

		AGENDA ITEM 5
		PAF/08/13
Committee:	People and Families Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	12 September 2013	
<u>Terms of Reference</u>		
Enquiries to:	Robert Fox Governance Officer Corporate Law & Governance 01245 430526 robert.fox@essex.gov.uk	

**Proposal for future partnership working between  
the ECC People Scrutiny Committee (and other  
scrutiny committees where appropriate) and the  
Young Essex Assembly  
- 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013**

Proposal from: Clare Ratcliffe & Lee McDermid, YEA Co-ordinators

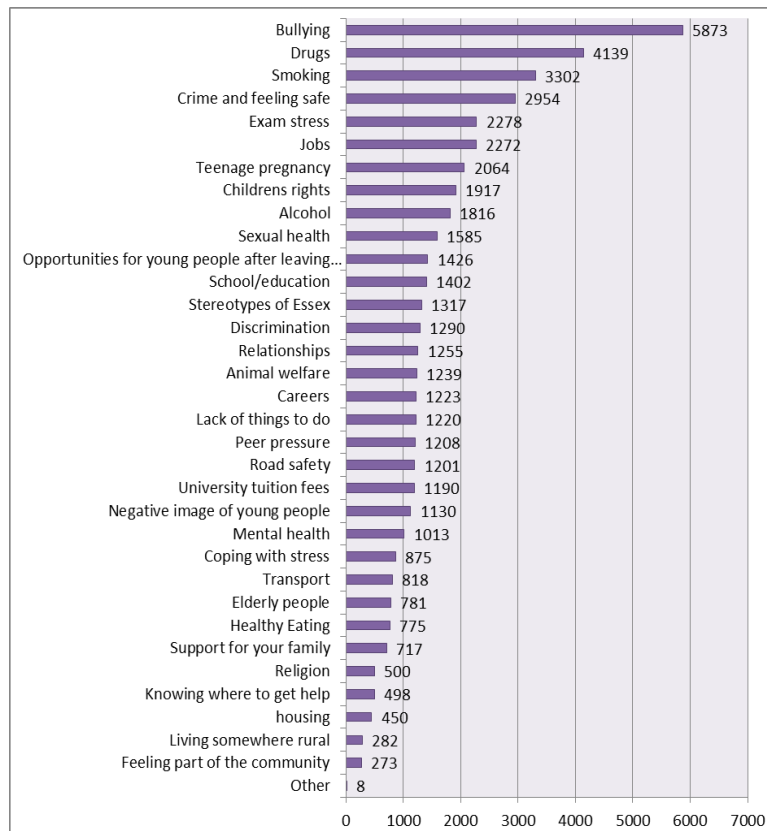
## SCF Involvement Team.

### Aims of this paper:-

- Part 1:** An overview of why this document has been written.
- Part 2:** A number of options for future working between the C&YP Scrutiny Committee and the YEA.
- Part 3:** An outline of how and why this working arrangement would be extended to other scrutiny committees.
- Part 4:** Conclusions

### Part 1

The Young Essex Assembly (YEA) was created by Essex County Council in 2003. It has 75 members aged between 11 and 19, who are elected every 2 years. As part of the voting process young people are asked to identify the issues they feel are most important from a list provided. The results from the 2012 election where almost 13,000 children and young people voted are shown below:



The aim of the YEA is to represent all young people and to be the official, democratically elected voice for young people in Essex. The YEA and its members seek to represent no party political stance. In recent times the focus of the YEA has been project based. Successful projects have included The Green Pledge and the Beat Bullying Conferences for schools. However the outgoing members of the YEA (2010-2012) felt that the focus of the YEA should move away from project work and instead it should concentrate on the scrutiny of services provided for children and young people as this would have the biggest positive outcome for all children and young people. They feel that there is a lot of work already being done around the top issues but that the scrutiny of this work was not being carried out from a young person's perspective. Furthermore the YEA is now a mature organisation and thus is fully equipped to best perform this function.

This scrutiny also fits with the new commissioning model of ECC, where the customer is to be at the heart of everything that we do. In the case of the scrutiny of work concerning children and young people, they are the customer and so should be involved in some way. Involving young people in the scrutiny process will also help in the councils' aim of providing value for money for the tax payer and delivering improved efficiency. If the customer (in this instance young people) is consulted money will be saved and/or directed in the right way.

This scrutiny will primarily but not entirely focus on the issues that have been identified as most important to young people in the YEA election survey and subsequent research which occurs over the YEA's term of office.

In order to fulfil this role, the subgroups within the YEA have been restructured as follows. All of the work done by the groups will be fed back and forth between the groups to ensure that an accurate scrutiny can be provided:

### **Cabinet Group**

This is the group that has the most direct contact with ECC members and officers. It aims to meet regularly with:

- Political leadership.
- SCF senior management including Dave Hill and Tim Coulson.
- People & Families and other Scrutiny Committees.
- Other groups representing children and young people in Essex e.g. The Children in Care Council.

### **Communications Group**

Members of this group have "adopted" a small number of schools and work with their school council (to include primary, secondary and special schools) in a 2 way process,

updating them on the work of the YEA and finding out pupils views to take back to the other groups. This has been limited to a maximum of 3 to allow meaningful relationships to be developed between the member of the YEA and their school, without becoming too big a commitment for them.

In addition to their primary work with schools, members of this group also work with other youth councils in their local area. One young person in this group from each quadrant will sit on their local Youth Scrutiny Groups.

### **Research Group**

This group are responsible for organising involvement events around the county to ensure that the focus of the YEA is continually in line with the top issues of young people around the county. These events will allow schools which are not working with members of the Communications Group access and influence to the YEA.

The Research Group will also take the lead on planned local democracy week events and other events through their two year term of office.

In addition to events, the purpose of this group is to research and write reports on issues identified by the cabinet group. This will include conducting Quality Assurance of different services and projects provided for children and young people by Essex County Council and their partner organisations. The young people on this group have received and will continue to receive training in order to effectively carry out their role.

### **Sittings Committee**

The YEA meets bi-monthly as a whole group. The purpose of these Sittings is for the subgroups to update each other on the work they have been doing and then plan work for the next two months. This group will organise these meetings as well as chair the day. They will invite (and brief) project leads from Essex County Council and other organisations from the top issues so that the YEA can scrutinise their work.

### **United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP)**

Twelve members of the YEA are selected to represent Essex on the UKYP. This enables the YEA to take the issues of children and young people in Essex to a national arena. It also provides an opportunity for the YEA to learn about and feed back to ECC about issues faced and services provided in other parts of the country.

---

Members of the YEA together with staff members who support their work were invited to attend a meeting of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> March, to provide an update on the work of the YEA.

The Committee under the Chair of Cllr Tracey Chapman stated their enthusiasm to work with the YEA to effectively scrutinise the work and services of ECC. Cllr Chapman identified that there could also be scope for the YEA to work with other scrutiny committees whose remit matched the top survey outcomes. It is for this reason that the document you are reading has been written; to propose a number of options for how this work could be developed. Although the membership and scope of the committee has altered since this time, we still hope that the a suitable way forward can be agreed.

## **Part 2**

We have identified three options for how the future working between the People and Families Scrutiny Committee and the YEA could function. It could be that a single option is adopted or that two or even all three in combination are taken forward:

### **Option A**

Scrutiny Committee meetings are held during school holidays (when possible). All members of the YEA cabinet subgroup are invited to join these meetings as full committee members.

Benefits of this option are that the members of the YEA are able to offer proper, informed scrutiny from a young person's perspective. However, due to timetabling these meetings may not be possible more than a couple of times each year.

### **Option B**

Regular meetings are held between the YEA Cabinet Subgroup and the Chairman and/ or other members of the Scrutiny Committee outside of school hours.

This option would promote regular contact between members of the Committee and the YEA subgroup, however it would not allow the young people to scrutinise the officers who are presenting to the committee face to face. Therefore, the young peoples' scrutiny would be more superficial than with option A. It could also prove difficult for the young people to influence the agenda of the committee.

### **Option C**

Information is provided to the YEA cabinet subgroup regarding upcoming agenda items which they can then comment on either in writing or in person via a YEA co-ordinator. Detailed information regarding the meeting can then be fed back to the YEA subgroup either in writing or by someone who was at the meeting, be this a YEA co-ordinator or another ECC officer.

This option would enable the YEA subgroup to have an input into the committee meeting itself; however the young people themselves would not be present and their adult representation would not know precisely their views as events unfolded at a particular meeting. The biggest disadvantage of this option compared to options A and B is that the young people would not build up any relationship with any of the committee members.

### **Part 3**

The work of the Young Essex Assembly is directed by the election survey and other pieces of research that are conducted with children and young people in Essex during their term of office. Whilst the bulk of these issues match the work of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee, there are obviously issues that place highly in the YEA election survey that are the focus of other ECC Member committees, for example, Essex Police & Crime Panel and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It would be great if whatever working arrangement is agreed between the YEA and the People and Families Scrutiny Committee could be extended to all other relevant committees and panels (even if this is only possible on a less regular basis).

### **Conclusions**

This is a very exciting time in the development of the Young Essex Assembly and it is good to know that these are supported by members of the Scrutiny Committee. Our recommendation is that a combination of options 1 and 2 would provide the best opportunity of meaningful scrutiny of children and young people's services provided by ECC, by young people.