

CHILDREN SERVICES TASK AND FINISH PANEL: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Origin:

The Cabinet at its meeting on 8 March 2010 considered a report about Essex Children's Trust. The Children's Act 2004 provided the legal underpinning for the national framework established by "Every Child Matters: Change for Children" with District Councils having a duty to cooperate in the making of arrangements to improve well being for children and young people 19 years or under. The most specific duty is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children alongside the more general "duty to cooperate" within Children's Trust arrangements.

At the inaugural meeting of the Essex Children's Trust Partnership Board on 27 November 2009 it had been agreed that a Memorandum of Agreement be entered into by all the constituent partners with the aim of demonstrating a commitment to a shared approach and to get all the partners working together to achieve common objectives.

The Cabinet decided that the Memorandum of agreement should not be signed as it did not appear to be clear, concise and contain specific proposals to safeguard the welfare of children or an assurance that Essex County Council would embrace best practice. The cabinet expressed the view that the emphasis appeared to be on bureaucracy rather than results, with as much responsibility as possible delegated to the borough and district councils. The Cabinet also requested that a Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel should be established to examine the Council's approach to Children's Services and its provision throughout the District.

At its meeting on 15 April 2010, the Overview and scrutiny Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel should be established to examine the Council's approach to Children's Services and its provision throughout the District and to review the provision of the Essex County Council Youth Service within the District.

Draft Terms of Reference:

1. To review the Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement in respect of children's services across Essex.
2. To review the purpose, operation and effectiveness of West Essex Children's Trust Board and the Essex Children's Trust structure.
3. To review current provision of children's and young people's services in the District including identifying the level of activity directly provided by the Council and the key responsibilities devolved to the Council under the Children's Trust arrangements.
4. To review the provision of Essex County Council Youth Services in the Epping Forest District, seeking to identify future needs and how these can best be met by the various Agencies involved in the delivery of Young People's Services.
5. To review current arrangements for Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Epping Forest's Children, seeking to identify communication pathways and effectiveness of information sharing, including:
 - the Council's own policies and procedures;
 - West Essex Stay Safe Group;
 - ECC Stay Safe Group, and,

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- Essex Safeguarding Children Board

Aims and Objectives:

To gather evidence and information in relation to the topics through the receipt of data, presentations and by participation in fact finding visits;

To consult with Partners, Agencies, Stakeholders and Users of the services under review, to establish key issues and future need;

To evaluate all relevant facts in relation to the topics under review in an objective way and to produce recommendations for future action accordingly;

To establish whether there are any resource implications arising out of the topics under review and advise Cabinet for inclusion in the Budget Process 2011/12; and

To report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at appropriate intervals and to submit any final reports in the proposed Corporate Format for consideration by O & S, the Cabinet and Council.

TIMESCALE	ESTIMATED	ACTUAL
Commencement	September 2010	September 2010
<u>Finish</u> 1. Interim report to include any budgetary items for the next budget round. 2. As a time limited review - to end by ? 2011.	By October 2010 (if needed). ? 2011	Officers to consult Finance to establish if the Panel should put an interim bid for next years budget round.