

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON THURSDAY  
7 MARCH 2013**

County Councillors present:

T Chapman (Chairman)	E Hart
S Barker (Vice-Chairman)	S Hillier
J Baugh	D Morris
R Callender	J Young
I Grundy	T Sargent

Non-Elected Voting Members present:

Mr R Carson  
Rev R Jordan

The following Members were also present:

Councillor V Metcalfe  
Councillor C Riley

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Robert Fox	Governance Officer
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 10.00 am.

**1. Apologies and Substitutions**

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Cllr J Deakin	
Cllr T Higgins	

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations were noted:

- Cllr Baugh - runs a youth club (Braintree)
- Cllr Morris - scout leader
- Cllr Hillier - divisional chairman of scouts
- Rev Jordan - involved with Fellowship Afloat (Tollesbury).

**3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 February 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

**4. Matters Arising**

Item 4, Domestic Abuse, page 2 of minutes, penultimate bullet: some Members expressed their concern over the response given to the question raised about the relocation issue for victims. It was **Agreed** that further clarification of the situation should be sought by the Chairman, who will write to Mr Nunn; Councillor Baugh will assist the Chairman in this process.

Item 4, Domestic Abuse – funding model. Some Members pointed out that they had not received a copy of the funding model after the meeting. The Committee Officer will follow this up. *[It was subsequently confirmed that the model had not been available for circulation until after the March meeting; this was done.]*

## **5. Safeguarding** *(originally agenda item 7)*

Members received the Families Safeguarding Sub-Committee Annual Report 2012-13 (CYP/06/13) and Councillor Hillier gave a brief oral report on recent activities of the Sub-Committee. She drew attention to the February meeting, at which Members had considered the Safeguarding Action Plan, the Third Quarter performance results and had received a report on response times of the Initial Response Team. It was pointed out that the Sub-Committee had reviewed its activities over the previous 12 months and had been pleased at the amount of ground it had covered.

## **6. Youth Strategy Groups**

The Chairman welcomed Michael O'Brien, Head of Youth Services, and Jane Herbert, Youth Service Co-ordinator – Curriculum. Mr O'Brien gave a brief presentation on the origins and development of the work of Youth Strategy Groups.

The creation of YSGs stemmed from the feeling that a distance existed between those providing youth services and those they were aiming to serve. The purpose of the YSGs is:

- i. To act as consultative bodies, supporting the development of new local provision and influencing the use of existing resources
- ii. To support partners and key stakeholders in identifying local priorities, suggesting key local activity and supporting its development
- iii. To act as local champions for young people's services in the district/borough

The key word here was "local".

Mr O'Brien identified YSGs' main responsibilities, in partnership with the County Council:

- i. To identify the needs of young people locally, along with the local council and other agencies, and to develop joint strategies to address gaps in provision
- ii. To ensure efficient and effective deployment of resources, avoiding duplication

- iii. To ensure measures are in place to safeguard the financial probity of any projects, etc
- iv. To provide a local forum where informed, relevant debate can take place
- v. To work closely with the local Children's Commissioning Board and Local Strategic Partnership to secure a coherent range of services for those aged 11-25, with a priority on the 13-19 group
- vi. To facilitate and nurture effective partnership working
- vii. To appoint a Clerk to the YSG
- viii. To make recommendations to appropriate local agencies/commissioning boards about local service priorities
- ix. To inform how services might be provided and co-ordinated at a local level, avoiding duplication
- x. To articulate local needs, to understand current provision and to set priorities, filling gaps without duplication
- xi. Work in partnership to attract new provision and funding opportunities. This may involve developing relationships with other groups, such as uniformed groups.

Members raised various issues, mostly based on their own experience of YSGs in their own districts.

- The inclusion of uniformed groups was welcomed, being a positive element, moving beyond the realm of dealing with issues such as drug abuse
- Most Members expressed strong support for YSGs overall. Several chair their local YSG. Groups have generally taken a while to get going, but most seem to have made a significant impact in their first 12 months of existence. Some have galvanised links with local groups, and there has also been some interaction between YSGs
- However, other Members had not such a positive experience, quoting a lack of information being circulated and a very poor, unwelcoming overall ethos of actual meetings
- It was pointed out that each YSG may take its own approach to how it makes contact with other parties, publicises itself and keeps in touch with partners and the general public.

Councillor Metcalfe, as the Deputy to the Cabinet Member for Education and the 2012 Games, pointed out that the original aim was to involve all Members in these, not necessarily as members of the YSG themselves, but at least in keeping them informed of what is going on. Another intention was for each YSG to be chaired by a County Councillor; and most are, but not all. Now that YSGs have been active for a year, each one will be subject to review, to see how well they are functioning. Mr O'Brien is preparing a report for her to consider. Councillor Metcalfe confirmed how useful it was to hear comments directly from Members. She stressed the importance of engage all Councillors in this project, especially in the wake of the forthcoming elections.

The Chairman asked that Mr O'Brien's report be circulated to all Members of the County Council, as well as the non-elected Members of this Committee. This would reflect the importance of this initiative overall.

## 7. Youth Centres

Michael O'Brien, Head of Youth Services, gave a brief presentation on the changes in the way the Essex Youth Services will operate in future.

In the past, the youth service has been perceived as very insular, with a consequent "us and them" mentality, which has drawn criticism from potential partners. The new Youth & Community Development Model aims to change this. The Youth Worker's role will change from being predominantly one delivering and managing youth work programmes, to one enabling and supporting others to do so. The emphasis will be on partnership working and the engagement of local people.

The present delivery model for a typical youth centre shows a small number of sessions when the centre is open, involving several youth workers at once, with the building unused for the rest of the time. The New Model shows a building in virtually constant use, providing a much wider range of services, and only requiring a youth worker presence half the time, the remaining sessions being overseen by individuals from the local community.

In practical terms, this will mean that youth workers will have to go into the community, to encourage and develop the use of a range of skills to be used by those in that community. He added that changes have already been taking place: there are now 104 more sessions per week in youth centres than there were a year ago.

Among the potential benefits, he listed:

- More and varied provision for less money
- Better partnership working
- More choice for young people
- Staff will develop greater skills and knowledge
- Better recognition of youth workers and service
- More secure future
- More volunteering opportunities for young people
- Community capacity building via ECC QA and Curriculum
- Greater community cohesion

Mr O'Brien responded to queries raised by Members.

- No youth centres have licensed bars. They are kept for youth activities, and bars tend to encourage an older clientele; also, there is a health issue – eg, no high energy drinks are available in youth centres either. And these are quite apart from any other issues that might be connected with the availability of alcohol
- Rural communities have always been particularly challenging, as transport is a real issue. Efforts are being made to identify potential projects, through the use of mobile clubs, for example
- It is intended to improve online access to this service, by developing a youth website and by producing an Essex app. Mr O'Brien pointed out

that the hook for this will be the social side, although the ultimate intention is for young people to achieve progress in the curriculum and other areas

- This programme can be seen as an important tool for the YSGs to use, so they will be kept informed of its progress. And the priorities of each individual youth centre will be dictated by the local communities, probably through the YSG.

The Chairman thanked Mr O'Brien for his update; she acknowledged the potential for this programme and suggested that it should be included in the induction for new Members, following the elections.

## **8. Future Scrutiny Structure**

The Chairman pointed out that, although speculation at this point was unlikely to be fruitful, the structure of scrutiny post elections would almost certainly be different. She sought any concerns or thoughts Members had on this or on any aspect of scrutiny.

Members made a few points:

- A reduction in the number of committees may put undue strain on those remaining, as they struggle to cope with their broader spheres of interest
- Another impact of having fewer committees could be a lack of engagement by Members, as there may be fewer opportunities to become involved in the policy and scrutiny functions
- Adopting a less introspective approach to scrutiny would be a step forward. At present, this committee fails to make sufficient use of external witnesses for scrutiny
- The Families Safeguarding Sub-Committee has demonstrated its worth over the past year; it was hoped that it would continue to have a role to play.

## **9. Date of next meeting**

The Committee noted that no meeting was scheduled for April, and that, because it was not clear what the structure of scrutiny would be after the elections, no meeting dates had been set thereafter.

The Chairman thanked all Members of the Committee for their contributions and help over the months she had been on the Committee. Members in turn acknowledged the efforts of the Chairman over that period and wished her well, as she would not be standing for re-election.

The meeting closed at 12.00 noon.

Chairman