

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7th November 2013



Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
P R Barlow	Yes	F Ricci	Yes
C A Cadman	Yes	W J Rose	Yes
Dr R L Evans (Chairman)	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
P Horner	Yes	J S Sutton	Yes
S A Howell	Yes	J R Swift	Apologies
R P Ramage	Yes		

22. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, all councillors remained in the meeting for all items and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

23. **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

24. **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25th September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – SCRUTINY REVIEW OF MOVING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET) INTO EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING**

INFORMATION: The Chairman welcomed the following invited speakers:

Brian Cairns

Director of Community Engagement and Marketing
Colchester Institute
(The College at Braintree)

Claire Pike

Work Related Learning Coordinator
Alec Hunter Academy, Braintree

Damien Lee

Vice Principal,
Maltings Academy, Witham

Douglas Mongan

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)
Participation Consultant ~ Braintree
Employability and Skills Unit
Essex County Council

The invitees outlined their work in helping young people avoid becoming NEET. The schools highlighted some parts of their NEET prevention strategies previously circulated to members and added a few other points, such as having vocational learning streams.

The work of the College included working with employers, apprenticeships, a skills to succeed programme and tailored courses.

Essex County Council IAG helps in the provision of careers advice in schools following the decommissioning of Connexions. The Education Act 2011 places the emphasis on careers advice on schools. IAG works with all 8 Braintree district schools and the College to help on the provision of advice.

IAG is introducing Employability for Life programme which aims to provide young people with the necessary skills for employment.

Invitees provided the following responses to questions from members:

- Less than 50% of school students go on to University.
- The college has submitted a bid with the aim of bringing Engineering (e.g. welding, fabricating, plumbing etc.) back to the Braintree Campus.
- In some schools, each department has an advertised careers path, informing students of where each subject can take you and the avenues you need to get there.
- Schools take part in industry days, where businesses come in to give students further information on their organisations and career paths. However, the schools advised that it is very difficult finding businesses to attend.
- IAG have identified over 80 organisations that engage with employers and try to secure work experience placements as well as business support.
- IAG have 62,000 employers registered on their database, and between 1,000 – 1,500 apprenticeships in placement with employers.
- IAG have 2.5 careers advisors for the 3 Braintree sites.
- The College has established centres in Stanway, Colchester and Harwich which provide employment like conditions for young people. In the case of Harwich, the centre has been established with the offshore wind industry. Young people have been trained and are now working offshore. The college believes that the partnership with industry has been key in the success of the centres.

- To be placed in the centres the College looks to interview 600 unemployed young people. Of these 200 attend a 4 week taster programme which looks at attitudes and other behaviours and skills. Around half qualify for a 12 week passport to work programme which includes working with employers to identify the skills they require, which are then delivered through the programme. Other options are considered for those not on the 12 week programme. However, this can result in several individuals being in a continuous loop of undergoing training without finding employment.
- Schools now have the responsibility of tracking their young people once they have completed year 11 and to report the outcomes back to Essex County Council.
- Schools find partner companies very expensive and that work placements can only be secured for very few students.
- Schools are now judged on the English Baccalaureate which forces young people who are struggling to achieve a grade E/F in English take up French or Spanish.
- Schools are not supported in placing students on construction courses as they will not leave with the correct set of qualifications which the government deem every student should achieve.
- Schools feel they are working against the direction they would like to go in supporting vocational courses for some.
- Academic grades are decreasing and schools statuses are being put at jeopardy in order to get students on the correct courses.
- Over 500 14-16 year olds are leaving school on vocational programmes, which have a negative effect on league table figures and Ofsted reports, but are the best option for the individual.
- Young people need good careers education and guidance.
- Young people should be encouraged to contact employers for feedback on unsuccessful job applications.
- Since the decommissioning of Connexions in 2011 schools now have to provide their own careers advice and education. However they are now faced with resource difficulties as no extra funding has been provided to support this.
- The number of companies taking up apprenticeships is increasing.
- All companies considered by the College for taking on an apprentice are vetted beforehand and have to meet a certain criteria.
- Apprenticeship achievements have to meet national benchmarks, which are changed annually depending on the success of the apprenticeship scheme nationally.
- Schools with sixth forms cannot cater for each year 11, part of the year 11 programme is targeting the students who are right to stay on and those who would

be best suited in a specialist college. Schools work alongside colleges in making these options available for students.

- Schools representatives work together to organise careers fairs.
- Each year the funding received by Colchester Institute for each student is cut by around 10%. This summer the cut in funds was £2 million.
- Colleges are continuously looking for alternative sources of funding to support projects in the community and local economy.
- Situations have arisen where apprenticeships have been recommended, however as soon as the parents realise this will have an impact on their benefits they remove the student from the programme.
- Several sixth form students who are threatened of being removed from the course due to misbehaving and not meeting their targets state that they do not want to be on the course and are only taking part due to the bursaries they receive.

Andy Wright, Corporate Director reported that Braintree District Council is in its 5th year of apprenticeships and has a 100% success rate in both completion of qualification and also developing apprentices on to either a level 3 or supporting them in to employment. The Council is committed to the apprenticeship programme which has brought huge benefits to the organisation.

The Council is already working with schools and employers, focusing on how to support new and current businesses.

In discussion, it emerged that there may be a role for Braintree District Council and Essex County Council to work as a bridge in bringing together employers and schools in support of opportunities for young people.

Members agreed that it would be useful to hold informal meetings with some businesses in support of the NEET Scrutiny Review.

DECISION: That progress in the Committee's scrutiny review of moving young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) into Education, Employment or Training be noted and the next steps in the review be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISION: To agree actions in support the Committee's scrutiny review.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.58pm.

Dr R L Evans
Chairman