

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON THURSDAY 1 JULY 2010

Membership

Councillors

* J Aldridge (Chairman)	S Mayzes
* J Baugh	* D Morris
* A Brown	* R Pearson
L Dangerfield	* C Riley (Vice-Chairman)
* Mrs J Deakin	* T Sargent
Mrs M Hutchon (Vice Chairman)	M Skeels
* Mrs E M Hart	* J Young

Non-Elected Voting Members

Mr R Carson	* Reverend P Trathern
* Mr O Richards	* Ms M Uzzell

Named Substitute Elected Members

L Barton	R Callender
K Twitchen	

(* present)

The following Councillors were also present: Councillors Mrs T Higgins (substitute for Mrs M Hutchon) and J Knapman.

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.

44. Membership of the Committee

The Chairman welcomed Ms Marian Uzzell as a non-elected member representing the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentwood. Ms Uzzell explained her background and longstanding interest in educational matters.

45. Apologies

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Cllr Mrs M Hutchon	Cllr Mrs T Higgins
Mr R Carson	

46. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were recorded.

47. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 May 2010 were approved as a correct record.

48. Matters Arising/Chairman's items

- i) Having noted that Vivien Door had changed her working roles and no longer acted as the Committee Officer, the Chairman and the Committee formally recorded their thanks for her support over the preceding two years.
- ii) The Chairman reminded members that officials from Ofsted were visiting and reviewing children's services in Essex at present, with a specific emphasis on safeguarding. He would be interviewed and other members might be approached for their views.
- iii) The Chairman confirmed that he would wish to see visits to Children's Homes confirmed as an annual "event" in the Forward Look. These should not take place on a Committee meeting day.
- iv) Youth Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman reported that this Committee would be taking the lead role in monitoring development and implementation of the recommendations of the Youth Scrutiny Committee.
- v) Local Children's Trust Board. The Chairman hoped that the document that had recently been circulated, setting out the Board's involvement with safeguarding, had been helpful. It was noted that non-elected members had not yet received a copy. **Action:** Committee Officer to circulate copies.
- vi) Visits to Prospects College and other venues. The Chairman encouraged members to pay a formal visit to the College, or another location, such as Southend Airport, or the Boat Yard at Brightlingsea, where apprenticeship courses were running. These visits were very worthwhile and were greatly appreciated by both trainees and trainers. **Action:** Committee Officer to ask members if they wish to make such visits.
- vii) Department for Education. The Governance Officer pointed out that the Department for Education had recently replaced the Department for Children, Schools & Families, under Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education. Website: www.education.gov.uk.
- viii) Webcasting Pilot. The Chairman informed the meeting that the webcasting pilot would finish in September. It had been successful, in providing another means of keeping the public informed of what committees were doing and in encouraging transparency, but the present economic climate was putting severe constraints on budgets, and funding for webcasting could not continue after the September deadline. The Scrutiny Board would take this forward.
- ix) Sexual Assault Referral Centre. The Chairman informed the meeting that a Sexual Assault Referral Centre ("SARC") was due to open in Essex later in 2010, providing specialist medical and support services for men, women and children who have suffered sexual assault. The Government's intention was to see one of these established in each county. The Essex centre would be at Brentwood.

- x) Petitions. The Chairman reminded members that legislation was coming into effect, compelling local authorities to act on petitions submitted to them by members of the public. These would be subject to certain conditions, but ECC would have to respond. The proposed protocol for this would be considered by the July Council meeting.

49. **Safeguarding Children Sub-Committee**

The Committee noted the minutes of the Safeguarding Children Sub-Committee meeting held on 3 June 2010.

Councillor Sargent gave a brief update on the work and role of the Sub-Committee. She pointed out that it had tried to ensure that it would have as wide terms of reference as possible, in order to maximise the positive impact on the lives of children in Council care. She added that it was a standing committee, rather than a Task and Finish Group, as it would have an ongoing role, rather than just carrying out one specific task. Meetings would generally be held in public, although it might have to hold private meetings, where confidentiality was required. The most important role would be to find out what was happening at the “coal face”.

One particular concern was expressed about the sub-committee’s work: that members would encounter barriers and so would not be able to get the information they sought. Councillor Sargent responded by emphasising the will of committee members to carry out a thorough and effective job for the benefit of all those involved in the care process, but especially the young people. If any barriers were met, she would also refer the matter back to the Committee. The Governance Officer confirmed that not only were the terms of reference robust, but any sub-committee had the full powers of the parent committee in any case.

Another concern was that serious case reviews take too long to complete. In response, Councillor Sargent confirmed that this was another issue the sub-committee intended to look at. The Governance Officer pointed out that some progress had been made in this area, particularly in making summaries of reviews available to members.

The Governance Officer also confirmed, in response to a member’s query, that the Sub-Committee would be able to draw on whatever legal assistance it required in the course of its work.

The Committee **Approved** the terms of reference of the Safeguarding Children Sub-Committee, as amended, including the addition of the role of monitoring the corporate scorecard, insofar as it relates to safeguarding.

Amended Terms of Reference are attached to these minutes, as Annex A.

50. Educational Attainment Scoping Document

The Committee received the Educational Attainment Scoping Document, CYP/SCR/024, from Graham Redgwell, Governance Officer. He introduced the item by reminding members that the Committee had previously proposed that the educational attainments of children who are being looked after should be the next issue to consider, after Safeguarding,

There was general support for the proposal, as set out in the scoping document, and several points were made by Committee members:

- Essex has a relatively low performance compared to many other county councils – we need to find out if there is something in particular we are doing wrong and to ascertain what those councils with better attainment levels are doing right
- At this stage the study should be restricted to children in residential care only, rather than also including those being fostered
- Children in care homes tend to have a narrower range of social contacts than their contemporaries; so it is even more important for them to attend school
- There are certainly care homes in Essex that achieve good levels – the involvement and commitment of the staff here is vital
- Extra funding is available for children who are looked after, but there are also children from out of county in Essex schools who are not paid for by the sponsoring Council
- Schools may have to go over their published admission number if a child who is looked after applies to it – how does this influence the school's attitude?
- The number of placements a child experiences often has a direct relationship with achievement
- Contact should be made with the children themselves, to ascertain their viewpoint
- There may be some overlap with the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel. A representative of the Panel should sit on the Task and Finish Group, to ensure this does not happen.

In conclusion, the Committee **Agreed:**

- i) to form a Task and Finish Group (not a standing sub-committee) to look into this issue, comprising five members - Cllr Deakin, Cllr Morris, Cllr Pearson and Cllr Young, with Cllr Riley as an *ex officio* member, as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- ii) The Group should not await the findings of the Corporate Parenting Panel, but should proceed once the Ofsted inspection is over and the outcomes are known..
- iii) The Group should use a revised scoping document as the basis of its work, with children who are looked after themselves being added as witnesses.

51. Transformation

The Chairman welcomed Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Director of Commissioning SCF, to the meeting. The Committee received a tabled paper on the Schools Children & Families Commissioning Strategy Programme.

Wendi Ogle-Welbourn listed the programme's five key project areas:

- i) Looked after children
- ii) School improvement
- iii) Special Educational Needs
- iv) SCF transport
- v) Preventative services

The programme should run, within the above areas, and within the timeframe indicated, as follows:

- i) clarifying accountabilities (from January to May);
- ii) clarifying the children's needs in respect of these accountabilities (ie seeing what needs to be done) (from January to May);
- iii) turning these needs into outcomes we would like to achieve (from January to June);
- iv) understanding what interventions will work best to achieve these outcomes (and, as importantly, those that do not work) (from May to September);
- v) benchmarking our own levels and exploring the quality/costs of achieving these in the open market (from May to September);
- vi) developing options and carrying out a SWOT analysis of each option (from May to September);
- vii) presenting options to senior management and consulting wider partners (from end August to September);
- viii) presenting recommendations (from September to October);
- ix) developing a project plan to implement preferred options (from October to April 2011).

Wendi Ogle-Welbourn pointed out that, as a result of the budget cuts, they were looking at achieving 25% savings over the next three years. These would be achieved by improved business design and by reducing activities that were not required by statute. They were establishing a Commissioning Design model for SCF that clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of both Commissioner and Provider aligned to statutory obligations. Concentration on the delivery of statutory duties had meant that the actual commissioning of services in the areas of School Improvement and SENCAN would be with schools. The LA would not be funding non-statutory services other than targeted preventative activities; and schools, in their role of Commissioner, would demand services that could be provided from the Private Sector, or potentially, a Local Authority Trading Company. Such services that would not be commissioned from LA directly included provision of health and safety advice to schools, specialist advice for School Action Plus, provision of home education support and monitoring, and governor training advice and support.

The Chairman thanked her for her succinct presentation and invited comments and questions from members. The following points were raised:

- The Government would be reducing the County's "area based grant" by £6.1 million, but this would not impact on Safeguarding or Looked After Children
- One member had specific concerns over the erosion of existing services in relation to youth, with the knock-on effect of, for example, police having fewer resources to deal with anti-social behaviour. Wendi Ogle-Welbourn pointed out that other ways of providing similar services were being looked into – for example by involving voluntary workers. In response, it was suggested that such a burden might prove too onerous for the voluntary sector
- A member queried the expense of maintaining residential homes, pointing out that having a single buyer tended to drive up costs and suggesting the actual figures were unreasonably high. Wendi Ogle-Welbourn confirmed these were high, pointing out that statutory requirements gave rise to a very high number of staff being on duty at any one time; also, some providers tended to raise costs deliberately, for difficult placements. In response to a suggestion that foster carers should be paid more, to cut down on the need to maintain so many residential homes, she confirmed that this was indeed one of the options to be explored. In response to a query on how much assistance was provided for those foster carers with children with particular problems or needs, she added that levels of support had improved and were now adequate. The Chairman suggested that the Corporate Parenting Panel might give this whole issue further consideration.
- One member noted the apparent emphasis on finance in the programme; in response, Wendi Ogle-Welbourn pointed out that quality remained the most important element, as the criteria they used were split by 40% cost and 60% quality.

The Chairman thanked Wendi Ogle-Welbourn for her presentation. He offered whatever assistance the Committee could provide and asked that she kept the Committee informed of progress made.

In view of the discussions held, the Committee **Agreed** that the Chairman should contact Councillor Candy, as Cabinet Member for Children's Services, seeking her views on the relatively high costs involved in keeping children in residential accommodation, and asking whether there are any other issues that affect this matter.

52. Regulation 33 Visits and Member visits

Councillor Riley reminded members that Regulation 33 visits were a statutory requirement and were carried out by officers of the Council. A Regulation 33 Sub-Group met regularly and a new permanent officer post was being created to lead on this work.

Cllr Riley encouraged all members to make visits to residential homes. This not only demonstrated support for officers but it also provided members with the opportunity to talk to the children themselves. It was pointed out that the children were very often keen to talk to members and that making regular visits encouraged even better engagement, as relationships developed. It was also suggested that member visits might be locally focused.

The Committee would continue to receive regular updates on issues arising from visits.

53. Forward Look

The Committee considered the Forward Look Document, CYP/18/10, as agreed at May 2010 and introduced by Graham Redgwell, Governance Officer. A few points were raised and the Committee **Agreed**:

- Corporate Scorecard. As noted above, the Safeguarding Sub-Committee will monitor this in respect of Safeguarding. Other RED assessments would come to the Committee for consideration.
- Member Visits. Committee Officer will ascertain from members which homes they would like to visit.
- Home Education. Reverend Paul Trathen, as Chairman of the Badman Task & Finish Group, has written to Councillor Castle, seeking an ECC response to the findings of the Badman report; but no response has yet been received. The Chairman of the Committee will follow this up with Councillor Castle. It looked unlikely that the new Government would be moving ahead with the Badman recommendations.
- The Five Outcomes of *Every Child Matters* (viz be healthy, stay safe, enjoy & achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being) be used as a framework for any work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee.

54. Dates of Future Meetings

The Committee confirmed the dates of future meetings and noted that they may comprise:

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

Thursday 2 September 2010

Thursday 30 September *[Date changed from 7 October, after the meeting]*

Thursday 4 November 2010

Thursday 2 December 2010

Thursday 6 January 2011

Thursday 3 February 2011

Thursday 3 March 2011

Thursday 7 April 2011

Thursday 12 May 2011

The meeting closed at 12.15 pm.

Chairman

Annex A**Terms of Reference**

1. To exercise the powers of the CYP P&SC in holding the following to local democratic account:

Executive Member for Children's Services (ie Cabinet member for Children's Services)

Executive Director of Schools Children and Families

Essex Safeguarding Children's Board

Essex Children's Partnership Trust (constituent members appended below)

2. To receive annual reports from the above and others and to make recommendations for consideration by the CYP P&SC

3. To undertake periodic in-depth investigations into the Essex Safeguarding Children arrangements, identify findings and make recommendations for consideration by the CYP P&SC

4. To report on its activities at appropriate intervals but at least on a quarterly basis to the CYP P&SC

5. The Sub-Committee will remain in being until decided otherwise by the CYP P&SC

6. The Sub-Committee is empowered to fill any vacancies in its membership, or co-opt appropriate people as members or advisers, subject to ratification by the next meeting of the CYP P&SC

7. The Sub-Committee will monitor the Corporate Scorecard, insofar as it relates to safeguarding, and will make regular reports on its findings to the Committee.

Appendix to Terms of Reference***Members of the Children's Trust arrangements*****Local Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships**

Basildon, Billericay & Wickford Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Braintree Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Brentwood Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Castle Point and Rochford Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Chelmsford Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Colchester Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Epping Forest Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Harlow Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Maldon Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Tendring Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Uttlesford Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Groups represented on the Stakeholder Forum

Association of Secondary Headteachers
in Essex
Association of Special Education Senior
Managers in Essex
Basildon District Council
Braintree District Council
Brentwood Borough Council
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford Borough Council
Children's Fund Essex
Children's Society, Chelmsford
Colchester Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council
Epping Forest Voluntary Action Group
Essex and Southend Healthy Schools
Partnership
Essex Community Foundation
Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services
Essex County Council
Essex Fire & Rescue Service
Essex Forum SNAP
Essex Foster Carers Council
Essex Police
Essex Primary Headteachers' Association
Essex Probation Service
Essex Racial Equality Council
Essex School Governors' Association
Essex Schools Forum
Families InFocus (Essex)
Harlow District Council
Learning & Skills Council (Essex)
Maldon District Council
Mid Essex Primary Care Trust
NHS Acute Trusts
North East Essex Primary Care Trust
North Essex Partnership NHS Foundation
Trust
Parentline Plus
Rainbow Services
Rainer
Rochford District Council
SCOPE
South East Essex Primary Care Trust
South Essex Partnership NHS Foundation
Trust
South West Essex Primary Care Trust
Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board
Tendring District Council
The Prince's Trust
Uttlesford District Council

West Essex Primary Care Trust
WHCM Counselling and Support

Organisations that attend Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships

Brentwood Catholic Diocese
Chelmsford Church of England Diocese
Essex Association of Boys Clubs