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**Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Thursday, 10 November 2016**

**Present:**

**Present:**

County Councillors:

I Grundy (Chairman)  
S Barker  
J Chandler  
M Danvers  
J Deakin  
A Goggin  
P Honeywood  
R Howard  
M McEwen  
C Sargeant  
C Seagers

Appointed Members:

Richard Carson

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:  
Robert Fox, Scrutiny Officer  
Jennifer Reid, Committee Officer

## **1 Apologies and Substitution Notices**

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Cllr Andy Erskine  
Cllr Carlo Guglielmi  
Cllr Andy Wood (Cllr Colin Seagers attended as substitute)  
Cllr Theresa Higgins (Cllr Jude Deakin attended as substitute)  
Cllr Keith Bobbin (named substitute)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Colin Sargeant to the meeting as a new Member of the Committee and welcomed back Councillor Susan Barker as a returning Member.

## **2 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2016 were agreed as a correct

record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising

*Page 3, Item 6 - A copy of the presentation had not been received so will be recirculated to Members.*

*Page 5, Item 7 - The list of residential homes had not been received to date.*

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Goggin declared an interest as a Governor of Marketfields School. Councillors Grundy and Barker declared an interest as Members of Youth strategy Groups.

### **4 Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### **5 Update on Task and Finish group report – Educational Attainment in Essex**

Members received PAF/22/16, a report providing an update on progress following the recommendations of the Task and Finish group in July 2015. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, and Clare Kershaw, Director for Commissioning; Education and Lifelong Learning - Intelligence, to the meeting.

In introducing the report, Councillor Gooding thanked the Task and Finish Group for their work on the initial recommendations and confirmed that these were now embedded within the service.

Clare Kershaw presented the report and in response to Member's questions confirmed the following information around the recommendations:

#### **2.1 Recruitment and Retention**

Recruitment and retention of teachers continues to be challenging due to a national shortage of teachers and the current financial restraints but resource has been allocated to a task group to continue to try and improve. A delegation had been sent to Australia to recruit teachers and an invitation extended to Irish teachers, to avoid the use of recruitment agencies, however due to the market domination of agencies, both of these initiatives were unsuccessful. Consideration was being given to selecting a preferred agency to work in partnership with. These countries remain the priority for overseas recruitment due to over supply of teachers and the speed in which they can be trained in the National Curriculum.

Work has been undertaken to provide a guide for retention to schools, through

headteachers of schools with high retention rates sharing good practice. Members commented regarding trade union relationships and national issues of pay increase freezes, changes in workload and the high rate of newly qualified teachers (NQT) leaving the profession in the first five years. The Cabinet Member maintains good relationships with Trade unions and attends quarterly meetings. The service recognised the national issues but felt that recognition of the profession was more important than pay rates and confirmed there was a national plan to address retention of NQTs linked to the training process. There had been a huge impact as a result of changes to the Primary curriculum and it was important that headteachers led by example and ensured teachers' workloads were balanced.

A housing for teachers strategy has been expanded by the Investment Board to include all key workers. Councillor Honeywood commented that the Cabinet Member for Housing at Tendring District Council was keen to work with Essex County Council in this area and suggested that housing could be linked to particular schools where recruitment was an issue. Councillor Barker suggested that delay to key worker housing due to build times and waiting lists could be addressed by HMOs and Rent a Room schemes. Consideration would need to be given to location of properties in relation to schools.

## 2.2 Early Years

The service has invested in outcomes for children in Early Years focussing on what makes a difference, transitions and school readiness resulting in an increase in Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes for children across Essex. Particular projects have been piloted in Basildon and Braintree which have shown real impact and these models will be expanded across the county. Strategic work was underway to align early years settings and schools through forming clusters.

Members raised concerns regarding the impact of Children's Centres closures on reaching parents and as a demonstration of what good early years settings should look like.. The Cabinet Member advised that the changes would have little impact on the existing challenges engaging hard to reach parents as generally alternative methods were used.

## 2.3 Support for Governors

A number of strategies have been brought in to increase support to School Governors.

- An E-Governors scheme has been piloted and 5 Governors, with business and finance skills, have been appointed as full members of governing bodies within Essex. The E-Governors contribute to meetings via conference call and can be used where specialist skills are required e.g. HR. the scheme is being evaluated with particular reference to impact of the lack of community link. The E-Governors are volunteers.
- Training in skills auditing to allow governing bodies to recognise skills gaps and recruit to fill.
- Collaboration as part of the cluster strategy bringing local governors

together and allow peer review. Framework was being developed and would be piloted in 2017.

- Continue to encourage knowledge sharing particularly in specialist areas through the Governors Association.

Members welcomed the E-Governor scheme and also commented on the benefit of an ECC scheme making it easier to approach businesses which are traditionally hard to recruit.

## 2.4 Data and Standards

The full annual report on attainment and progress would be completed in March 2017 once data has been validated and completed, however initial data shows that GLD is now in the top 25% nationally and outcomes for children in Essex are the highest they have ever been. It should be noted that there has been a new assessment framework for Key Stage 2 and work is on-going for key stage 4.

Focus is now on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This is where poverty is considered the main barrier to achievement rather than those with special educational needs.

Collaboration with The National Education Trust has resulted in a toolkit being launched in May 2016 which will be embedded over the 2016-17 academic year. A copy of this will be provided to Members of the Committee.

## 2.5 School Organisation and Planning

In response to Member's questions the following key points were discussed:

- The impact of in-year migrant children, which can be from other counties in the UK as well as from abroad, on class sizes is being analysed and data from the March 2017 report will provide a better picture. This is one of a number of factors affecting school places in Essex as predictions for required school places have been based on Reception and Year 7 admissions. Other year groups will now also be monitored. The Cabinet Member invited Members to feedback to him on the local picture in their wards to ensure an accurate reflection across the county.
- There has been changes in contractor to the school building program, however there is now a significant building program underway and contingency plans put in place to reduce the impact of any potential delays.
- Councillor Barker commented on the value of the 'Commissioning School Places 2015-2020' report in providing information regarding planning.
- Consideration has been given, in the recruitment strategy, to the need for more teachers for increased school places through increases in training schools and the number of teaching assistants becoming teachers.
- All new schools must be registered and comply with DFE and OFSTED regulations. In regards to specific query raised, Councillor Gooding confirmed he would be visiting the school built on the old Castlevue

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School site in the near future.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and, supported by the Cabinet Member, thanked Councillor McEwen and her colleagues for the outstanding work of the task and finish group.

#### Actions

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1. To request contact be made with Councillor Paul Honeywood with regard to discussion around key worker housing in Tendring. **Clare Kershaw**
2. To consider Homes of Multiple Occupation and rent-a-room in the strategies for key worker homes to improve teacher recruitment and retention. **Clare Kershaw**
3. To provide Members with the best practice toolkit for disadvantaged children produced by the National Education Trust. **Clare Kershaw**
4. To consider future work with regard to school organisation and planning around meeting growth and demand. **Councillor Ian Grundy/Robert Fox**

## **6 Essex Youth Service Scrutiny Report 2016**

Members received a presentation from Michael O'Brien, Head of Commissioning Education and Lifelong Learning - Youth Service, providing an update on the Youth Service following the move to a 'community development' model. In introducing the report, Councillor Gooding referred to the concerns raised by the People and Families Scrutiny Committee in 2014 regarding the impact of reduced funding to the service and the capacity within the voluntary sector. Councillor Gooding was pleased that this report demonstrated improved outcomes and a large amount of volunteers and felt the service was now more effective in meeting the needs of young people in Essex.

The following key points were discussed in more detail:

- The service now focuses on supporting the community to deliver services based on community identified needs. Any services that use ECC buildings and have support through the Youth service are monitored.
- Monitoring of services is based on the OFSTED model and there has been national interest in sharing of the model.
- There are over 400 volunteers working in centres without the need for specific recruitment campaigns.
- The Youth Strategy Groups have been successful in gaining funding from partners to more than double budget allocations
- There were 7000 Youth work sessions delivered in 2015-16 and there is

capacity for further increases. This compares positively to national statistics.

- The increase from 46 to 234 Community Youth Clubs refers to new clubs using existing buildings.
- ECC still delivers the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, where nationally there has been trend of schools delivering. The scheme can form part of the National Citizenship Service scheme. The service would like to continue to deliver within Essex but relies on the approval of the national scheme to do this.
- National Citizenship Service (NCS) scheme continues to be very successful and ECC has been asked to deliver a pilot NCS Extreme scheme of 500 places.
- A new requirement of the service has been to conduct Young Carers' assessments. this has been successfully introduced with all young people having been offered an assessment date within two weeks. The Youth Service has also worked with schools to add the Young Carer element to the Healthy Schools program. There is a statutory duty to assess and help put support in place or signpost through a range of approaches. Funding was provided to employ Targeted Youth Advisers and the service, in partnership with Health, funds Young Carer groups in all areas. Social Care involvement is normally where the young person is the primary carer.
- Consultation has significantly increased providing real insight and individual reports have been provided to the Chair of each Youth Strategy Group.
- The Youth Essex Assembly (YEA) is now within the service and is currently holding elections. A recent debate was held in the council chamber which a number of Councillors attended and was very positively received by the young people who attended. Members commented on the value of these sessions and requested further similar opportunities be arranged across a range of dates
- All community officers act as outreach workers, monitoring communities and assisting in setting up programs in areas where big issues are identified, e.g. gangs
- Members were pleased to see the improved number of achieved outcomes and increased involvement and congratulated the service for the hard work behind the statistics.
- Follow up on outcomes is through continued contact with young people over time encouraging them to become youth workers or undertaking and delivering NCS.
- Challenges still exist in promoting achievements in the service and Members agreed to share information and promote the service.

### Actions

1. The Committee to consider how it might engage constructively with the Young Essex Assembly in the future. **Councillor Ian Grundy/Robert Fox**

**7 Scrutiny recommendations tracker and work programme**

Members received PAF/24/16, providing an outline of the work programme.

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a training session would be held that afternoon in preparation for the Annual Safeguarding reports due to be brought to the Committee at its meeting on 8 December 2017.

*\* Subsequently a decision was made to hold the next meeting of the Committee on 12 January 2017 and a further training session for members of the Committee on 8 December 2016.*

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that Essex Police had submitted some questions regarding the Adults' safeguarding report and he also expected to receive questions regarding the Children's report.

**8 Date of Next Meeting**

The next committee meeting was confirmed for Thursday 8 December 2016 at 10.30am.

*\* Subsequently a decision was made to hold the next meeting of the Committee on 12 January 2017 and a training session for members of the Committee on 8 December 2016.*

**Chairman**