

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT LATTON BUSH CENTRE, HARLOW, ON THURSDAY 21 MAY
2015**

County Councillors:

* I Grundy (Chairman)	* C Guglielmi
D Blackwell	* T Higgins
R Boyce	* P Honeywood
* J Chandler	* R Howard
* M Danvers	A Jackson
K Gibbs	* M McEwen
A Goggin	

Non-Elected Voting Members:

* Mr R Carson	Ms M Uzzell
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*present

The following Members were also present:

Councillor K Bobbin
Councillor R Gadsby
Councillor J Whitehouse

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Robert Fox	Scrutiny Officer
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 10.30 am.

1. Appointment of Vice Chairmen

The Chairman invited nominations for two vice-chairmen of the Committee. Cllr T Higgins and Cllr M McEwen, each having been proposed and seconded, were unanimously voted in as vice chairmen of the Committee.

2. Apologies and Substitutions

The Chairman reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Cllr D Blackwell	
Cllr R Boyce	
Cllr K Gibbs	
Cllr A Goggin	
Cllr A Jackson	

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee meeting of 12 March 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

5. Questions from the Public

There were no questions registered from Members of the Public.

6. Community Agent Essex Scheme

Members received Report PAF/11/15, which provided an update on the Community Agent Essex Scheme. The Chairman welcomed Andrew Gardner, Chief Executive of Age UK Essex, Sharon Longworth, Head of Commissioning Vulnerable People, and Helen Gilbert, Senior Commissioning Delivery Officer, Commissioning Support, to the meeting and invited Ms Longworth to introduce the item.

Ms Longworth pointed out that the scheme was delivered by the four major charities working alongside the County Council.

It introduced an entirely new service, with 36 salaried agents assisted by, in due course, 72 volunteers, working across the County. The model was set on the expectation that half of the 6000 anticipated annual referrals would come through Social Services and the rest through GPs, friends, family, friends, etc. There was a triaging system, and a focus on the most vulnerable. Volunteers were trained and supported by the British Red Cross. Efforts were being made to attract further recruits.

The Community Agents had been modelled on Village Agents, although their aim was to spend much longer with people, building resilience and helping individuals, rather than just signposting.

The Rural Community Council for Essex was the senior partner; it employed the agents in the Mid and North East areas. The British Red Cross employed the others. A very lean management structure was in place.

The inclusion of Essex Neighbourhood Watch was potentially very effective, as there were about 6000 groups across the County, all with members who were able to look out for unusual signs, indicating that people may need support.

The Scheme would receive ECC funding for five years: full funding for the first three, then reduced funding in years four and five. The intention was that the partners should work out a funding scheme for the latter stage. The partners did

not know exactly how they would achieve this, but were committed to producing some proposals during the first year.

Responses were given to points raised by Members:

- Village Agents received ongoing training and their understanding of what they were expected to do had greatly improved
- Agents operated in all parishes, but may not have managed to contact all parish councils as yet. They also worked in non-parished, urban areas; their contact details were attached to the Committee paper and members were encouraged to use these details and circulate them as widely as possible.
- As partners, the various parties contribute freely to providing solutions, and will use outside organisations as well, if appropriate. The overall aim is shared, so everyone may get involved
- Referral routes are varied, with agents being used to different degrees – usually less so when social workers are already allocated. Some agents already have their own routes. Best routes are developing. Agents may also work on the reablement side (when patients return home after hospital stays)
- The new Care Act sets prevention as a higher priority; this ties in well with the Council's preventative strategy. The Act also specifically targets the needs of carers, which is another area that the Scheme intends to address
- Although there has not been much engagement with Essex Cares in the past, there is likely to be more in future
- The policy is to engage with all district councils. They have also looked at what other counties do and tried to select the best elements
- A lot of data is being produced and analysed. This should enable areas of need to be better targeted, particularly from Year 2 onward
- Regarding the potential number of referrals involved, this may change in time – the priority would be to remain flexible, to be able to cope with changing situations.

The Chairman thanked the presenters for their helpful contributions and suggested that the Committee should receive an update on the scheme in 12 months' time.

7. People and Families Scrutiny Committee work programme, 2015-16

Members received Report PAF/12/15, setting out proposed topics for consideration by the Committee over the next 18 months, and including proposed scoping documents.

Members discussed these as follows:

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The role of the Safeguarding Member Reference Group was raised. There was general contentment that both the Member Reference Group and the wider

Safeguarding Board cover CSE issues; however, the Group and the Board do not have a scrutiny function. The Committee agreed a formal **RECOMMENDATION** that the Member Safeguarding Reference Group report directly to the People and Families Scrutiny Committee. To this end a meeting between the Chairman of the Committee and the Cabinet Member for Adults and Children would be established. Further there was a request that the informal structure of all Cabinet Member Reference Groups would be reported to each Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee agreed that the Cabinet Member for Adults and Children should provide and present a report to the full Committee in September 2015. The terms of reference and key lines of enquiry on the scoping document as presented were agreed as the basis for the September 2015 report. Following the receipt of the September report the Committee would be in a position to take an informed view as to whether it establishes a formal review.

Care Act Implications

It was agreed that the Committee should receive periodic (perhaps quarterly) updates on the implications of the Care Act with the recognition that a review might become a major item this time next year – twelve months following the implementation of the Act.

The updates might look at two separate aspects: 1) what does the County Council have to do to get itself ready; and 2) how is it progressing.

Residential and Domiciliary Care

A review of residential and domiciliary care was suggested to the Committee by the Cabinet Member for Adults and Children. It was agreed that such a review form part of the Committee's work programme. A Task and Finish Group would be established.

It was noted that the Members Reference Group was already involved in the monitoring of homes, because of safeguarding issues; and there was probably much going on unknown to the Committee.

Health and Education Plans

This was a key tenet to the Essex County Council Commissioning Strategies priorities: *Children in Essex get the best start in life and People have aspirations and achieve their ambitions through education, training and lifelong learning*. It was agreed that Health and Education Plans should form part of the Committee's work programme. A Task and Finish Group would be established. It was proposed that the review of Health and Education Plans should commence in 2016.

All Age Disability

Two particular issues were raised as possibly needing to be addressed: 1) the transition period; and 2) the fact that many individuals do not come into the system until they are quite old, when their parents become unable to cope.

As part of any review it was suggested by Cllr Carlo Guglielmi that the Committee undertake a visit to the Mistley Village Centre. This was agreed. It was agreed that All Age Disability should form part of the Committee's work programme.

The Committee noted that it was also committed to receiving updates on the Youth Services Redesign from the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning throughout the following 18 months.

8. Updates from Task & Finish Groups

Members received a brief oral report on the status of Task & Finish Groups:

Educational Attainment. The Group anticipates two further meetings, site visits. A draft report will be brought to the Scrutiny Committee in July, with final sign-off being sought at the September meeting.

Carers Strategy. The intention is to meet on a regular basis, probably quarterly. The Group wishes to make recommendations to the Cabinet Member in due course.

9. Date of next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting: 10.00 am on Thursday 9 July 2015. Venue: Committee Room 1 at County Hall.

The Chairman proposed that the Committee commence monthly meetings, with the formal Scrutiny Committee meetings taking place bi-monthly with the intervening months set aside as 'activity days' – which might be set aside for briefings, visits and Task and Finish Group activity. These activity days could be all-day events. However, the Chairman of the Committee would be able to call a full meeting, if required, on these intervening months.

The meeting closed at 12:23 pm.

Chairman