
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.15am in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 11 April 2019

Present:

County Councillors:

M Maddocks (Chairman)
J Baker (Vice Chairman)
J Chandler (Vice Chairman)
M Durham
C Guglielmi (substitute)
J Henry
P May
M McEwan
P Reid
C Souter

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer and Sharon Westfield de Cortez, Healthwatch Essex was also present throughout.

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Butland and Egan and Richard Carson, Educational Co-optee. No declarations of interest were made.

2 Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public

4. Drug gangs, knife crime and county lines

The Committee considered report PAF/09/19 comprising an update from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) on the development of a Violence and Vulnerability Framework (VVF). Also attached was a draft scoping document to be considered to framework future work.

Mr Greg Myddelton, Assistant Director for Commissioning, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, joined the meeting to introduce the issues.

During discussion the following was highlighted, acknowledged and/or noted:

(i) The OPFCC had led the development of a partnership strategy for violence and vulnerability.

(ii) The VVF covered all types of serious violence and vulnerability including gangs and county lines activity.

(iii) The VVF had been developed as a collaborative process collectively taking a child welfare, victim centred and early intervention approach.

(iv) The OPFCC had looked at national and international interventions to try and broaden scope of the VVF, assessing each for universal or specialist application. The issue was larger than just gangs and required a more holistic approach to understand the wider determinants.

(v) It had been seen in previous programmes that there was sometimes a risk in using previous offenders in advice and educational programmes as sometimes the messaging did not work so effectively.

(vi) Home Office funding for two years had been received which had assisted in the creation of a new violence and vulnerability unit, recruitment of a new co-ordinator/programme manager and the development of various prevention, outreach and early intervention initiatives. Some thought would need to be given to sustainability of these initiatives and alternative funding etc if the Home Office funding ended.

(vii) The Programme Manager had been recruited to be a partnership resource and the OPFCC had committed to continue to provide the post. The expectation was that they would continue to receive some national funding to facilitate that.

(viii) The OPFCC was keen to develop a workplan (to be managed by the Programme Manager) that sat under the framework with timelines, project milestones and targets to help evaluate the VVF. There would also be discussions with local strategic leaders to see if the ambitions being set were realistic.

(viii) Reference was made to the Risk Avert tool developed by Essex County Council for use with school-age children. The tool was not in all schools (with take-up more successful in some areas than others) but there were efforts to encourage further take up. It was important to reach school professionals as well as the pupils.

(ix) It remained a challenge to engage with the school sector as a whole as it usually had to be done on an individual basis although there were some opportunities to also communicate through the respective Head Teachers Associations. It was also important to engage more with

alternative educational provision (e.g. pupil referral units, those educated at home etc).

(x) Through their Community Safety Fund the OPFCC had funded smaller community groups to deliver local interventions. It was important to stress that this was not always solely about gang activity but about supporting vulnerable people more generally.

(xi) The VVF would encourage further data and intelligence sharing to inform local early intervention and prevention activity.

(xii) It was expected that an Operational Board below the VVF Strategic Board should be able to collate examples of good practice and arrange for its dissemination.

(xiii) Members questioned whether the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable would appoint one person to oversee County Lines work. That role could be placed with the Programme Manager although it was stressed that it should not be an opportunity for organisations to divest their responsibilities.

Conclusion

It was agreed:

- (i) To note the briefing from the OPFCC and subsequent discussion which would inform the ongoing review of drug gangs, knife crime and county lines;
- (ii) That a Task and Finish Group now be established to continue scrutiny work on this issue and that members be invited to indicate their interest in serving on the Group (an all-ECC member email would also be sent);
- (iii) That the draft scoping document presented within the agenda pack be approved to framework future work by the Task and Finish Group;
- (iv) The duration of the Task and Finish Group was expected to continue over the medium term and a regular reporting mechanism back to the full committee would need to be determined.

The Chairman thanked Mr Myddelton for his attendance and he then left the meeting.

The meeting then adjourned at 11.30am and reconvened ten minutes later.

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5. Relationship Management

The Committee considered report PAF/10/19 which comprised further information requested at the January 2019 meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed:

- (i) To note the report; and
- (ii) Invite the Executive Director, Adult Social Care to attend in July to update the Committee on the refresh of the Market Strategy.

6. Work Programme

The committee considered report PAF/11/19.

It was agreed:

- (i) To note the report; and
- (ii) Seek confirmation from the Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation that comments from Councillor Baker on the draft recent SEN consultation document were duly considered for inclusion in the final version.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Committee activity day was scheduled for Thursday 9 May 2019 which may be held in public, be a private session, briefing or site visit – to be confirmed nearer the time.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.54am.

Chairman