

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 MARCH 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Thursday, 14 March 2013.

PRESENT: **Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)**

Councillors M. Bateman, A. Bragg, A.I. Dunbar, R.G. Hampson, S. Jones, C. Legg, P. R. Lightfoot, D.I. Mackie, N.M. Matthews, P. Shotton, N.R. Steele-Mortimer and C.A. Thomas

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Mr. D. Hytch, Mrs R. Price and Mrs. S. Williams.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors R.B. Lloyd and P.G. Heesom

APOLOGIES: Councillors A.J. Davies-Cooke, and Mrs. R. Stark

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Education, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Development and Resources, Head of Culture and Leisure, and Principal Learning Advisor

IN ATTENDANCE: Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator, and Committee Officer

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

The Chairman advised Members of the need to declare a personal interest in school related items on the agenda if they were school or college governors. All Members present except Councillors R.C. Bithell, A. Bragg, W. P. Shotton, A.I. Dunbar and P.R. Lightfoot (who were not school governors) declared an interest as school governors.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 February 2013 were submitted.

Accuracy

Mr. D. Hytch referred to his comments under item 50, Page 9, and said that his concern was that the reduction of the annual budget may lead to an increase in the shortfall if it was less than annual deterioration.

Mr Hytch referred to his comments on Page 11, paragraph 3, and explained that the Minister had said that the banding mechanism for secondary schools may be flawed, but that a mechanism was needed to prompt under performing schools into action.

Mr. D. Hytch referred to his comments on Page 14, final paragraph, and asked that the sentence be amended to read as follows "that if pupils were kept on site at lunch times that this would minimise unhealthy food choices although this was not practically possible on some school sites".

Matters arising

Councillor A Bragg referred to the OWL scheme and the invite sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to attend a meeting of the County Council and Community Profile and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She advised that the PCC would be visiting the Authority during April.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above the minutes be received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

62. ESTYN MONITORING OF FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Director of Lifelong Learning gave a verbal report on the outcomes of the Estyn Monitoring visit which took place between the 4 - 8 February 2013.

The Director provided background information and detailed the progress made by the Authority against the recommendations arising from the core inspection. He advised that overall, the Estyn team had judged that the Authority had made good progress towards addressing the recommendations in the inspection report and, as a result of the findings, the Authority would be removed from the follow-up category of Estyn Monitoring.

In summary the Director advised that an Estyn Action Plan would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to outline the continued work to ensure all of Estyn's recommendations were being fully addressed.

The Leader and Members welcomed the update and commended the Cabinet Member for Education, Director and Officers for their hard work and achievements.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That an Estyn Action Plan be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to outline the continued work to ensure all of Estyn's recommendations are fully addressed.

63. SCHOOL MODERNISATION UPDATE

The Head of Development and Resources introduced a report to update Members on the progress made in relation to the School Modernisation Strategy. He provided background information and advised that consultations on the proposed Area reviews of provision closed on 31 December 2012. The outcome of the consultations and consideration of the responses were to be reported to Cabinet on 19 March 2013. Further consultation was to be undertaken with schools in Flint and Saltney on the provision of Post 16 education.

The Head of Service commented on other initiatives being progressed concerning the amalgamations of Infant and Junior Schools into Primary Schools. He referred to the proposed amalgamations at Shotton and Hawarden which were subject to Statutory Notice and advised that consultations on the amalgamation of Penyffordd Infant and Junior Schools had been completed.

Members were advised that if the proposals were approved by Cabinet on 19 March 2013, Statutory Notices would be prepared in relation to a change in age range from 11-18 to 11-16 from 2016 at Holywell High School, Connah's Quay High School, John Summers High School and from 2014 at Buckley Elfed High School. Statutory Notices would also be published relating to the proposed closure of the Croft Nursery. Additional Statutory Notices would be required for the proposed amalgamation of Ysgol Perth y Terfyn and Ysgol y Fron and Penyffordd Infant and Junior Schools.

The Head of Service reported that the Minister for Education had confirmed the closure of Ysgol Rhes y Cae as of 31 August 2013, and appropriate transitional arrangements were being made with members of the school community.

During discussion the Director and Officers responded to the queries and concerns raised around the cost of new build, disposal of existing capital assets, collaborative working, the future implications of reduced numbers in 6th form provision in existing Secondary schools, and funding for post 16 education.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That consultation processes for Saltney and Flint be subjected to pre-consultation with the school communities involved;

- (b) That further data be provided regarding the potential impact of Flint Secondary Schools not participating in the hub; and
- (c) That future updates on the progress of the strategy be submitted to Committee when appropriate.

64. SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report to seek Members' views on proposed changes to discretionary school transport policy; namely post 16 and transport to denominational schools.

The Director outlined the proposed changes in respect of transport to denominational schools and transport for post 16 students. He advised that the changes for post 16 transport would be implemented from the start of the 2013/14 academic year for new students. The changes to denominational transport would be introduced in a "phased" approach from September 2014, as new pupils were admitted into Year 7. The changes would not affect existing pupils.

The Director advised that consultation with all stakeholders commenced on 1 March and would continue until 12 April. The responses received would be collated into a report for consideration by Cabinet on 23 April 2013. This would enable post-16 changes to be implemented from September 2013.

The Cabinet Member for Education referred to the work undertaken by a Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Task and Finish Group in 2010/11 on this issue when the Group scrutinised in detail the implications of this aspect of the policy in terms of parental preference and admissions to school.

During discussion the Cabinet Member for Education, Director of Lifelong Learning and Officers responded to the questions and concerns raised by Members around provision for sibling groups, provision for faith schools and Welsh medium education, students living in rural areas, and issues in relation to Wrexham transport to Yale and Glyndwr Colleges.

Some members expressed concern regarding lack of public awareness and access to the consultation questionnaire on the Authority's website. Councillor Mackie confirmed that the consultation was accessible on the front page of the Council's website

Members agreed that a further report be submitted to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Cabinet Member be asked to reconsider the proposals in view of the issues and concerns raised during the meeting; and

- (b) That a further report be submitted to the Committee for further consideration.

65. FLINTSHIRE PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

The Head of Culture and Leisure Services introduced a report to invite comments on the draft Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan. He provided background information and explained that following consultation with the Committee, and previous stakeholder consultations, the document would be submitted to Cabinet for approval and forwarded to the Welsh Government as the Council's formal response.

Members considered an executive summary of the Play Sufficiency Assessment and subsequent Action Plan which was attached to the report. Councillor P. Shotton commented on the financial cost of delivering the required actions under Schedules 2 and 3 and referred to the need for further discussions with the WG concerning additional resources. Councillor C.A. Thomas also expressed concern regarding funding and commented on the need for collaborative working within Schedule 1. She referred to the play funding proposal and match funding for play areas and congratulated the Director of Lifelong Learning and his team on their hard work in producing the Play Sufficiency Assessment and subsequent Action Plan.

In response to a question from Councillor M. Bateman on the all-weather football pitch in Sychdyn, the Director commented that it was amongst a number of leisure facilities which were in need of significant investment but for which resources are not available. He referred to the difficult decisions which would have to be made in terms of sustaining leisure facilities.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

66. QUARTER 3 SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Director introduced a report to request that the Committee consider the 2012/13 Quarter 3 service reports for the period October-December 2012.

Schools' Services

The Principal Learning Advisor highlighted the key considerations and performance across all work streams and invited Members to submit questions.

Councillor C.A. Thomas raised concerns around the impact on schools in regard to the Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) arrangements, the appointment of system leaders and funding. In his response the Principal Learning Advisor explained that a group of

experienced headteachers had been appointed and were working on a 'supply costs basis' as acting system leaders with groups of primary schools. He advised that individuals would not be contracted for a long period of time and that School Effectiveness Grant funding (SEG) would be available next year.

The Director commented on the importance of successful practitioners in schools sharing their experience and good practice with other schools.

Councillor N.M Matthews expressed concern that under the (GwE) arrangements small schools would no longer have direct access to the Authority's ICT support services. The Director gave an assurance that ICT support would continue to be provided for schools, however, schools were able to seek service provision from other providers if they wished.

Development and Resources

The Head of Development and Resources gave an update on school modernisation – area schools review, the Facilities review and Youth Strategy. He also gave an assessment of performance for the quarter across all work streams.

Culture and Leisure

The Head of Culture and Leisure gave an overview of key messages across work streams in Culture and Leisure and highlighted performance in service areas.

RESOLVED:

That the reports be noted.

67. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. She advised that it was proposed that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at Ysgol Cae Nant, Connah's Quay, on 25 April 2013.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee:

- School Music Service
- School Meal Service
- Lifelong Learning Directorate Plan
- Update on Saltney Library
- Estyn Action Plan

The Facilitator advised that it had been proposed that a further joint meeting be arranged with the Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny

Committee during May 2013. She also reported that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 11 July 2013 would be held in Deeside College and that representatives of Alliance Leisure be invited to attend to discuss the Leisure Strategy.

Following a request from Councillor C.A. Thomas the Director agreed to arrange for monthly updates to be provided to the Committee on Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (RSEIS) issues.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed;
- (b) That a further joint meeting be arranged with the Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- (c) That the Director of Lifelong Learning agreed to arrange for monthly updates to be provided Members on Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Services (RSEIS) issues

68. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.35 pm.

69. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two members of the press in attendance.

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Chairman