeting should begin at 5.00 pm, to allow YEA representatives to attend.

The Committee agreed to a 5.00 pm start.

The meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Chairman