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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 22 JUNE 2015 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY**

- Present:** Councillors Fairley (Chairman), Raby (Vice-Chairman), Amos, Bennison, Bucke, Calver and Poonian
- Also Present:** Councillor McWilliams (Well-being and Partnerships Portfolio Holder)
- In Attendance:** Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney), Executive Projects Manager (Keri Lawrence) and Democratic Services Officer (Janey Nice)
- Also In Attendance:** Tracey Hemming (Principal, Clacton Coastal Academy), Lauren Kilbey (Essex Social Justice Lead for the Department for Work and Pensions) and Lisa Andrews (Deputy Chief Officer, Community Voluntary Services Tending).

**1. WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed all to this, the first meeting of the Education and Skills Committee since the recent District Council elections. She then read out the Committee's Terms of Reference to remind Members of the role of the Committee.

**2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman invited nominations from Members of the Committee for the vacant position of Vice-Chairman. It was moved by Councillor Bennison, seconded by Councillor Bucke and **RESOLVED** that Councillor Raby be elected Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2015-16 Municipal Year.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none.

**4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 11 February 2015, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Raby declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 5 (Review of Secondary Schools) by virtue of the fact he was a School Governor at Alton Park School.

**6. REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Tracey Hemming, Principal of Clacton Coastal Academy (CCA), gave a comprehensive presentation of the Academy's recent performance and highlighted the potential issues for the Academy and other Secondary Schools.

She highlighted that the CCA had been accredited with the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) as a Flagship School, an Ofsted 'Good' report with Outstanding Features and awarded

the prestigious 'Silver' Investors in People, which was given in recognition of the outstanding staff performance at the Academy.

Ms Hemming outlined the Academy's achievements at GCSE levels A\* - C (including English and Mathematics), which had been improving year on year and how the gap was narrowing between the national levels and what the Academy was achieving.

She then explained the challenges that were facing the students at the Key Stage 4 (KS4) level, especially with recent changes to the Attainment 8 levels. Students, she said, had to compulsorily study seven out of eight of the areas of Curriculum Progress 8, which only left one subject for students to choose from. The first two mandatory subjects were English and Maths, the next five being selected from the sciences, computer science, geography, history and languages.

At the KS5 level, Ms Hemming said the Academy had attained its best successes so far with 50% of the sixth form going onto University. She added there were new A levels available with the first year of the two-year course ending with AS levels. However, with the requirement now that all children were required to stay in full-time education or training until the age of 18, funding was becoming an issue.

She said that while attendance was compulsory, there was no statutory instrument to enforce this and the limit of courses available, particularly in the Tendring area was a real problem. At the Colchester Institute Clacton campus, the subjects that could be studied included: electrical installation, carpentry, painting and decorating, plumbing and catering (due to move) which were more of interest to male students. Many of the subjects that would be of interest to females were now only available at Colchester and these included hair and beauty and childcare with the grants available being £500 p.a. with benefits and £800 without. It was noted that this had put a real cost pressure on families.

Ms Hemming then spoke about who would be responsible for the provision of further education, with travel and transportation being a problem with the inter-site bus service having been withdrawn, however, schools could collaborate with funding to put on a new bus service for the students.

Members asked a number of questions on the subject and expressed their concern about the lack of options available to students in the Tendring area, especially with the number of apprenticeship places being reduced.

The Chairman thanked Ms Hemming for what had been an interesting and informative presentation.

## **7. REVIEW OF WORK UNDERTAKEN TO ADDRESS ENTRENCHED WORKLESSNESS AND IMPROVE SKILLS OF THOSE LIVING IN THE DISTRICT**

Lauren Kilbey, the Essex Social Justice Lead for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) updated the Committee on the progress of the Turning the Tides project. She started by saying that the definition of Entrenched Worklessness was claimants who had been claiming work benefits for three out of the last four years. She added that the largest proportion of claimants were single men, middle aged, estranged from families (possibly through divorce), alcohol or drug misuse and about a third of these were ex-offenders. She added that the figures she had provided were just for the Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) claimants and did not include any other benefits.

In the Clacton pilot of two wards, she said there were a number of partners working to help the claimants, including Tendring District Council, DWP, Tendring Mental Health Support and Citizens Advice Bureau, amongst others. In naming the wards in the Pilot,

she said that claimants had been claiming for JSA, Incapacity Benefits (IB), Severe Disability Allowance (SDA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support (IS) and had been claiming for three out of the last four years. In the first of the wards the claimants, she said, were made up of largely single people undertaking transient, manual labour and service jobs; low income older couples from long established former council housing estates and larger families with incomes topped up with benefits, debts, low educational attainment and minimal or no internet access. In the second pilot ward she said again claimants were largely single, transient but from outside the area with no local roots, had low self esteem, low aspirations, living in poor accommodation, little or no internet access, debt, problems with drugs and alcohol, reoffenders and many with multiple and/or complex needs.

Ms Kilbey referred to a chart, which highlighted the number of DWP recipients in Essex by District, with Tendring being the second highest of these. She said that the chart showed both the number of claimants recorded as being on JSA, IS, ESA, IB and SDA as at 31 March 2014 and also the number that had been claiming benefits for at least three out of the four preceding years.

She then highlighted the challenges that had faced 197 participants, which included claimants with disabilities, mental health issues, lack of accommodation, in debt, lack of basic skills, English as a second language, lack of digital (IT) skills, drug and alcohol issues and childcare.

She demonstrated two further charts, one of which highlighted internal and external training provision for claimants. She further explained about the number of claimants with compliance issues, which included refusing work but only one of these had actually had their benefit withdrawn from them and she highlighted a particular case study.

Ms Kilbey ended her presentation with a case history of a young man who had had a number of difficult issues to overcome but as he wanted things to change for the better he was assisted by various agencies and eventually found work and had turned his life around.

## **8. REVIEW OF HOW PARTNERS WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO CAREERS INFORMATION TO YOUNG PEOPLE**

Ms Lisa Andrews, the Deputy Chief Officer of Community Voluntary Services Tendring (CVST), had been invited to give a verbal update on the Tendring Youth Network website and had two young assistants with her to demonstrate what the service provided. The Tendring Youth Network website had been set up in April 2014 with its official launch having been held in August of the same year.

A background report to this item stated that the website had been created by partners joining together to make accessing information easier for young people. This contained advice about further education, help in finding apprenticeships, career opportunities, volunteering in the UK or travelling overseas, help with housing or benefit-related issues and general support and guidance as well as ideas for leisure time.

Ms Andrews said that the website was accessible via social media such as Facebook and Twitter and was constantly being updated.

## **9. SCHOOL READINESS**

Keri Lawrence, the Council's Executive Projects Manager provided the Committee with an update of the Promote Reading Initiative and the siting of a Storytelling Tent at the Clacton Sea and Beach Festival to be held on 4 and 5 July 2015 on Clacton Seafront, during which, there would be a number of activities available.

**10. WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16**

The Chairman referred to the Committee's Work Programme and invited Members to contact Democratic Services should they wish to have an item of business included.

The Committee agreed that a workshop be held in advance of the next meeting for Members of the Committee to attend to receive a briefing on the role of the Committee and to consider any additional items for inclusion within the Committee's Work Programme.

**Date of Next Scheduled Meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 21 September 2015 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Weeley.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.26 p.m.

Chairman