

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 APRIL 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, 25 April 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 and W.P. Shotton

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

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor P.G. Heesom for C.A. Thomas, and Mr. J. Kenworthy for Mrs. R. Price

APOLOGIES: Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Education, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Culture and Leisure, Interim Facilities Services Manager, and Principal Librarian of Community Libraries and Arts

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

70. 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.

71. YSGOL CAE'R NANT SCHOOL COUNCIL

The following members of the School Council gave a presentation on their school meal service:

Adam Woosey
Ben Kendrick
Efhan Lenning-Pearman
Harry Gorst
Ffion Cooper
Matthew Dodd

Following the presentation the School Council responded to the questions put to them by members concerning choice, healthy options and cost.

The Chairman thanked the School Council and congratulated them on an interesting and informative presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation on School Meals be noted: and
- (b) That a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to the Headteacher and each pupil on the School Council to thank them for their presentation.

72. MINUTES

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

Accuracy

Councillor D.I. Mackie referred to his comments on page 4, concerning the School Transport Policy and asked that the minutes be amended to reflect that the consultation questionnaire had been made available on the Authority's website sometime after the consultation start date. He also asked that reference be made to Councillor N.R. Steele-Mortimer's comments that even though parents of pupils may not have any religious preferences they may wish for their children to be raised and educated in a certain faith.

RESOLVED:

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

73. SCHOOL MEAL SERVICE

The Interim Facilities Manager introduced a report to provide members with an update on the implementation of various initiatives within the school meals service. He also gave a presentation and progress report on the Appetite for Life programme which was a Welsh Government initiative designed to improve the health and wellbeing of children. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- Welsh Assembly Government Campaign
- Aims and Changes
- Balanced diet
- Communication
- Mind and Body fuel
- Some obesity facts
- Secondary Schools

- Primary Schools
- Going Forward

The Chairman thanked the Interim Facilities Manager for a detailed and informative presentation and invited members to raise questions.

Councillor M. Bateman queried the cost of the new branding. The Interim Facilities Manager advised that the cost was £40K for Secondary schools but the cost for Primary schools had yet to be determined.

Councillor P. Shotton referred to the effects of the Single Status agreement on facilities staff. The Interim Facilities Manager referred to a management review which had been undertaken and said the outcome had been reported to the Corporate Management Team last month which had proposed a flatter structure. The Director of Lifelong Learning commented that in neighbouring Authorities staffing levels were based on the number of pupils having school meals which maybe something the Authority might wish to consider.

Councillor S. Jones expressed a number of concerns around the administration of the proposed promotional offers and hoped that it would not create additional work for school administration staff. The Interim Facilities Manager commented that the service was working closely to support schools and considering a range of interventions to ensure support was in place.

During discussion members raised a number of further queries and concerns around the charges for school meals, cash handling and alternative methods of payment by pupils for school meals.

Councillor N.M. Matthews raised the issue of rural schools, the transport of school meals and how to maintain quality of standards. The Interim Facilities Manager acknowledged the points made and advised that the Authority was looking into the quality of food that was transported. In response to a suggestion by Councillor Matthews concerning a cook on site in small schools the Interim Facilities Manager said that any proposals put forward by rural schools would be considered.

Mr. D. Hytch commented on the need for outsourcing and asked if the Authority sourced sustainable local produce from local suppliers. The Interim Facilities Manager outlined the tendering process and advised that as far as possible wholesalers were asked to purchase local produce.

Mrs. R. Stark referred to the different issues to be considered between provision of the scheme in Primary and Secondary schools and suggested that an holistic view should be taken of the needs of Primary schools. Councillor P.G. Heesom welcomed the initiative but emphasised the need to consider the local community base of rural and small schools.

In response to a request from Councillor N.M. Matthews the Director of Lifelong Learning agreed to provide further information to the Committee on

the eligibility of free school meals and other entitlements. The Interim Facilities Manager also confirmed that he would provide the Facilitator with information on the number of pupils who received free school meals in Primary and Secondary schools in Flintshire.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee receives further updates at key project milestones; and
- (c) That the Director of Lifelong Learning provides further information to the Committee on the eligibility of free school meals and other entitlements.

74. SCHOOL MUSIC SERVICE – REVIEW OF BUSINESS MODEL

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report to inform the Committee of the arrangements brokered with schools for an operating model to protect and develop the Flintshire Music Service, with a three year funding commitment by the Council from 2013/14 to 2015/16. He provided background information and outlined the key considerations in the report.

Councillor D.I. Mackie expressed concern that the report had already been submitted to a recent meeting of the Cabinet prior to submission to the Committee. He raised further concerns around the delegated funding to schools which was based on a formula and asked if this meant that some schools would be getting more as a result. He also commented on the wording in the first sentence of the report under the heading school responsibilities and said that it appeared that the onus was on the schools to continue to fulfil their role in service commissioning.

During discussion the Director of Lifelong Learning responded to the further concerns raised by Councillor Mackie around schools being responsible for raising invoices for music tuition, the number of pupils which signed up for music tuition and then dropped out, income received, and the net budget for 2013/14. Councillor Mackie referred to the scope of the music service and the provision of progression and performance opportunities and stated his concerns that if some schools considered obtaining provision elsewhere the service would not be sustainable in the future. The Director commented on the need for resilient operating arrangements to be in place for the new academic year and on discussions taking place with System Leader teams.

Councillor A.I. Dunbar referred to tuition for disabled pupils and raised the issue of provision during school holiday periods and difficulties experienced in gaining access to facilities.

Mr. D. Hytch commented on the issue of delegation and said that delegated budgets came under the control of a school Governing Body and there was no guarantee that the funding would be used for the provision of a music service.

Councillor C. Legg expressed a number of concerns around the pressures associated with accompaniment.

Mrs. R. Stark praised the service provided by the Authority and thanked Officers for their commitment. She raised concerns about how schools would administer the proposed model and asked that guidance be given to assist them in the first year of administering the increase in fees. She also referred to the issue of deprivation, cost of fees and discounts for sibling groups. The Director responded to the matters raised and advised that some schools were planning to make provision from the School Deprivation Grant (SDG).

Councillor N.M. Matthews commented on the Authority's stock of musical instruments and the cost of future maintenance and replacement.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee monitors the operating model for the Flintshire Music Service as set out subject to effective implementation of the business model changes set out in the report and a matched commitment by the school community; and
- (b) That a further report be submitted to a meeting of the Committee to be held in September 2013.

75. OUTCOME OF ESTYN MONITORING VISIT

Due to time constraints the Chairman asked Members to consider deferring the item until the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

76. A STRATEGY FOR FLINTSHIRE'S LIBRARIES 2013-16

The Head of Culture and Leisure Services introduced a report to seek the endorsement of the Committee for the Strategy for Flintshire's Libraries 2013-16. He introduced Pennie Corbett, the Principal Librarian of Community Libraries and Arts, and invited her to give an overview of the strategy.

The Principal Librarian provided background information and context and advised that the Strategy for Flintshire's Libraries 2013-16 updated the key objectives of the previous strategy to reflect the aims of the service for the next three years. She advised that following public consultation many

supportive comments had been received and constructive suggestions had been incorporated into the final draft.

Members expressed their praise for the Library Service and thanked Officers for their work. During discussion Officers responded to the questions raised by members concerning the on-line service and administration of the RNIB talking book service.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee endorse the Strategy and its five key objectives as a blueprint for the current and proposed offer from the Library Service over the next three years.

77. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 6 June 2013:

- Outcome of Estyn Monitoring Visit
- Q4/Year end performance reporting
- Lifelong Learning Directorate Plan

Members also agreed that the Facilitator would arrange a Forward Work Programme Planning Workshop to be held in July 2013.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed; and
- (b) That the Facilitator arrange a Forward Work Programme Planning Workshop to be held in July.

78. DURATION OF MEETING

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

79. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two members of the press in attendance and one member of the public.

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Chairman