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Community Leadership Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

7 March 2023

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
HELD ON TUESDAY, 7TH MARCH, 2023 AT 7.30 PM
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA,
CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors Chittock (Chairman), Clifton, Codling, Miles and Steady
In Attendance:	Anastasia Simpson (Assistant Director (Partnerships)), Keith Simmons (Head of Democratic Services and Elections), Rebecca Morton (Executive Projects Manager) and Hattie Dawson-Dragisic (Performance and Business Support Officer)

[Also in Attendance: Anita Patel-Lingam (Statutory Education Compliance Manager, Essex County Council), Michael O'Brien (Head of Specialist Education Services, Essex County Council) [these persons attended via Microsoft Teams]]

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absences were received from Councillors Davidson and S Honeywood (no substitutions). Councillor Davidson was able to participate in the meeting by way of a remote connection using MS Teams.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER AND 13 DECEMBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the two meetings of the Committee held on Tuesday 22 November and Tuesday 13 December 2022 be approved as correct records.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest by Councillors in relation to any item on the agenda for this meeting.

25. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

On this occasion no Councillor had submitted notice of a question.

26. REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PARTNERSHIPS) - A.1 - CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

The enquiry commenced with the Head of Democratic Services and Elections. He reminded the Committee that they had last look at this matter on Monday 21 March 2022 and had heard from Essex County Council (ECC) representatives about measures it was seeking to promote in legislation with Government and that this Council had decided to support them with their endeavours. The Head of Democratic Services and Elections also reminded the Committee that it was its wish to revisit this issue and receive an update as to where things are in relation to those people taught in school, home educated and missing from education.

The Chairman invited the Councils' Executive Projects Manager, Rebecca Morton, to address the Committee on this item. Rebecca reminded the Committee that this item is to enquire into the safeguarding and educational position concerning those of school age where an elective decision had been made that they would not be attending mainstream schools and were home educated. She made reference to an email response to Cllr McWilliams (Portfolio Holder for Partnerships) from the Department of Education (following the meeting where this Committee last looked at this matter) which confirmed its current position in respect of the issue. Within the letter (circulated to Members of the Committee) it stated that:

“At the Secretary of State’s appearance before the Education Select Committee on 7 December 2022, she confirmed that the Schools Bill, which included the Children Not in School (CNIS) measures, will not be progressing in this parliamentary session.

The Department remains committed to measures on safeguarding and attendance, including CNIS registers and a duty on local authorities to provide support to home educators. These will be progressed when the legislative timetable allows.

In the meantime, the Department will continue to:

- 1. work with local authorities on improving their current voluntary registers;*
- 2. analyse local authority data from the voluntary EHE and Children Missing Education (CME) collection to build a more accurate picture of the EHE and CME landscape and;*
- 3. review the current EHE guidance for local authorities and parents in due course, and will seek to work collaboratively with local authorities and home educating parents on any updates to this.”*

The Chairman of the Committee invited the representatives from (ECC Anita Patel-Lingam, Statutory Education Compliance Manager and Michael O'Brien, Head of Specialist Education Service) to provide the Committee with an update on this item. Anita advised the Committee that the numbers for electively home educated Children across Essex had risen year on year and that, that pattern was continuing. She also confirmed that the pattern of rising numbers of electively home educated (EHE) Children was a National Pattern. Anita informed the Committee that within Essex there was a “Lasting Legacy” of Children that were home educated throughout Covid-19 Pandemic and their families had decided to not send them back to school following this. Anita advised the Committee of the various reasons why families choose to home educate. The Committee were provided with the numbers of the electively home educated the numbers were the following:

- March 2022 2,445 EHE Cohort across Essex
- March 2023 2,801 EHE Cohort across Essex (14.6% Increase)

- March 2022 352 EHE Cohort across Tendring
- March 2023 433 EHE Cohort across Tendring (23% Increase)

The Committee were informed by the ECC Representative that there was a document soon to be published on ECC Website (but also to all EHE Families who were on their voluntary register) which would support them to understand what Anita’s team were looking in terms of evidence of a suitable home education.

The Chairman of the Committee also invited to this meeting a group of parents, Tracy Hide, Emily Woods, Reverend Tichase and Andrew Brown who provided home education for their children and gave them the opportunity to speak to the Committee about this subject. Each of parent's explained to the Committee why they had chosen to electively home educate, how they chose to structure this education and how they felt it was more beneficial for the children being home educated. The parents advised the Committee that there were groups and communities of parents who were electively home educating and that they worked together in educating their children where this was beneficial. The parents provided answers to questions they were frequently asked around the social development of children not in mainstream education etc. They explained to the Committee that although they felt there were multiple benefits to electively home educating there were some barriers that it would be helpful to them to be overcome in order to support families that wished to home educate. Example of these barriers were; restricted opportunities for GCSE exams outside of English, Maths and Science due to having to travel outside of the area and the cost of accessing resources and opportunities for the children.

Following the parents opportunities to speak, the Chairman asked Anita Patel-Lingam if there was anything she wished to comment on. Anita picked up the issue from the parent around the availability and cost of examination centres and she confirmed that as a local authority this was something they were acutely aware of. She also advised that this was an issue that Councillors at ECC were keen to look at. Anita also brought to the Committee's attention the struggle parent experience when trying to access these examinations and (due to distance in some cases) having to factor in the cost of accommodation and travel.

The Committee asked questions of the parents around the community of parents that was mentioned and their methods of supporting the needs of the children. They also asked around the resourcing issues the parents experience. The Committee also asked the parents their view on other parents that may not be so passionate about the home education of their children.

The Committee had a discussion around parents that electively home educate but don't feel they trust local authorities and don't wish to engage with them. In addressing this Anita informed the Committee that this is an issue that they are aware of and would like to be reassuring of the shared best interests of the child. She also advised the Committee that a decision to place a child back in the mainstream education system would only be made where it was in the best interest of that child.

Following the discussion around a set of guidelines to follow when home educating being produced and sent to parents, the parents explained their point of view on the subject. They explained that in home educating they may not follow conventional methods of teaching their children and that rigid requirements would impede the learning needs of the child.

The Chairman invited Cllr McWilliams, the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships to speak and she wished to thank the parents and the ECC Representative for their contribution to this enquiry at the meeting. The Chairman also gave his thanks to the guest speakers for joining their discussion on this.

It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** the following to Cabinet:

A. That representations be again made to see Academies provide access to sites in the locality where those that are home schooled can take examinations in a range of subjects close to home.

B. That efforts be made to encourage further enhancement of a positive relationship between home educators and the County Council's education service. Including in policy development and home visits; and

C. to support the collaborative work that was being talked about to identify those that are not attending school or being effectively home educated and taking the necessary steps to get them back into education.

It was further **RESOLVED** that:

Following the Elections in May this year, to further look at this issue of homeschooling and also the related or other issue or missing from education in early 2024 where a further update can be provided, and the opportunity to identify who further to invite to contribute to the enquiry.

27. REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & ELECTIONS - A.2 - CALL-IN: TENDRING BEACH HUT STRATEGY REVISITED - FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

This item was withdrawn as a valid call-in had not been received.

28. REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTIONS - A.3 - WORK PROGRAMMING INCLUDING MONITORING OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY OF FORTHCOMING DECISIONS

The Head of Democratic Services and Elections introduced this item and advised the Committee that at Appendix A was the detail of the enquiries intended to be undertaken through Task and Finish Groups, Appendix B had the Recommendations Monitoring Report (which there was nothing specific to report to the meeting) and at Appendix C was the list of the 4 items that are on the forward plan of the Council relevant to this Committee.

He advised that the items in Appendix C were there for the Committee to note as the date for the first two (Events on Council Land Policy and State of Tendring District Statement) had already passed, the update on the work of the Tendring Education Strategic Board would not now be submitted to Cabinet on 17 March 2023. That left the Citizens Advice Tendring – Service Level Agreement 2023/23. He informed the Committee that as this Council would be going into its pre-election period on Monday 13 March 2023 this would provide little opportunity for this Committee to be considering that item.

The Head of Democratic Services and Elections advised the Committee that (in terms of Appendix A) the Committee would need to acknowledge that those Task and Finish Groups now won't reach conclusion and so, they would be referenced back to the new Committee following the elections to see what needs to happen in relation to them.

It was **RESOLVED** to submit the enquiry detail at appendix A to the report to the Committee to determine how to proceed with those enquiries.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.12 pm

Chairman

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