

		AGENDA ITEM 4
		PAF/26/19
Committee:	People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	14 November 2019	
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Special Educational Needs – update

Purpose:

To consider the report attached in Appendix 2 providing an update on a review undertaken of SEN provision in Essex. This follows on from a public consultation exercise completed earlier this year.

To consider the role of the Committee in continuing to oversee the redesign of the service, and the format and timelines for future work on this issue.

Background:

The 14 February 2019 meeting of the Committee discussed with Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Development and Innovation, the aspirations and objectives behind a planned public consultation on future SEN services. A link to the meeting papers is here – [PAF 14 Feb 2019 agenda papers](#)

As part of that formal consultation the County Council was looking to have a principles and values based conversation with parents and discuss a vision for long-term service provision. The formal public consultation exercise was completed and an analysis of the feedback was incorporated in an update from Mr Holloway at a meeting of this Committee on 11 July 2019. An extract of the minutes recording that discussion is attached as **Appendix 1** overleaf and a link to the meeting papers is here [PAF 11 July 2019 agenda papers](#)

Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation will be in attendance today to provide the update and participate in discussion.

An extract of the Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH at 10am on Thursday, 11 July 2019

4. Special Educational Needs

The Committee considered report PAF/17/19.

The County Council had completed a formal public consultation on principles, values and vision for future SEN service provision. Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation, joined the meeting to introduce the update and outline the feedback received.

During the discussion the following was highlighted or acknowledged:

- Growth in SEN demand had been greater than general growth in school pupil nos. Lifelong outcomes for those with SEN are poor.
- The County Council was looking to improve outcomes for those with SEN and communications needed to be clear and framed to demonstrate that there would be continuing support and that parents can have a meaningful input.
- A desired outcome from the review was to encourage a concept of a school-led system to share resource and challenges rather than just one school having to struggle on its own with an issue.
- An overriding message was that respondents wanted the SEN population to be integrated into the community and not be separate.
- There had been some concerns raised during the consultation that there was to be the creation of a two-tier system and that SEN pupils were going to be moved out of main stream schools.
- The intention was that the new service worked more closely with schools and the school effectiveness team to further support the aspirations of SEN pupils.
- Health and wellbeing and emotional support had been prioritised by respondents with choice paramount.
- Mr Holloway had attended meetings of SEN co-ordinators to also get their views - a significant proportion of them felt threatened and under resourced.
- Engagement had started with groups of parents to entice young people with autism to get back into mainstream education.

- SEN has not really benefitted in past from developer contributions but have started now. Will be looking as part of ten-year planning/forecasting.
- The County Council were working more closely with planning authorities to include provision for autism friendly environments in future plans. Generally, the feedback from existing schools was that the bigger challenge was meeting care needs not the lack of physical space.
- Four new specialist schools were planned in Essex. With the development of garden communities further work would be required to predict the location of the future SEN population.
- There was a desire to make the Essex Family Forum more representative of the population. The service also wanted to use more direct engagement with parents and schools. Some special schools had already facilitated meetings with parents.
- The service would continue to consult with clusters of schools as it was challenging to engage with all 500 plus schools in Essex on an individual basis.
- The new strategy would need to look at existing schools and making them fit for purpose as well as developing specialist schools.
- Members questioned whether small rural schools would be particularly limited on how many SEN pupils can be supported and that they did not see this specifically addressed in the strategy. It was highlighted that there was a minor works capital programme which would fund reasonable adjustments to include a child.

Conclusion

The Chairman thanked Mr Holloway for the update, noted that further engagement work was planned during the Autumn Term on the new SEND structure and action plan and, accordingly, suggested that the Committee should be further updated at its November meeting.