

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON
THURSDAY 14 JUNE 2012**

County Councillors present:

T Chapman (Chairman)
J Baugh
A Brown
R Callender
J Deakin

I Grundy
E Hart
T Higgins (Vice-Chairman)
S Hillier
L Mead

Non-Elected Voting Members present:

Mr R Carson
Mr S Geddes

The following Member was also present:

Councillor R Madden (Item 4)

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. Membership/Vice Chairmen

Members noted that, with effect from Tuesday 8 May, Councillors Anne Brown, Ricky Callender, Tracey Chapman and Linda Mead had come onto the Committee and Councillors John Aldridge, Dick Madden and Colin Riley had resigned. Councillors Susan Barker and Theresa Higgins were to be Vice Chairmen. On behalf of the Committee, Councillor Chapman thanked them, and her predecessor in particular, for their contribution to scrutiny.

2. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Cllr E Barker	
Cllr D Morris	
Cllr R Pearson	
Cllr T Sargent	
Cllr J Young	
Rev R Jordan	--

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Families Safeguarding Sub-Committee

Councillor Madden, as Chairman of the Families Safeguarding Sub-Committee, gave a brief report to the meeting, making the following points:

- The Committee had formed, following suggestions from various sources, including the Peer Review of Children's Services in 2011 and this Committee itself, as a joint Sub-Committee of the Community and Older People PSC and this Committee
- It was made up of 4 representatives of each Committee, with the Chairmen of each Committee as ex officio members.
- The Committee had developed a Tracker of strategic work to be carried out by the County Council in these areas. It also received regular data on the work in these areas.
- Simon Hart, Chairman of both the Childrens and Adults Safeguarding Boards, had already attended a Sub-Committee meeting and would do so on a six-monthly basis in future.
- One sub-group of Members had held a meeting with a group of social work team leaders, to get a grass roots view of the work; this was a repeat of last year's exercise. It had again proved very enlightening and certain improvements had been noted in the intervening 12 months. A report for Members would follow in due course.
- A second sub-group had met with Helen Lincoln, to consider how the requirements demanded by Ofsted were being matched with the measures being taken by the County Council.

The role of the Sub-Committee was noted and it was AGREED that the Scrutiny Committee should be kept fully up to date on its activities, by receiving a quarterly report, under Part II of the agenda – in view of the nature of the subject matter.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 April 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Matters Arising

YEA – Eating Disorders (Item 15 a). Members requested that a copy of the initial comments on Eating Disorders prepared by the YEA be recirculated.

Ofsted inspection on adoption services (Item 15 d). Members requested that a copy of the Ofsted inspection report be recirculated. Members also requested a hyperlink to this report be included in the minutes:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/CARE/SC055065>

7. Commissioned and Traded Services

The meeting received CYP/15/12, which provided an update on Commissioned and Traded Services. The Chairman welcomed Tim Coulson, Director for Education and Learning, and Graeme Trott, Interim Financial Analyst, to the meeting.

Regarding the viability of initiating such services, Mr Coulson drew attention to two crucial points made by Babcock 4S, in their analysis of the County Council's position: 1, that ECC services already have a good reputation; and 2, that significant market opportunities do exist (eg in Suffolk).

Five of the existing eight traded services to schools are to be merged to form a new organisation, Education Services Organisation ("ESO"). These services already show a surplus; and one service provided, the Target Tracker, was particularly well regarded, being used by many authorities outside Essex.

They had great strength and depth in their core areas, but needed to boost certain skills, particularly in the fields of sales and marketing.

In response to Members' enquiries, he made the following comments:

- Academies. The vast majority of academies have continued to use their services (apart from one large group). Babcock's view of this was that, even though some trade might be lost to academies, this should be recovered through providing services to schools outside Essex.
- Protection of services to non-academies. This is a strong area for Essex, as it is aware of what these schools need and want, and these schools are keen to use these services. Essex will have to ensure these services remain flexible, needing to suit both bigger and smaller schools. Essex will also have to be commercially aware, as there will probably be former employees offering to provide them at low cost (as they will not have comparable overheads of the County Council).
- Schools Learning & Development – position of staff. Six of the present 20 full time advisors will cease to be employed full time and will only be used when required, on a consultancy basis.
- Relationship with Babcock 4S. Surrey CC some years ago set up an organisation to do what Essex is considering now; in time this broadened out and became fully independent. Babcock specialises in providing advice to other authorities considering this route. Now they have provided this advice, their relationship with Essex CC has ended.

The Chairman thanked Mr Coulson and Mr Trott for their contribution. Members noted the service changes proposed and looked forward to receiving an update when these services had developed further.

8. Briefing on SEN/AEN review

The meeting received CYP/16/12, which provided an update on the special Educational Needs and Additional Educational Needs structural changes and strategy development.

Mr Coulson pointed out that this was a big subject and the review was still at an early stage. He noted that one significant issue was that the geographical spread of special schools does not match the need. This issue becomes acute when children reached the age of 16 and deciding how best to cater for this older age group. He added that the Government's intention was to overhaul the system by 2014.

Two further positive points were that this now fell within Councillor Castle's portfolio, as it linked in with schools, and that a new post had been created, the Head of SEND/AEN Strategy, to drive changes forward.

In response to Members' enquiries, he made the following comments:

- Pre-school children. Government changes may help, as all children will have some sort of assessment at age 2½ to 3.
- 16-25 year-olds. These are a challenge but special schools are keen to provide a quality service here. This is seen as a very big issue by parents and special school governors and an extension beyond the formal school leaving age would have major financial implications for the County Council. It is an area which will need to be considered carefully whilst this review is underway. (Members were advised of comments received from a school governor which drew particular attention to this point.)
- Academies. Mr Coulson believed that all schools were keen to engage; the Directorate did not intend to distinguish between academies and non-academies in this context. "Time would tell."
- Personal Budget Pilot. Essex is involved in this pilot scheme (one of 30 or so local authorities), under the aegis of the Children and Families Bill. It is at an early stage. Mr Coulson will provide further details for circulation to Members.
- A summary of issues discussed at the February 2012 stakeholder event will be circulated.
- Details of the statutory duties falling on the County Council will be circulated.
- Numbers of children classed as SEN. There had been a substantial increase in the number of children with statements in recent years. There is also a "parent partnership" arrangement. Details of numbers in each SEN category will be circulated.
- There is some involvement with the voluntary sector.

The Committee indicated that it would wish to see the proposed final draft of the strategy before it is confirmed by either Cabinet or the Cabinet Member.

9. Dates of future meetings

The Committee confirmed the dates of future meetings as set out below and noted that they may comprise:

- Meetings in private
- Meetings in public
- Working groups
- Sub-Committee meetings
- Outside visits

Thursday 5 July 2012

Thursday 6 September 2012

Thursday 4 October 2012

Thursday 1 November 2012

Thursday 6 December 2012

Thursday 3 January 2013

Thursday 7 February 2013

Thursday 7 March 2013

Thursday 4 April 2013

Thursday 9 May 2013

The Chairman summarised a number of issues on which further reports/information papers would be welcomed.

The Forward Look will be updated to include two additional items:
Schools Forum Role and Constitution; and
Procuring services for Children in Care.

Officers will be circulating a number of information papers as requested.

The meeting closed at 11.12 am.

Chairman