

**JOINT COMMUNITY PROFILE & PARTNERSHIPS AND
LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 FEBRUARY 2015**

Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Community Profile & Partnerships and Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Alyn & Deeside Meeting Room, County Hall, Mold on Monday, 2 February 2015

PRESENT:

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Brian Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Vicky Perfect, Ian Roberts, David Roney, Paul Shotton, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Carolyn Thomas

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Mrs. Janine Beggan, Mr. David Hÿtch, Mrs. Rebecca Stark and Rev. John Thelwell

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Paul Cunningham, Brian Dunn, Mike Lowe, Ian Smith and David Wisinger

ALSO PRESENT: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Education & Youth)

Mr. David Jones OBE, Principal/Chief Executive of Coleg Cambria

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager, Housing & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Member Engagement Manager sought nominations for a Chair for the meeting. Councillor Ian Dunbar's nomination for Councillor Ian Roberts was duly seconded and supported by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Ian Roberts be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

2. THE LATE COUNCILLOR STELLA JONES

The Chairman took the opportunity to pay tribute to the late Councillor Stella Jones who had been a valuable member of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He spoke about the way in which Councillor Jones had served her community well and asked that the Committee observe a moment's silence in her memory.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received.

4. COLEG CAMBRIA (PRESENTATION)

The Chairman welcomed Mr. David Jones OBE, Principal/Chief Executive of Coleg Cambria to the meeting and congratulated him on his OBE award in the New Year's Honours List.

In reflecting on his recent award, Mr. Jones said that this would not have been possible without the valuable contribution made by local people, particularly those in Deeside. He spoke about links between Coleg Cambria and other partners such as the Council, which was of particular importance given the financial challenges affecting all. Despite a reduction in funding for Coleg Cambria, front services had been maintained, and the annual report was due to be received at the Annual General Meeting on 6 February 2015, which Members were welcome to attend.

In his presentation, Mr. Jones provided information on the scale of Coleg Cambria as the second largest college in Wales, with sites based across Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire. Each of the three Councils were represented on the governing body - with Councillor Tony Sharps representing Flintshire - and was chaired by Mr John Clutton, the Council's former Director of Education. The range of support and extra-curricular activities at Coleg Cambria had been reflected as one of the key strengths within the Estyn report.

Key indicators were split between three categories using the Red/Amber/Green status approach, with targets regularly reviewed and increased where Green had been achieved. Whilst there was a reduction in the number of learners aged 16-18 across the three counties, it was important to recognise that AS/A Levels were not the only offers available to young people, with many opting for vocational courses and apprenticeships. In discussing outcomes and value-added indicators, Mr. Jones highlighted the importance of taking into account the progression of individual learners.

Information was given on the approach to tackle substance abuse, which was viewed as a major problem across society affecting schools and colleges, and the need to work together to target issues of behavioural standards of young people at a young age.

As part of an update on the Connah's Quay Sixth Form Centre, the Committee was informed that contractors were due to start work in the next four weeks and that the partnership facility would offer choice and support to learners in a convenient location.

On Welsh medium provision, Mr. Jones reported on partnerships with a number of schools and the development of bilingual programmes for local businesses which had received positive feedback.

On the Deeside Enterprise Zone, Mr. Jones stated the importance of protecting what was already in place with continued investment from Welsh

Government (WG) and that funding from WG to support the road infrastructure would help to encourage new businesses.

Councillor Ian Dunbar asked about links between the Sixth Form Centre with requirements in the Deeside Enterprise Zone. Mr. Jones referred to a collaborative approach with the Joint Committee on developing the Sixth Form Hub in Connah's Quay and utilising key individuals within schools to help build links with the Enterprise Zone. The aim to secure funding for an Advanced Manufacturing Skills & Training Centre situated in the Northern Gateway would benefit manufacturing companies in the Enterprise Zone and across North Wales.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the level of apprenticeship enrolments at Coleg Cambria and the development of the Sixth Form Centre in Connah's Quay. In response to a question, Mr. Jones provided information on the 'Seren' initiative by WG to address the decline in the number of Welsh students progressing to the more prestigious universities in the UK. The creation of a pilot hub, with involvement of Coleg Cambria in partnership with schools in Wrexham and Flintshire, would provide additional support and mentoring to students wishing to access these universities.

Mr. David Hýtch commented on the role of colleges in meeting the Learning and Skills Measure and obligations placed on Councils to increase standards and participation numbers in Welsh medium provision. Mr. Jones said that there was no simple answer to the challenge around Welsh medium provision due to the low numbers involved. He commented on the use of video conference facilities to form viable groups and the potential for more bilingual schools such as that at Ysgol Brynhyfryd in Ruthin or the creation of Welsh medium schools within areas in North East Wales. Whilst the college was able to offer courses in partnership with schools, the aim was to look at areas in need and develop resources for teaching in Welsh.

Councillor Nancy Matthews raised queries on the scrutiny and opening of the facility in Connah's Quay, and whether there would be any involvement from GwE. On the Seren initiative, she felt that students were able to make informed decisions about their choice of university and should not necessarily be swayed by the more prestigious ones.

On the latter point, Mr. Jones said that the aim of the initiative was to offer learners more choice and support, and was not a reflection on ability. On the Sixth Form Centre, he welcomed the opportunity for regular progress to be reported to the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee giving the opportunity for the Council as a key stakeholder to help shape services.

The Chief Executive spoke of the Council's trust in Coleg Cambria as a partner organisation and a shared aim of success for the Sixth Form Centre. He reported on the development of a complex local government arrangement where performance on the hub was accountable locally first and then to the Coleg Cambria Board. When asked about any involvement from GwE, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) explained that this was not the case at present as the focus of the service was on school improvement.

In response to a query on the scheduled opening of the Connah's Quay Sixth Form Centre, Mr. Jones advised that the project was currently six weeks behind schedule, due to delayed approval received from WG, however this would be addressed through a 'buffer' time period built into projections.

The Chairman sought clarification on governance arrangements for the Sixth Form Centre as some Members had been advised that these would be separate from Coleg Cambria. The Chief Officer confirmed that the governing body formed part of the college and that the Joint Committee (incorporating nominated Council Members) would help to shape, design and embody the partnership ethos and be actively involved with Governors/Head Teachers in steering the development of the hub. This was an advisory group, able to make decisions, with responsibility for reporting to the Coleg Cambria Board.

The Cabinet Member for Education gave assurance that there was a fair representation of all schools on the Joint Committee, of which he was a member.

The Chairman queried reference in the presentation to some failings in the education system to identify and diagnose learners with special needs prior to reaching college. The Chief Officer confirmed that some additional needs were identified when people moved to different contexts. Gains could be made through planning for improved continuity of provision from early years through all stages of education, including better exchange of information on each learner.

Councillor Matthews requested that Members receive a link to access the Constitutional arrangements for the Sixth Form Centre. The Chief Officer agreed to forward the two key documents setting out the partnership relationship.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Jones for his attendance and presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted and Mr. Jones formally thanked for his contribution.

5. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.12 am)

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Chairman