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**Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 9.30am on Thursday, 10 November 2022 in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford.**

**Present:**

*County Councillors:*

Cllr Ray Gooding (Chairman)

Cllr Jane Fleming

Cllr Marie Goldman

Cllr Ian Grundy

Cllr Carlo Guglielmi

Cllr June Lumley

Cllr Peter May

Cllr Aidan McGurran

Cllr Ross Playle

Cllr Laureen Shaw

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer and Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex were also present.

**1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received.

- Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Susan Barker and Cllr Mark Durham.
- Cllr Ian Grundy declared an interest in that he was a shareholder appointed director of Essex Cares Limited.
- Cllr Ross Playle declared an interest in that his mother worked for Carers First which received funding from ECC and was contracted to deliver services for ECC.
- Cllr June Lumley declared an interest in that she was an unpaid Chairman of Trustees of Supporting Carers and Families Together, a local charitable organisation providing respite groups and activities/outings for young carers and their families.

**2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

- Minute 5, Page 7, 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point – to remove the last sentence which read ‘Officers confirmed that the date of the ECIA stated should be August 2022 and not April 2022.’

**3 Questions from the public**

There were none.

#### 4 Carers Strategy Update

The Committee considered report PAF/20/22. The following attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

- Cllr Beverley Egan, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years
- Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health
- Clare Burrell, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy
- Chris Martin, Director of Strategic Commissioning and Policy

Contributors provided the Committee with a presentation on the All-Age Carers Strategy, the presentation included:

- Care Act 2014 duties and supporting unpaid family carers
- Drivers for change
- Measuring carers' satisfaction including results sampled in the recent survey of adult carers
- The challenges and benefits of being a carer
- The six Commitments to Carers made by Essex County Council which are included in the Carers outcomes framework
- System support for carers
- A summary of the current offer of support and aspirations and targets for the next 18 months
- A film of carers who had supported the development of the strategy

Following the presentation, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

- (i) Communication was important to help some unpaid carers recognise they were actually a carer.
- (ii) It was important to embed across the system what information was available, how it could be accessed including through libraries, a GP or Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service or other setting.
- (iii) The estimate of 153,000 carers in Essex was based on national figures and what would come out of the census. It was also partly informed by interactions with individuals through other commissioned services and health partners. However, it also depended on how 'carer' was defined.
- (iv) Schools were one of the most structured settings to help identify young carers. Stronger collaboration between youth services and schools would also help with that identification. Digital support was important for young carers, as well as

peer support, both of which needed to be built on within the strategy.

- (v) Hearing the voice of the voluntary sector needed to be strengthened to ensure they received the support they needed. It was likely not to be an equal offer across the county as they were reliant on charitable donations and funding. It was highlighted that Local Alliances had just launched community funding grants rounds. Members recommended talking to the Community Foundation and Action for Family Carers if not already done so.
- (vi) A query was raised on how the proportion split between male and female family carers had informed the strategy. Some Members pointed out evidence that women made up a larger percentage of carers and that male and female carers may need different forms and levels of support. It was acknowledged that further disclosure may be needed in the next iteration of the strategy.
- (vii) Engagement with carers needed to be a continuous loop of feedback and dialogue. There was not a one size fits all in terms of engaging with carers, and the Carers Partnership Board was looking at a variety of ways carers could be informed about the progress of what was happening.
- (viii) A basic card or leaflet was advocated with just one contact number for support to hand out in various settings such as schools, youth clubs, libraries, dementia cafes. Ongoing work with Public Health around the newly launched Essex Wellbeing Service was highlighted and that becoming a first point of contact for help. It was agreed that further work including linking to other settings would be considered.
- (ix) The date of the next carer assessment should be put in assessments but this was not always consistent due to various reasons such as pressures and capacity. This process was being audited to see where it could be improved.
- (x) Providing respite was important and that short notice emergency respite was especially helpful. Further discussion with carers was needed to fully understand their preferences to help go beyond the initial survey findings. Insight Team work was underway and once that work was completed the results could be shared with the Committee.
- (xi) Age, employment and end of a caring role were three of the areas of focus for the work underway on Transitions.

- (xii) ECC needed to ensure that the carers strategy and resulting work linked up with other corporate strategies and workstreams, and those of partners, and did not become siloed.

#### Conclusion:

It was **agreed** that:

- Further information on Carer friendly schools and how many schools have engaged with this programme would be provided. There was reference also to young carers' passports in schools and accreditation linked to the Healthy Schools Programme.
- Further consideration be given as to whether the estimate of 153,000 carers in Essex could be further broken down and compare figures with other local authorities to see if Essex had a higher penetration rate.
- Further disclosure on male and female family carers may be needed in the next iteration of the strategy.
- The Insight Team work regarding respite would be shared once completed.

Contributors were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting.

## **5 Adult Community Learning Update**

The Committee considered report PAF/21/22. The following attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

- Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability
- Lisa Jarentowski, Adult Community Learning Principal

Contributors provided the Committee with a presentation on the Adult Community Learning Strategy, the presentation included:

- Portfolio vision and statement
- Key facts and statistics
- Key points on the delivery model including now offering hybrid sessions
- Response to previous comments made by the Committee to a previous draft of the Strategy
- Enrolment numbers which had not fully recovered yet to pre-pandemic levels
- Where centres were located and the areas of greatest need to help target outreach provision

Following the presentation, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

- (i) A significant number had transitioned from non-accredited courses in the previous year to accredited courses this year.
- (ii) Multiply was a new government funded programme delivered through the Adult Community Learning service to help adults improve their numeracy skills. Moving forward there would be work on how to combine ECC's own branding with that of a national scheme. Subtle ways of advertising Multiply maths had taken place through Cooking on a Budget, Managing Your Finances and TikTok videos.
- (iii) Concerns were raised on the real term reductions of funding from Government. The County Council continued to lobby on maintaining funding through the Department of Education. Even during the pandemic ACL had still managed to generate a surplus to reinvest back into ACL but there was a balance of what funding was received from Government and the charge of courses.
- (iv) A Government funding consultation was currently underway. Exact funding allocations would not be known until March 2023.
- (v) The detrimental impact on supported learners had been highlighted in the response to the funding consultation. An impact study had been instigated on the learning disabilities cohort as a result.
- (vi) ACL were working with Essex Property to constantly review the property portfolio to make the ACL centres as accessible as possible and in line with learner needs and with some flexibility in locations. The Digital Connectivity Team could also provide some support packages to help some students.
- (vii) Significant work around supported learners was underway including some support of apprenticeships and ACL were working closely with local employers to get them on board to help with job opportunities. There were a number of programmes for supported learners and it was important to ensure transferable skills were developed and documented. There was a successful online service where supported learners could develop an interactive CV.
- (viii) Curriculum planning had recently started using refreshed data to look at greater focus on provision in areas of highest need. ECC buildings was being looked into where provision could be facilitated. Provision in Braintree was in the Town Hall but had been moved to the library and different options of facilities was being considered in Castle Point.
- (ix) The mental health and wellbeing team were currently planning their future curriculum whilst mapping it back to the main Strategy and were aiming to present this in January.

- (x) Broader curriculum planning and presentations of draft plans also would be brought to Challenge Meetings in January. It was expected that the final plan would be ready by March.

Conclusion:

It was **agreed** that a further update would be brought to the committee in the new year including a work plan (particularly on implementation of strategy and related workstreams), progress and impact of actions so far.

Contributors were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting.

**6 Work Programme**

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/22/22 comprising the work programme for the committee.

**7 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Wednesday 14 December 2022.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.06pm.

**Chairman**