

	AGENDA ITEM 4
	PAF/17/19
Committee:	People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 July 2019
Enquiries to:	Name: Graham Hughes Designation: Senior Democratic Services Officer Contact details: 033301 34574 Graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk

Special Educational Needs – review and public consultation

Purpose:

To consider the report attached in Appendix 2 providing an update on a review undertaken of SEN provision in Essex and the outcomes from a recently completed public consultation.

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.

An extract of the minutes recording that discussion is attached as **Appendix 1** overleaf and 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 has now been completed and an analysis of the feedback is incorporated in the attached update report from Mr Holloway (**Appendix 2**).

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 at 10.15am in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 14 February 2019

5. Special Educational Needs

The Committee considered and noted report PAF/06/19 which comprised an Executive Summary of a review undertaken on current SEN provision including parent and teacher views. Also attached within the report was a draft scoping document to be considered to framework future work. Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation joined the meeting to introduce the item and assist initial discussion.

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

- Essex had a higher number assessed with Special Educational Needs than statistical neighbours and that trend was continuing.
- The number of people diagnosed with autism had also increased resulting in resourcing extra provision for those people in schools.
- The County Council had specialist autism support centres in eight maintained schools offering an integrated model of provision which over time could help pupils integrate back into the mainstream educational provision in the school.
- Between 250-300 pupils a year received their SEN support outside of the maintained school sector in Essex due to insufficient places being available in the maintained sector but this was more expensive and outcomes could be variable in that sector (some could be outside of the county of Essex).
- The new garden communities' developments would put further pressure on school provision and likely lead to further numbers being diagnosed with SEN.
- There had also been a rise in exclusions and it was likely that some could be connected to autism, speech and language difficulties.
- There was no obligation on schools to notify ECC about pupils not accessing full-time education. A new OFSTED framework would help emphasise the importance of this.
- Further attention needed to be given to post-16 transitions particularly looking at SEN provision in colleges and other vocational settings so as to avoid the leaving of school being seen and experienced as a "cliff-edge".

- The County Council was looking to restructure SEN services. It would be launching a public consultation the following month inviting parents and carers etc to co-design future service provision and help identify where and how some services could be delivered differently.
- There could be some shrinkage of non-statutory services. Staff were also being involved in the co-designing of future services.
- Members queried the outcome being sought from the planned public consultation and whether it was about changing the quality of services and/or reducing the financial costs of the service. It was stressed that it was about quality and direction of a service which had evolved in response to legislative changes over the years rather than being designed from the start. The County Council wanted to move towards seeking specific outcomes rather than outputs (i.e. volume count on how many people have accessed a service). It was suggested that one specific outcome being sought was to encourage a better understanding by parents that resource is limited and that spending heavily in bespoke specific circumstances would limit ability to invest more widely.
- The County Council wanted support to move towards a 'whole school' approach permeating change through the whole school.

Conclusion

The Chairman thanked Mr Holloway for his attendance. It was **agreed** that (i) a draft of the proposed consultation document(s) be distributed to members in advance of publication for general comment on style and readability (ii) the Committee intended to continue to monitor the consultation process and would continue to liaise with Mr Holloway regarding further discussions (iii) the draft scoping document be used to framework future work.