

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON
THURSDAY 5 APRIL 2012**

Membership

Councillors

* J Aldridge (Chairman)	* R Madden
S Barker	* D Morris
* J Baugh	R Pearson
* J Deakin	* J Pike (substitute for S Barker)
* I Grundy	* C Riley (Vice-Chairman)
* E Hart	* T Sargent
* T Higgins (Vice-Chairman)	* J Young
* S Hillier	

Non-Elected Voting Members

* Mr R Carson	* Rev R Jordan
* Mr S Geddes	Ms M Uzzell
(* present)	

The following Members were also present:

Councillor A Brown	Councillor V Metcalfe
Councillor R Gooding	Councillor A Naylor
Councillor G McEwen	

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.

11. Membership of the Committee

The Chairman welcomed the Reverend Richard Jordan as representative of the Church of England. He noted that Rev. Jordan is Faith Adviser for the Bradwell area of the Chelmsford Diocese and Parish Priest of St Nicholas, Rawreth.

12. Apologies and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Cllr S Barker	Cllr J Pike
Cllr R Pearson	

13. Declarations of Interest

With regard to the Item on Youth Services: Councillor Higgins declared an interest as Chair of the Board of Colchester YMCA; and Councillor Baugh declared that he delivers youth services in the private sector, co-running a youth club in Braintree.

14. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 January 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. Matters Arising/Chairman's Report

- a) Eating disorders. The Chairman reported that the Eating Disorders and Obesity Focus groups with young people in Essex had recently produced an Interim Report on their findings. Copies would be circulated to Members after the meeting.
- b) Members were reminded that the Chairman of the Communities and Older People PSC (COP) had invited all Members of this Committee to accompany COP Members on a proposed visit to see the work of the South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT), on the afternoon Wednesday 9 May. Members would be circulated with further details, as they became available, after the meeting.
- c) Portfolio changes. The Chairman informed Members that, following the Council meeting on 8 May, there would be some changes to the Cabinet. He would be moving to become Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care and Councillor Ray Gooding would be taking over the Cabinet portfolio for Children's Services. The new Chairman of this Committee would be announced in due course.
- d) Members' attention was drawn to the recent successful Ofsted inspection on adoption services (details available on the intranet).

16. Youth Services Provision

Introduction

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Stephen Castle, Cabinet Member for Education and 2012 Games, Terry Reynolds, Director for Learning, School Improvement and Early Years, and Michael O'Brien, County Manager – Youth Work. The Committee considered Report CYP/09/12, which set out the current situation with regard to the provision of youth services in the County, and proposals for the future.

Councillor Castle reminded the meeting that, following the stopping of government funding, at the end of 2010, the decision had been made for "Connexions" to bear most of the cuts, and the consequences had been worked through over the past 12 months. The new proposals needed Members to play an important role. This was pre-strategy, but the proposed new Strategy Groups would need to start up quite soon.

Mr O'Brien gave a brief presentation, bringing out some salient points. He confirmed that, although the restructuring of the Integrated Youth Service was brought on by the withdrawal of Government funding and the consequent need to make £7m saving, the Service was in need of streamlining, and changes would have been implemented in any case.

He pointed out that, although Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 refers to the requirement for the provision of "sufficient ... activities", no definition of "sufficient" is given in the Act.

Current practice is to open clubs with a programme of some sort, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, rather than have purely informal sessions, with no particular structure. The intention is to move toward a situation where local communities do want the service.

There are four elements: 1, mobile and detached workers, working with communities, encouraging their own initiatives. 2, targeted youth centres, again encouraging communities. 3, encouraging attainment eg in Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, or Prince's Trust. 4, a specialised group of 24 workers, working on a limited caseload.

Work is continuing on an ongoing dynamic Equality Impact Assessment. This caters for the needs of vulnerable young people; but this work is also complemented by the support given to a broader part of the voluntary sector, enhancing facilities and opportunities for young people in general.

There are five main areas of activity:

1. Developing local youth strategy groups to act as consultative bodies.
2. Seeking the views of young people and relevant stakeholders to assess their needs and priorities.
3. Restructuring the service to ensure it is fit for purpose, and considering whether it should become commissioned, in whole or in part.
4. Presenting proposals regarding a future target operating model, seeing how it can contribute to a wider agenda, including that of Big Society, citizenship, early intervention and preventative.
5. Working with the voluntary sector, to see how they can deliver more provision, working with local communities.

The Cabinet Member made two further points:

1. He acknowledged the sensitivity of the changes being made to youth provision and confirmed that he would ensure that, in future, Members were informed directly about any local changes affecting them.
2. He recognised the need to increase capacity for the Third Sector here. A resource of £200,000 has been added to the budget for this purpose.

Before inviting Members to ask questions or make observations about the proposals, the Chairman expressed the view that he did not believe that there were any objections to the fact that a review had taken place but there are Members concerned about not being kept up to date on progress and

disappointed that they had not been involved and able to comment at an earlier stage.

Discussion

After discussion it was AGREED that the following observations would be passed to the Cabinet Member.

General Issues

- **Staffing.** It was accepted that the Council would have wished to review youth services regardless of the changed financial situation, but with the substantial number of staff who have been made redundant and those who have also chosen to take up other employment, there was some concern that there remained a sufficient number of staff to undertake the different roles now required of them.
- **Equality Impact Assessment.** Members noted that this was an ongoing process, but it was suggested that it should have been completed at a much earlier stage in the process. It was AGREED that the Assessment should be circulated to Members.
- **Leisure elements of youth work.** Members recognised the value of giving young people the opportunity to take part in schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince's Trust; but they also believed that there was a definite place for the provision of simple recreational facilities for young people, with the emphasis on enjoyment. (NB Mr O'Brien pointed out that the kind of provision in each location would be determined at the local level – eg, if a certain centre waned more emphasis on more traditional "fun" activities, then it would adopt this policy.)
- **Young People's Own Views.** In response to a Member's question on what young people themselves wanted, Mr O'Brien pointed out that the most commonly expressed wishes were to have somebody to talk to, and a safe place to meet friends. He added that there was often a desire for the opportunity to take part in an activity involving some element of danger.
- **Extended Schools Provision.** Members expressed their support for the reinstatement of the full Extended Schools provision and the Cabinet Member's continued lobbying of Ministers. They agreed with him that schools had an important role to play as part of the local community. Members noted the Cabinet Member's point that some schools were much more likely to engage with the community than others and that Members themselves could have a role in encouraging such involvement.
- **Youth Conference.** Members also expressed support for the Cabinet Member's intention to hold a countywide youth conference later in 2012. They emphasised the need to involve all interested parties, including young people and Committee members.
- **"Targeting".** There was concern over just what this meant and how it would work. Specific reference was made to the danger of certain groups falling through the net, by being just out of the relevant target group. The Cabinet Member confirmed that NEETs were a particularly targeted group, and that budget restrictions might mean that he would

have to take a view on the extent of targeting. Again, local conditions would be a significant factor. Members sought further written clarification on targeted groups.

- Youth Buses. There was also some uncertainty about these; further written clarification was sought on their retention and likely numbers.
- Local Involvement. Concern was expressed on the apparent emphasis on local involvement. It was suggested that one of the main problems encountered by those hard-to-reach youngsters was often the lack of engagement of their parents. In response, it was pointed out that the intention was not to rely solely on the local sector, but that it formed another element.
- Voluntary Sector. The proposals pre-supposed the involvement of the voluntary sector, particularly in respect of Youth Strategy Groups. There was concern over the level of contribution that could be expected from the voluntary sector, both in terms of money and of time and abilities. These were likely to be very variable factors, depending on areas.

Youth Strategy Groups

Members wished to see these established and acknowledged the principles behind them. However, they raised certain issues, and hoped these could be resolved without delay, as it is accepted that the Groups would be set up very quickly.

- Lifespan. Members thought they were not likely to be long term bodies, but they welcomed the Cabinet Member's views on this.
- Terms of Reference. It was suggested that a steer on the underlying principles be included in the Terms of Reference, particularly giving Groups the leeway to reflect local needs. Another element needing clarification involved the voting arrangements; for example, whether the views of County Members would prevail in case of dispute in Group discussions.
- Membership. Groups should have the scope to vary membership, for example to include involving more non-County members. Also, it was proposed that it might be helpful for each Group to have a named officer lead to co-ordinate its activities and to ensure that proposals are submitted to the Cabinet Member and that reporting lines between the Groups and him are clear and unequivocal.
- Additional Funding. There were a number of issues raised in respect of the £200,000 that needed clarifying:
 - how the monies would be distributed (eg equally by district, or per capita, or skewed toward the disadvantaged)
 - whether there will be limitations on how it may be spent (eg on capital projects or on revenue costs)
 - whether the number of projects may be limited
 - whether there will be deadlines in place for applications.
- Countywide View. The need for each Group to consider local issues was noted; but it was suggested that a mechanism be created to co-

ordinate comments from different Groups and thereby get a overview of developments across the county.

- Locality Children's Commissioning Delivery Boards. It was proposed that there will not be any formal links with the existing Locality Children's Commissioning Delivery Boards, either now or in the future, as the two bodies could be in competition for the same funding.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and his colleagues for their input. He looked forward to a positive outcome from these developments.

17. People with lifelong disabilities – All-age commissioning pilot (transitions)

Mr Dave Hill (Executive director, SCF Directorate) was present and drew Members' attention to the Report CYP/10/12, as circulated, which set out the proposed new outline business model for commissioning all-age services for people with lifelong disabilities. He reminded Members that this was an outline business case; he hoped that a full business case will be developed by the summer, and that there would be a further opportunity for pre-scrutiny at a later stage in the process.

Mr Hill pointed out that there was a large demographic pressure on the system, both through a greater number of individuals surviving through childhood, and through survivors of accidents, who would not have previously survived such trauma. The County spent just under £200 million per annum on those with lifelong disabilities – and may spend from £1 million to £1.4 million in an individual's lifetime. Historically, the transition phase has been a problem area.

The new approach attempts to take a "whole life" view, to provide as fulfilling a life as possible and to focus on the actual individuals concerned. Very few providers think in terms of whole life. Mr Hill had been asked to lead this work on behalf of the Corporate Leadership Team, re-emphasising this approach.

Several points were raised by Members:

- The importance of the healthcare element was noted. Mr Hill confirmed that the health authorities were also engaged.
- Concern was expressed over the commissioning element, insofar as costs had to be measured against levels of care. Mr Hill pointed out that understanding people's needs was fundamental to the commissioning process, which meant talking to them to achieve the best outcome. This part would drive the process.
- There was a need to educate parents and carers, to emphasise the individuality of children, and often to change the mindset of parents, who frequently needed to let their children go. Mr Hill informed Members that his previous authority (Merton) had introduced mentors, who encouraged parents to think more boldly about their children. This was very successful and he hoped to introduce a similar scheme in Essex.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hill. The Committee sees this a promising piece of work proposed that a Member of the Committee should join the group taking this forward. This suggestion was welcomed by Mr Hill.

18. Speech and language update

The Chairman welcomed Mr Stewart McArthur, Director Commissioning, SCF. The Committee considered Report CYP/11/12, which provided an update on the ongoing work on commissioning speech and language therapy, since the last detailed report to the Committee in April 2011.

Members noted that all targets had been met, relating to:

- Countywide objectives/priorities. These have been clearly stated
- Specifications. An overall model setting out county wide objectives, which will be used as the framework for all future specifications, has been agreed by all Primary Care Trusts
- Responsibility for budgets. This has been clearly assigned
- Audits. Considerable work has been undertaken and is ongoing, to establish both external and internal audits of provision. All categories of need have been included, and a number of parties, from schools staff, LA workers and an independent speech therapist, have provided input to produce a model that will be further developed
- Closer working, which has been achieved with Health Providers, in spite of changes in these over the year.

Most Speech and Language Therapy work (SLT) has focused on the West Essex PCT. ECC has been involved in the commissioning process, with Hertfordshire Community Trust becoming a new Child Development Centre provider.

The situation across the rest of the county remains the same; but certain areas will be targeted over the coming year, eg secondary school provision in Central Essex, and the reduction of spot purchasing in Mid and West Essex.

Mr McArthur emphasised the need for a collaborative approach, so that both the local authority and the NHS feel they have the same aims. Also, a unity in approach was being sought across all services for children – eg SLT and occupational therapy – so that parents would only have one point of contact.

He pointed out that the Elklan programme had been used successfully in South Essex for several years; and that embedding it across the whole county was a key priority.

The Chairman thanked Mr McArthur for the update and the Committee hoped that these changes would continue to lead to improvements across the County.

19. Families Safeguarding Sub-Committee

Councillor Madden gave a brief update on the work of the Sub-Committee. He indicated that:

- Simon Hart, Chairman of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board, will attend the May meeting of the Sub-Committee. He will also take over as Chairman of the Adults' Safeguarding Board shortly.
- The Tracker Document, which currently indicates progress made in respect of the Ofsted recommendations in respect of safeguarding children, will be aligned with the Childrens Sustained Improvement Plan, and will also incorporate Adult safeguarding matters.

It was noted that the Adults Safeguarding Board had been restructured, along similar lines to that of the Children's Board. Mr Hill agreed to circulate the structure for both to Members.

20. Corporate parenting issues

Councillor Riley made three points:

- He encouraged Members to engage with the carers' groups for children in care
- The number of children in care now stood at 1498
- Quadrants – he encouraged Members to contact Quadrant Managers and spend half a day with one, seeing their work at first hand.

21. Forward Look

The Committee confirmed Report CYP/12/12, showing its Forward Look up to December 2012.

It was agreed that Special Schools needed to be connected to work on with customer service and the SEN/AEN review.

22. Prospective meeting dates 2012-2013

The Committee noted Report CYP/13/12, which listed prospective meeting dates from June 2012 to May 2013. These were agreed, as follows:

Thursday 7 June 2012
Thursday 5 July 2012
Thursday 6 September 2012
Thursday 4 October 2012
Thursday 1 November 2012
Thursday 6 December 2012
Thursday 3 January 2013
Thursday 7 February 2013
Thursday 7 March 2013
Thursday 4 April 2013
Thursday 9 May 2013

23. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee confirmed the date of the next scheduled meeting as Thursday 10 May 2012 (the second Thursday of the month in order to avoid a clash with local elections). It was noted that this would take the form of a private workshop session.

24. Committee Chairman

Councillor Riley drew Members' attention to the huge amount of work that had been carried out by Councillor Aldridge during his time as the Committee's Chairman. Councillor Sargent echoed these sentiments and added that his time at the helm had seen a great development of the Committee and its role. The Committee endorsed the Members' views.

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm.