
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 11.20am in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 12 April 2018**Present:***County Councillors:*

M Maddocks (Chairman)

J Baker

J Chandler

B Egan

J Henry

S Hillier (substitute)

J Lumley

P May

M McEwen

J Moran

P Reid

C Souter

L Wagland

A Wood

Also in attendance: R Carson, education co-optee.

The following officer was present in support of the meeting:

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report of the Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Erskine (for whom Councillor Hillier substituted).

The following declarations of interest were made for the item on educational attainment:

Councillor Andy Wood	Member of ACL Forum and champion for safeguarding. Wife is a safeguarding officer in a local school
Councillor John Moran	Partner is a school secretary at an academy trust.
Councillors June Lumley, Peter May, Jeff Henry and Richard Carson	School Governor

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public
The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, to vary the order of business published on the agenda and take the items on Healthwatch Essex Relationship and the Essex Safeguarding Children Board next before reverting back to the order in the published agenda.

4 Healthwatch Essex

The Committee considered report (PAF/10/18) proposing that Healthwatch Essex be invited to attend future meetings of the Committee as an observer and accepted the proposal.

Agreed: That Healthwatch be invited to nominate a representative to be an observer at future meetings of the Committee and, at the discretion of the Chairman, to be able to ask questions.

5 Healthwatch Essex

The Committee considered report (PAF/11/18) providing a copy of correspondence between the Committee Chairman and the Independent Chairman of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) further to issues raised with the Committee when it discussed the work of the ESCB with voluntary sector representatives in February 2018.

Agreed: That the correspondence should be noted at this stage and that there could be further discussion on the issues raised at the next scheduled update from the ESCB in September or October 2018.

6 Educational Attainment in Essex

The Committee considered report (PAF/09/18) comprising an annual report on educational attainment specifically prepared for the Committee. It was noted that whilst all the data was in the public domain in various other formats and locations, this annual report produced it in one place.

The following introduced the item and participate in subsequent discussion.

Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member – Education.
Clare Kershaw, Director, Education.
Katerina Glover (Senior Analyst)

Background

A power point presentation was delivered highlighting key performance measures for educational attainment in the 550 maintained schools and academies in Essex. With recent changes in the way attainment was being

assessed nationally, it made direct comparison with previous years more difficult. Members stressed the importance of benchmarking against data from ECC's statistical neighbours.

Two key corporate priorities formed the basis of the report compiled namely (i) working towards an aspiration of every school being judged good or outstanding by OFSTED and (ii) that performance for all Key Stages in Essex sat in the top quartile nationally.

Currently, 94% of Essex schools were graded Good or Outstanding compared to 89% nationally. It was highlighted that back in 2012/13 the comparable figure for Essex was just over 60%. The breakdown by sector for 2016/17 was 93% primary school (380 schools), 97% secondary, 94% of special schools.

During subsequent discussion the following was highlighted and or noted:

- (i) There was no typical profile of a school needing improvement/being inadequate. Schools often had issues that could not be predicted. However, some of the more challenging schools were small and often in rural locations where they specifically had difficulty with recruitment.
- (ii) District breakdown - Brentwood was the highest performing district in terms of achieving an overall good level of development. Whilst there had been significant improvement in overall district profiles there had been a dip in performance in Tendring and a general increased focus on driving up attainment levels in Basildon and Harlow as well as Tendring.
- (iii) Part of the decline in performance in Tendring was attributed to lower achieving cohorts coming through the system (particularly Year 6 this year) but also social and family challenges specifically in the Tendring area. It was acknowledged that the County Council have been prioritising achieving OFSTED stipulated outcomes and may not been following up on the actual progress of children as much as needed and will need to do this as well going forward.
- (iv) Attainment 8 – Essex was slightly ahead of the national picture. Within that there were variations between districts with Brentwood, Chelmsford and Colchester positive and Braintree and Tendring minus.
- (v) Post 16 qualifications – there had been a slight decline in the levels entering general apprenticeships but a slight increase in higher degree and higher apprentice levels.
- (vi) Data for Absences and exclusions was more time-lagged. The rates of secondary school permanent exclusions was 0.6% which

was significantly below the rest of country. However, the rate in Essex was increasing - reflecting the increasing national trend.

- (vii) There was a statutory duty to track and monitor outcomes for Children in Care at all times and the County Council had a specific team to do this. This was an increasingly challenging issue and the County Council was seeing an increasing trend of children entering care in their later school years.
- (viii) Recruitment and retention did continue to be a challenge both locally and nationally - especially for maths and science teachers. The County Council had unsuccessfully tried working with recruitment agencies in Ireland and Australia. A Return to Teaching training programme had been more successful.
- (ix) A review of alternative educational provision had been commissioned recently to look at effective practice and what was working well. There are approximately 1400 Essex children being home educated and the County Council had a general duty of care for them (especially in relation to safeguarding) yet had no real power of intervention (unless formal referral) or enforcing quality. Councillor Gooding had been lobbying local MPs to pressure Government to grant local education authorities some powers of intervention.
- (x) The County Council had prioritised a school improvement service for every school irrespective of whether it was maintained or an academy. In addition, the County Council RAG rated all Essex maintained schools and aligned the degree of support/resources each school had offered to it so that it was proportionate to that rating. The County Council was also encouraging the development of a school-led improvement system – i.e. schools often can look towards other schools first for assistance - the County Council had now formed 37 clusters of schools and the County Council provided tools for them to assist conducting rigorous peer reviews within their respective clusters. It was important that even schools with good and outstanding status realised that it still required hard work to maintain those ratings.

Councillor Gooding suggested that he would like to see the peer to peer support extended to governing bodies.

- (xi) The reasons for exclusion were recorded although they may not specifically record incidences of substance abuse and instead just record the resulting disruptive behaviour and whether it involved physical or verbal abuse.
- (xii) Whilst the educational attainment report included data on academies, it did not include the independent sector. It was noted that independent schools often also took non-Essex

resident children and that they also did not have to follow the national curriculum. The County Council's only significant remit over independent schools was if safeguarding concerns were raised.

- (xiii) Up to 20% of children in Essex were assessed with varying degrees of Special Educational Needs. The County Council was looking at working with a group of schools to develop/identify a minimum service entitlement for specific needs (providing more consistency of effective practice) and develop an outcomes tools framework. This was partly to acknowledge that schools can often struggle to track progress when it is not academic based.

Conclusion

The Chairman thanked the witnesses for their attendance. The following actions were agreed:

- (i) That a glossary be produced for future reports.
- (ii) That the Committee be specifically updated on the County Council's work to develop a minimum service entitlement identified for specific needs and develop/identify an outcomes tools framework.
- (iii) A mechanism be developed to keep North East Essex County Councillors up to date on Tending educational attainment issues and concerns and actions being taken.
- (iv) Further information be provided on exclusion rates for districts.

7 Work Programme

The Committee considered and noted report PAF/12/18. The date for a member development session on gang culture would be circulated.

Date next meeting

The next Committee activity day is scheduled for Thursday 10 May 2018. Activity days may be a private session, meeting in public, briefing, site visit etc – to be confirmed nearer the time

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.55am.

Chairman