

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 9 MARCH 2015 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY**

Present: Councillors Miles (Chairman), Patten (Vice-Chairman), Bucke, C Callender, Hawkins, Howard, D R Mayzes and Pugh.

Also Present: Councillor McWilliams (Well-being and Partnerships Portfolio Holder).

In Attendance: Corporate Director (Life Opportunities) (Paul Price), Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney), and Democratic Services Officer (Janey Nice),

Also in Attendance: Lee Bailey (Lead for Partnerships Delivery, Family Operations – Essex County Council) and Benjamin Mann (Senior Policy and Strategy Advisor – Essex County Council).

54. WELCOME

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to all present at the meeting.

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Amos (with Councillor D R Mayzes substituting) and Tracey (with Councillor Bucke substituting).

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

57. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

With reference to Minute No.45 of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 January 2015, at which, it had been requested that a further report be brought back to this Committee on the subject of Child Poverty, with the appropriate Portfolio Holder and an appropriate representative from Essex County Council (ECC) in attendance, the Chairman was delighted to welcome to the meeting, Paul Price, the Council's Corporate Director (Life Opportunities), Lee Bailey (Lead for Partnerships Delivery, Family Operations – Essex County Council) and Benjamin Mann (Senior Policy and Strategy Advisor – Essex County Council).

Essex County Council's Senior Policy and Strategy Advisor, Benjamin Mann, delivered a presentation, which, mindful of a National Child Poverty Strategy that had been released in April 2014, touched upon the Government's commitment to eliminating poverty by 2020. He said that poverty cost Essex emotionally, physically and financially, with 15.4% of children in Essex living in poverty however, this was lower than the national average of 18.1%.

Mr Mann said that Child Poverty was measured by the number of children who lived in a family where the annual income was less than 60% of the median average income of £13,143 however, that figure was subject to national influence, for example, the rate of inflation, which affected the number of children below or above that line. He went on to say that poverty was a complex issue with worklessness and low income being the fundamental causes of poverty. Other drivers were, he said, health (particularly mental health and drug and alcohol use), housing, debt, education and training, isolation, low pay, unemployment, irregular work and zero hour contracts.

Mr Mann explained how the reduction in child poverty, nationally, had dropped from a high in 2011 with data indicating a downward trend, but the key peaks of poverty were in Tendring, Harlow and Basildon. He showed a map which gave details of the wards in those areas, which had low income families.

Mr Mann said that tackling worklessness and low income were the key objectives of the Strategy but working with the most vulnerable families took time. He said that some excellent work was being undertaken with families across Essex and he summarised the longer-term approach to working with families into three core phases:

- Working with the most vulnerable;
- Building individual, family and community resilience; and
- Reducing worklessness and low income

Mr Bailey spoke on issues as these affected Tendring and that working with N E Essex Local Children's Partnership Board had identified four key priorities, which were:

- **Priority 1**
Stay Safe – Protecting children and young people from harm and neglect;
- **Priority 2**
Early Help – Developing resilience in families to help reduce dependency on public services by enhancing their capacity to resolve their own problems;
- **Priority 3**
Starting Well – Enabling children to get the best start in life; and
- **Priority 4**
Developing Well – Promoting good health for children and young people and reducing health inequalities.

Mr Mann talked about a holistic approach to tackling poverty in Tendring and said that a coordinated approach to school readiness had worked well and continued to show good progress.

In response to a Member's question with regard to the 8.7% increase in school readiness from 2013 to 2014 and what the figure had been based upon, the Chairman agreed that the Committee needed to see the whole picture however it did indicate that Tendring was improving. It was commented that the Family Solution service had had a massive impact in Tendring with the team currently working with 100 families. The Chairman commented that the Council was outperforming other Districts in Essex and was putting in more resources and working together with partners. Mr Mann commented that the coordinated activity in Tendring was making a real difference.

Mr Mann displayed another map showing the profile of poverty within Tendring, with the main driver being low income. In response to a Member's question as to whether the figures were against national figures, Mr Mann commented that he was only interested in the Tendring figures, which gave examples of levels of divorce, long-term sick and unemployment as factors in the causes of child poverty.

Mr Mann highlighted other concerns, showing levels of the local population Not in Education or Employment or Training (NEETS) for each ward. He added that around 68% of children in Poverty lived in a family with three or more children.

Members asked questions concerning the living wage, whether that was a reliable driver for reducing poverty and was this reflected in the Strategy. Mr Mann said Tendring was not on target for eradicating child poverty by 2020 but was in decline by 1% with a number of factors preventing it from reaching its target.

A Member commented that it was not a new issue, especially in Tendring, with charts showing the area had the worse child poverty figures in Essex and it was difficult to get a sense of what was or was not working. The Member added that he had found it very difficult to get any figures or minutes of meetings of the Partnership and there appeared to be little or

no details of structure or how the Partnership was working with Tendring. Mr Mann agreed that this was a valid observation and he had set out to make the Strategy a document that people read and which was issued on a quarterly basis to enable people to compare what was happening in every district within Essex. A Member commented that a report on Tendring Children and Young People's Strategy was being presented to Cabinet next week however, the report had no measurable target so what was the point of adopting a strategy when there was no target to work to. Mr Mann said he would work with the Council on a regular basis and see what he could do to achieve a positive outcome.

Mr Mann said that ECC had no budget to resource the work on child poverty and the Chairman said that a budget was not important if resources were shared and the partners worked together.

Mr Bailey said he would ensure that the minutes of meetings of the Partnerships were readily available and more easy to find and he would take this issue back to the Partnership Board with a recommendation that these be made available to all who needed to access them.

Councillor McWilliams, as Portfolio Holder for Well-being and Partnerships, commented that Family Solutions saved other local authorities a lot of money and gave examples of the fire service and NHS. She said that school readiness was another issue with some children not knowing how to behave, some children still in nappies when starting school and others needing to learn how to play and even learn how to read books.

Councillor Patten commented that looking at P.20 of Appendix B to the Report A.1 Child Poverty thought that some of the points should be refreshed and that the Council's Strategy should bear a passing resemblance to the County Council Strategy as at the moment, the Council's document did not show any relationship or show any target or outcomes. He thought it should be focussed on wards like Pier for example, and it was also important to acknowledge rural areas. Mr Price said it would be useful to align with child partnerships and added that Council's landlord accreditation scheme to provide safe and good accommodation for children. Mr Bailey offered his support to the Council's Officers to prepare its Strategy.

Councillor Hawkins said the issue needed to raise awareness to Members as many of them did not realise that this was a big issue. He added it was very careful when draft reports were sent to Cabinet that they reflected issues where and when it was relevant and said he had not been aware that child poverty was part of the Youth Strategy.

Councillor Patten asked if the issue of child poverty was a priority for the Council and Mr Price said it was and he had been working on it. Councillor Patten, through the Chair, asked that it be minuted that the Corporate Director (Corporate Services) Martyn Knappett had said that this was not a priority issue for the Council.

After the Democratic Services Manager summarised the issues the Committee had discussed:

- TDC Strategy should bear some resemblance to the Essex County Council Strategy;
- No mention made of whether there were targets to be met;
- When draft reports are sent to Cabinet make it clear that this is a strategic priority of Council;
- This subject could be included on new Member induction, new Members to be made aware;
- Issue is really important to reputation of area and that this subject is addressed., report issues every six months – if not addressed the reputation of Tendring area will not be improved

- Benjamin Mann and Lee Bailey had offered their support to the Council's Officers preparing Child Poverty Strategy.
- The Chairman (Councillor Miles) requested figures on Child Poverty as it related to her own Ward.
- Members were asked to put forward any points they wished to raise to the Portfolio Holder for Well-being and Partnerships.

It was **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

- (a) The Council takes up the offer of Essex County Council's Officers to assist this Council's Officers in drafting its Child Poverty Strategy; and
- (b) The draft Strategy was brought back to the Community Leadership and Partnerships Committee for scrutiny before being finalised.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mann and Mr Bailey for attending what had been a very interesting meeting which had shown that this was very much a work in progress with a lot of work still to be done.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held at 7.30pm on Monday 30 March 2015 at the Council Offices, Weeley.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.15 p.m.

Chairman