

**MINUTES OF THE LA AND EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY 6 OCTOBER 2016 starting at 1.00 pm**

In attendance	Representing	email address
Clare Kershaw CK	Director of Commissioning, Education and Lifelong Learning	clare.kershaw@essex.gov.uk
Alison Fiala	Interim Head of Primary Improvement	alison.fiala@essex.gov.uk
Lisa Fergus	Primary Improvement Commissioner S	Lisa.fergus@essex.gov.uk
Nicola Woolf	Primary Improvement Commissioner W	Nicola.woolf@essex.gov.uk
Jacky Castle	Primary Improvement Commissioner NE	Jacky.castle@essex.gov.uk
Ros Somerville	Principal Educational Psychologist	Ros.Somerville@essex.gov.uk
Shamsun Noor	Head of Schools Admissions & Transport	shamsun.noor@essex.gov.uk
Julie Weddell	Manager, Missing Education and Child Employment Service	Julie.weddell@essex.gov.uk
Steve Mellors	SEC Champion for Pupil Premium	stephen.mellors@essex.gov.uk
Lehla Abbott	EPHA North East Vice-Chair	head@broomgrove-inf.essex.sch.uk
Cheryl Allard	EPHA Central Chair/Chelmsford South	head@oaklands-inf.essex.sch.uk
Lois Ashforth	EPHA Dengie	Head@coldnorton.essex.sch.uk
Sue Bardetti	EPHA Tendring South	admin@hollandhaven.essex.sch.uk
Nicky Barrand	EPHA South Vice-Chair	htpa@cherrytree-pri.essex.sch.uk
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Amanda Buckland Garnett	EPHA South Woodham Ferrers	abg@collingwood.essex.sch.uk
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Shelagh Harvey	EPHA Brentwood	headteacher@ingatestone.essex.sch.uk
Nigel Hookway	EPHA Executive Director	nigelhookway@hotmail.com
Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/NE Chair	head@st-johns-colchester.essex.sch.uk
Ceri Jones	EPHA Mid Chair	Head@chippinghill.essex.sch.uk
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer	pam@langmead.me.uk
Lesley Lewis	EPHA West Treasurer/Epping Forest	admin@theydonbois.essex.sch.uk
Jacq Martin	EPHA Colchester South	Headteacher@langenhoe.essex.sch.uk
Kate Mills	EPHA Braintree	head@johnrayinfants.essex.sch.uk
Hayley O'Dea	EPHA Rochford	head@greatwaking.essex.sch.uk
Donna Parker	EPHA Tendring North	head@st-marys-ardleigh.essex.sch.uk
Lorna Pigram	EPHA Rayleigh	head@canewdon.essex.sch.uk
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair	Head@janetduke.essex.sch.uk
Karen Tucker	EPHA Canvey Island	head@canvey-jun.essex.sch.uk
Janice Tunney	EPHA Epping Forest South	admin@limesfarm-inf.essex.sch.uk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from:

Dawn Baker	Chelmsford West/Mid Treasurer
Rachel Callaghan	Uttlesford North
Lyn Corderoy	South Treasurer/Wickford

Action

Melissa Eades	Billericay
Julie Lorkins	West Vice-Chair
Amanda Reid	Chelmsford North
Angela Russell	Basildon West
Jonathan Tye	Harlow
Kay Wills	Harwich and Dovercourt

Clare Kershaw welcomed headteachers and LA Officers to the meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE EPHA EXECUTIVE MEETING

a) Asbestos survey

A number of headteachers have shared their concerns about the recent asbestos surveys that have been carried out in maintained schools, including comments around health and safety practice. Clare confirmed that if there are any concerns with the process of the surveys and/or its outcomes, these should be emailed to Garry Fisher, ECC Health and Safety Manager (copying her in). It was noted that there are some ongoing concerns about the cost of the survey and the tendering process. She **AGREED** to pick up the issue of contractors not following due process and will include a communication to schools about the survey in the following week's Education Essex newsletter.

CK

b) SEC challenge around number of EHCPs in schools

One headteacher reported that her new Standards and Excellence Commissioner had challenged the number of Education, Health and Care Plans in her school and had used this information as a basis for changing the school's RAG rating; another headteacher noted that she had been questioned in the same way. Clare apologised for this and stated that, while the LA is gathering intelligence around EHCPs, this was not intended to be used to judge or criticise schools.

c) Key Stage 2 teacher assessment submission date 2017

It was noted that staff will be trained in moderation on 22 November. The date for the submission of assessment date will be shared in the Education Essex newsletter once it has been set.

d) Early Years baseline data

Clare **AGREED** to discuss the format and use of EY baseline data with the Early Years team.

CK

e) Use of 2016 data to RAG rate schools

It was noted that headteachers had been led to believe that 2016 data would not be used to change the RAG rating of their school and the Executive asked for confirmation of whether this was the case. Clare stated that previously, if a school's Key Stage 2 data indicated weaknesses, this would have automatically have downgraded the RAG rating. This year the data will be scrutinised and, where there is cause for concern, the school's SEC will arrange a visit to discuss data and determine whether additional action should be taken. The pragmatic reason for downgrading a school's RAG rating is to enable additional support from the Standards and Excellence team.

However, Clare confirmed that, except where there are previous indicators of concern or a significant inconsistency between subjects, the 2016 data is not being compared with 2015 outcomes. Initial analysis of the KS2 data suggests that a very small number of Essex schools will fall within the coasting schools definition (the number is still to be announced by the DfE). She stressed that Essex primary schools have managed last year's challenges around assessment and test changes well, but that there are always some schools that give cause for concern.

f) Domestic Violence notifications

One of the EPHA members noted that schools are still not being trusted with information around domestic violence cases that involve children, despite the appointment of a communications officer for JDATT (Joint Domestic Abuse Triage Team). Clare said that she was concerned to hear this, as this role was specifically created (and funded by schools) to improve communication and information sharing. Clare **AGREED** to follow up this concern

CK

3. CHANGES TO THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST SERVICE

Ros Somerville, Principal Educational Psychologist

In advance of the meeting a draft document, "A proposed model for Essex Educational Psychology Service (EPS) 2016-17 Version 2" was circulated to the EPHA Executive.

The intention of the new model is to allow EPs (Educational Psychologists) the flexibility to work with children and young people when they can have the most impact. The service will reduce how much EP time is divided up between different tasks (or 'pots' of time) to a minimum and instead have a single 'pot' of time which EPs can use flexibly to meet the needs of the children and young people they work with. This will reduce time inefficiencies due to managing different ways of working and prioritising time and allow EPs to spend as much time as possible working directly with children and young people in schools, settings and colleges.

In particular, the artificial divide between providing psychological advice for EHC needs assessment and early intervention work in schools is removed. EPs will still need to provide psychological advice for all new EHC needs assessments but aim to become involved earlier so that they are not limited to the short six-week timescale they currently have to plan, carry out and report on their work. They will have the opportunity to have worked with children at a pre statutory and to have a closer relationship with schools, settings and other agencies in their local areas. This will not reduce the amount of time that schools receive for early intervention but better enable schools and EPs to address the needs of children and young people as they arise. The new model also requires EPs to focus some of their time on workforce development as schools staff are better placed to meet needs on a daily basis.

Ros reminded headteachers that children with an EHC Plan (or Statement) do well in Essex, but those who are receiving SENSupport do not achieve or progress as well. The number of EHCPs in the county are above the national average – currently 3.3% of the school age population compared with 2.8% nationally.

The service has reviewed the allocation of EP time to schools in order to remove the separation between support of and application to statements/EHCPs, and early intervention. The revised model aims to support a child earlier, before the need to apply for an EHC plan. Under the new arrangements, EPs will be required to provide a written report (however brief) each time they visit a school.

The shortage of EPs has proved a barrier to delivering an effective service – there are 140 vacancies across 103 Local Authorities, partly due to retirements, and the service is focusing on recruitment and retention.

Ros explained that she will be delivering this information to SENCo briefings this term. Each school will be guaranteed EP time each term, even if their allocated EP is absent.

One headteacher stated her concern about potential restrictive practice, having been told that the report from a private EP was not regarded as valid in comparison to that provided

**Ros
Somerville**

by an EP employed by the LA or NHS. Ros noted that all EPs must follow the guidance set out in the SEND Code of Practice and **AGREED** to follow up on this concern. She noted that the EP service would welcome feedback from school on the changes to allocation. Clare confirmed that the LA is keen to move resources currently used to support statutory assessment to support early intervention, as far as possible.

4. FAIR ACCESS PROTOCOLS

Shamsun Noor, Head of Schools Admission & Transport, attended the meeting to report on the admission of displaced children mid-year into Essex primary schools, and the application of the Fair Access Protocol – Shamsun acknowledged that there was a need to support the issues facing schools in relation to expansion and to ensure that the Fair Access Protocol is actually fair, and applied consistently and transparently.

There are growing demands for mid-year places and growing pressure on the availability of “local” school places for children who move into or within Essex during the year. This is largely explained by the rising birth rate as well as increased migration into the county and the development of new housing, on a large scale in some areas.

The Council processes more than 10,000 mid-year primary school applications each year. Where a place is not available at the parent’s school of preference and the child is without a “local” school place, the School Admissions team identifies the nearest school to the home with an available place. If that school is 2+ miles away in walking distance (Reception and KS1) or 3+ miles at KS2, the LA must provide home to school transport – usually by taxi, and potentially at prohibitive cost (around £9,500 per child a year).

Parents who move into an area are often under the illusion (sometime perpetuated by housing developers) that their child/ren will definitely get a place at the school of their preference – this becomes even more of an issue for them when their children may end up going to different schools because of a lack of places at their preferred school. The LA makes “reasonable” decisions under the law, and at times schools may perceive that they are being asked to admit unfairly (and more often than others) to take pupils.

Some schools are approached more often due to concentrated demand in specific areas, but decisions will be based on geography and overall context. The LA is trying hard to be transparent about the decisions that are made, and Clare noted that she has asked the School Organisation team to do a survey of every school in Colchester to determine the current capacity for additional places.

The LA has committed to holding regular local meetings with headteachers, to discuss expansion of schools and the capacity for placements – however, the Admissions Team has to manage daily applications, so these meetings cannot (usually) address individual placements when they arise.

The LA has the right to offer a place at a community or VC school for any child, and can direct foundation and VA schools. It can also ask the Secretary of State to direct academies and free schools. The need for direction is very rare as all schools have to comply with the Admissions Code and the very low number of instances of direction is a tribute to the collaborative approach of schools.

In respect of schools in a category (serious weaknesses or special measures) the school has the right to refuse a place to a “challenging” pupil – though they may not always refuse, as pupil numbers (and associated funding) may be a key issue.

The local meetings will be set up to take place in the four most affected districts as appropriate – Basildon, Colchester, Tendring and Uttlesford.

Some areas are considerably less impacted than others – SN shared the list of primary cases affected by the Fair Access protocols (*listed in order of number of FAP cases*)

Fair Access Protocol primary cases 01/09/15 – 21/07/16			
District	Total number of FAP cases in district	Number of primary schools who admitted pupils via FAP	Total number of primary schools in the district
Colchester	157	33	63
Tendring	120	24	40
Uttlesford	72	22	36
Basildon	71	30	56
Chelmsford	36	17	58
Brentwood	35	12	31
Epping	20	5	39
Braintree	10	6	57
Castle Point	10	8	22
Rochford	8	5	22
Harlow	7	5	33
Maldon	2	2	18
Total	548	169	475

One headteacher, in Clacton, said that schools in this area were experiencing huge problems in relation to over-subscription and fair access. Her school is now over-subscribed in every year group and this is causing huge problems. She argued that the Local Authority 10 year plan fails to address the issue of increasing numbers in Clacton and felt that schools have not had the opportunity to agree a fair access protocol, in line with the DfE requirement.

Shamsun confirmed that Clacton Town is currently a high priority for admissions; there is evidence that families are being moved from London boroughs to access cheap housing in the area. Clare **AGREED** that she and Shamsun would review the 10 year plan with a particular focus on the Clacton Town area.

This headteacher said that her school has already spent £2,500 on appeals, which is a severe pressure on her budget. It was noted that the County Appeals Service is a cost recovery service, offered to own-admission schools on a cost basis.

It is expected that a new Admissions Code will be published soon, and this should include mid-year admissions, an omission from the current code.

Headteachers were reminded that where a school admits a child above the admission number for the year group, and that admission means the school has a class of 32 in an infant class, or the admission takes the school two pupils over the admission number, a payment of £1,500 is payable from the centrally held dowry for the placement of displaced children. However, one head noted that she currently has 66 children in a Year 1 cohort and has been informed that two more will be joining her school; she asked when

the limit would be reached?

Shamsun explained that there is no actual legal limit; while the law states that KS1 class sizes should be limited to 30 pupils, that does not take into account “excepted pupils”. Shamsun stated that he did not know of any schools in Essex where class sizes in KS1 have reached 33, but this was contradicted by this headteacher in Colchester. He **AGREED** to follow this case up.

It was agreed that it was essential to ensure that headteachers are clear about the Fair Access Protocol and it was explained that there will be meetings to share allocations, who has been approached and the movement of children with SEND.

5. a) **PENALTY NOTICES**

Julie Weddell County Manager of the Missing Education and Child Employment Service (formerly Education Welfare Service) attended the meeting to update the Executive on the current criteria used to issue Penalty Notices for irregular attendance.

Legislation

Each LA must have a Code of Conduct for how they issue penalty notices for truancy and consult with schools and police to agree the criteria for issuing penalty notices.

If a penalty notice is not paid the parent is not prosecuted for non-payment of fine.

Parents are prosecuted for irregular school attendance, not for taking term time holidays.

The changes in the pupil registration regulations made it clear that head teachers must not authorise holidays unless exceptional circumstances. NAHT have written guidance on what constitutes exceptional circumstances, which has been shared with headteachers.

Essex Code of Conduct Steering Group

The Steering Group has been in existence since the legislation introduced penalty notices in 2004. Essex is a large authority and there are varied opinions about when penalty notices should be issued. It was agreed that representatives of headteacher associations would represent schools in Essex – currently the EPHA Professional Officer sits on the steering group along with serving headteachers.

The Code of Conduct is reviewed annually. The current Code states that penalty notices may be issued where there have been at least 10 unauthorised sessions of absence during a period of 6 school weeks and in respect of unauthorised leave of absence, the 10 sessions must be consecutive.

It is for schools to decide whether they request that the LA issue a penalty notice. Some schools prefer to warn the parents that a PN may be issued for future holidays; others prefer a firm stance, due to their absence rates and the quantity of holidays being taken during term time.

Isle of Wight prosecuted Jon Platt in October 2015 Mr Platt claimed that this was not irregular school attendance. The case was dismissed by the magistrates. The absence was for 7 days and the attendance was 93.8% in the previous year.

Isle of Wight took the case to High Court 13th May 2016 questioning the outcome The High Court stated: Whether there was regular attendance was an issue of fact and degree. The question of whether attendance had been regular had to be looked at in the wider context and not just during the limited period of the holiday. The magistrates had correctly had regard to the wider picture. It could not be said that they had reached a decision that was not reasonably open to them. The magistrates had not erred in law by taking into account dates outside the dates of the holiday, [Bromley LBC v C \[2006\] EWHC 1110 \(Admin\), \[2006\] E.L.R. 358](#) considered. (Lawtel)

Lord Justice Lloyd Jones stated "I do not consider it is open to an authority to criminalise every unauthorised holiday by the simple device of alleging that there has been no regular attendance in a period limited to the absence on holiday."

It was indicated that 90% is an acceptable attendance rate - however Local Authorities, including Essex, would strongly disagree as this is persistent absentee criteria.

The Isle of Wight has lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court, a hearing date has not yet been confirmed, but may be in the spring.

Essex Education and Lifelong Learning Service sought legal advice immediately after the High Court judgement and meetings were convened with the Director and Cabinet Member.

It was agreed that it is important for head teachers to continue to take a firm stance by not authorising leave of absence if there are no exceptional circumstances; this was later reinforced by Nick Gibb in his letter dated 9th June. However, we need to give due consideration to the outcome of the high court before proceeding with prosecutions. To ensure we protect the integrity and reputation of the system, we are only issuing penalty notices where we intend to prosecute for irregular school attendance if the penalty notice is not paid. Every application for a penalty notice is considered on the facts and merit of the case, benchmarking against the high court outcome, i.e. the number of days of holiday and previous school attendance.

The steering group met in September 2016 to consider the current bench marking and whether the code of conduct should be amended. It was hoped that we would receive more guidance from DFE by now. However Ministerial changes seem to have delayed this.

The Steering group agreed:

- The code of conduct should not be changed at this time. We need to await the outcome of the Supreme Court or further guidance from DFE. It will become confusing for schools if we change the criteria and then revert later in the year.
- The message to parents needs to continue, that all children need to be in school every day.
- If a penalty notice is not issued, schools can include the unauthorised leave of absence if further unauthorised absences occur and they wish to apply for a penalty notice if code of conduct criteria is met.
- JW to communicate the background issues and bench marking to all Headteachers via attendance at the EPHA Executive meeting on 6th October 2016 and Area EPHA meetings during the Autumn term.
- The Steering Group will meet again in February 2017 when it is hoped that more information will be available

Information and guidance is available on the Essex Schools Info Link <http://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/MECE/Pages/Unauthorised-leave-of-absence.aspx>

Julie noted that she continues to keep abreast of the national picture, as vice president of the National Association of Education Welfare Management. She meets regularly with the DFE and has knowledge of other local authorities' policies and how they are dealing with this situation as well as receiving regular feedback on court outcomes. This information

feeds into the LA and Steering Group's decision making.

Julie stressed that the Local Authority looks at every referral on the facts and merits of the case and benchmarking decisions against the Isle of Wight case, ie 14 sessions for a holiday were not deemed as irregular.. She suggested that if a penalty notice is not issued for a short holiday then schools should inform parents that future periods of unauthorised absence may (or will) be taken to account when deciding whether to issue a penalty notice. Julie was asked to amend the model letter to parents accordingly, and she **AGREED** to review this.

Julie
Weddell

b) CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION – REQUIREMENT TO NOTIFY LOCAL AUTHORITY

It was agreed that schools are now aware of the new requirement to notify LAs when a pupil is taken on or off roll at a time other than at normal transition dates. One headteacher has asked whether the school needs to inform the LA if they have been alerted to a child who is apparently not within education (for example, by a member of the public). Julie explained this is not a statutory responsibility for the school, but would be expected as good practice to notify this information as a safeguarding measure.

One headteacher argued that the notification form provided by the LA is not fit for purpose and there are still some anomalies; Julie **AGREED** to follow this up.

Julie
Weddell

It was noted that it would be helpful for the school to receive a receipt of notification, with the child's name, UPN and the date.

6. a) PRIMARY PERFORMANCE 2016

Clare Kershaw congratulated the headteachers on the outcomes of tests and assessments in July 2016, as Essex schools performed very well compared with national outcomes. Essex schools are also performing well in Ofsted inspections, with 90% of primary schools now judged to be good or outstanding, a significant improvement from 2011/12 when just 62% of schools were good or outstanding and on average, one a month was judged to require Special Measures. Seven schools have been judged to be outstanding in their last inspection. However, 6 schools were judged to be inadequate last year, 3 of which were previously judged to be "good".

Clare confirmed that the end of Key Stage 2 results showed that 55 -56% of pupils in Essex achieved expected standards, in comparison to 52-53% nationally.

b) EXCELLENCE IN ESSEX 2016-17

The Excellence in Essex document has been updated, and is used to ensure that schools receive appropriate support and, when necessary, challenge, from the Standards and Excellence team. The team aims to give earlier and additional support. Alison stressed that there are just 24 schools, both maintained schools and academies, in the lowest 6%. A number of schools had results that were below 20% in relation to attainment, but their progress results were okay.

Alison noted that only 13 schools were below floor standards – 8 of these are maintained schools and 5 are academies.

c) REVIEW OF EDUCATION SERVICES

The Standards and Excellence service is reviewing future services in light of the likely reduction in the Education Services Grant in September 2017. The Government has

indicated that the ESG will be reduced from £7.2m to around £3m and the Local Authority will have to focus its activities on statutory services. Any additional services will therefore have to be funded by a top-slice from the DSG or by offering traded services that schools and academies can buy. The Autumn Statement on 23 November should state the actual reduction in the ESG but Clare confirmed that the LA is planning for a worst-case scenario. The feedback received from around 90 schools who completed the Primary Services survey for EPHA will be used to help shape future services.

7. RAISING ATTAINMENT FOR DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Steve Mellors has been leading on the Essex strategy to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. He noted the continuing focus on raising attainment and narrowing the gap and reported that data shows that certain areas are performing less well than others.

Three projects will be developed this year to support school leaders and governors:

Project 1 - Maximising the use of the Essex toolkit – to promote the use of the toolkit to support school’s developing their own approaches to self-evaluation of their pupil premium strategy.

This will be aimed Pupil Premium champions and school governors – included breakfast meetings, additional support from SECs, support to meeting new requirements in relation to publication of pupil premium information on school websites.

Project 2 – Ongoing support for a pupil premium strategy – to provide additional support for identified schools who may be Ofsted good, but gaps are stubborn and therefore differences in achievement are not diminishing.

Aimed at schools leaders, to include identification of schools where gaps are stubborn, discussion of school self-evaluation, mini pupil premium reviews.

It was stressed that school’s own understanding and self-evaluation of the impact of chosen strategies is absolutely critical – plenty of schools implement a range of strategies, but are not so good at evaluating the impact and effectiveness of those strategies.

Project 3 – Disseminating knowledge from research findings to improve life chances for disadvantaged pupils.

Half day conference aimed at school representatives and school governors, which will include a focus on metacognition.

One headteacher asked if there any specific data around Pupil Premium children who also have Special Educational Needs? Steve accepted that producing and understanding this data was a priority for the Local Authority. It was argued that it is essential to have high expectations when a child is “just” financially disadvantaged – that alone should not be a barrier to achievement and progress. A different conversation and approach is needed when a child also has SEND.

8. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION UPDATE

Clare **AGREED** to include an update on the activities of the Recruitment and Retention task and finish group in a future Education Essex newsletter.

9. AUTUMN TERM AREA HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

The agenda included a number of suggestions for the termly area meetings and the following were agreed:

- Essex View from the Bridge -update from the Director
- SEND transformation update and survey of current therapies used and commissioned by schools
- Update on the School Led Improvement System rolling out across Essex

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) DfE WHITE PAPER

Clare noted that the DfE is expected to produce a new White Paper following the consultation on the current Green Paper, "Schools that work for everyone". It is hoped that the positive role that many Local Authorities undertake in relation to school improvement will be recognised; there certainly seems to be a shift in attitude by the current Secretary of State, who appears to be listening to representatives of local democracy.

b) ESSEX TEACHING AWARDS

Clare reminded the Executive that nominations for the Essex Teaching Awards are being invited and entries must be submitted by 5pm on Friday 18 November 2016. She stressed that the LA is committed to the process, regarding it as a very positive celebration of outstanding practice in Essex schools, but the future of the awards will depend on the number and spread of the nominations this year.

11. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2016/17 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (Chelmsford City Football Club)

Thursday 26 January 2017

Thursday 4 May 2017

Area Heads Meetings

Autumn term 2016

N-EAST	Wednesday 9 November	Weston Homes Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 10 November	Holiday Inn, Basildon
WEST	Wednesday 16 November	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 17 November	Chelmsford City Football Club

Spring term 2017

SOUTH	Wednesday 22 February	Holiday Inn, Basildon
N-EAST	Thursday 23 February	Weston Homes Community Stadium
WEST	Wednesday 1 March	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 2 March	Chelmsford City Football Club

Summer term 2016

SOUTH	Wednesday 14 June	Holiday Inn, Basildon
N-EAST	Thursday 15 June	Weston Homes Community Stadium
WEST	Wednesday 21 June	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 22 June	Chelmsford City Football Club

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm

Pam Langmead, EPHA Professional Officer