

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24 JULY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council, held at County Hall, Mold , on Thursday, 24 July 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Amanda Bragg, Adele Davies-Cooke, Ian Dunbar, Stella Jones, Colin Legg, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Carolyn Thomas.

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Rita Price, Rebecca Stark and Reverend John Thelwell

APOLOGIES: Councillors Phil Lightfoot and Paul Shotton. Mr. David Hytch.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), and Head of Inclusion Services

IN ATTENDANCE:

Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

10. 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 Councillor Amanda Bragg and Reverend John Thelwell (who were not school governors) declared an interest as school governors.

11. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 June 2014 were submitted.

Matters arising

Recommendation from the Leisure Finance Task and Finish Group

Councillor Dave Mackie reported that at a meeting of the Cabinet on 15 July 2014, it had been agreed not to support the ring-fencing of capital receipts received from the sale of land at Ysgol Perth y Terfyn Infants and Ysgol y Fron Junior School for maintenance works for Leisure Centres in Flintshire as it was not in line with Council Policy and maintenance of leisure centres would be considered as part of the ongoing asset management strategy. It was agreed that officers be asked to initiate discussions with schools where dual

use leisure facilities were provided to assess whether they would consider assuming responsibility for community access of the facilities in the future.

RESOLVED:

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

12. YEAR END SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report on the 2013/14 Year End Service Performance Report produced at the Head of Service/Divisional level under the adopted business model of the Council. The report covered the period January – March 2014.

The Chief Officer advised that detailed Year End Service Performance Reports were appended to the report for Schools Services, Development and Resources, and Culture and Leisure Services. He commented on the retirement of the Head of Culture and Leisure Services and the forthcoming retirement of the Head of Development and Resources and paid tribute to both officers for their hard work and commitment to service improvement and for preparation of the Year End reports. The Chairman reiterated the sentiments expressed by the Chief Officer and asked that the Committee's thanks be passed on to the Officers for their work and best wishes for their future retirement.

The Chief Officer gave a summary of the key information in relation to School Services and referred to improvement priorities and Service Plan monitoring, the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) progress report, Governor development, and the Authority's support for Newly Qualified Teacher induction. He commented on the NSI Improvement Target performance indicators and the positive progress achieved in the primary and secondary sectors.

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to the training package for foundation phase learners which had been organised to support schools on the effective use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant and focussed on the Sutton Trust strategies to improve learner outcomes, and asked whether teachers had the opportunity to access training through the Sutton Trust. The Head of Inclusion Service responded and agreed to provide information to the Committee on the Sutton Trust document following the meeting.

Councillor Matthews also referred to the 'Talk for Writing' training event which focused on the strategies promoted by Pie Corbett, which was targeted at the primary sector and asked if this was the only strategy being focused. The Head of Inclusion Service explained that this was the only one that training was being provided on at the current time.

During discussion members raised a number of concerns around the School Governor Development and Training Programme and referred to the

quality of the training provided, time and venue for events. Councillor Amanda Bragg referred to the difficulties being experienced by some Governors who were unable to attend training due to limited places on the event provided. She suggested that Governors who requested training but were not able to attend due to the training session being full, be placed on a reserve list and notified if a vacancy on the training session became available. The Chief Officer agreed to put the suggestion forward to the School Governance Manager.

Councillor David Mackie asked for information on the number of governors across Flintshire who had attended training sessions. The Chief Officer agreed to circulate the information following the meeting.

The Chief Officer acknowledged the concerns raised by members around delivery of the School Governor Development Programme and specifically the points concerning the data protection training. He advised that all courses were evaluated and agreed to provide feedback to the School Governance Manager. The Chief Officer advised that the School Governor Development Programme was organised jointly with neighbouring authorities in North East Wales and agreed to circulate information to members following the meeting around provision and participation in the programme.

Members raised further concerns around the introduction of mandatory training for governors in their role and the warning that Governors could be suspended from a Governing Body if they did not attend the relevant training. A number of members expressed the view that this approach was a deterrent to the recruitment and retention of volunteers to the position. The Chief Officer emphasised the importance of governors availing themselves of the training development opportunities provided and the need to understand why the knowledge and information gained had a positive impact on school development.

Following the issues and observations raised by members the Chairman suggested that a report on School Governors be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to include information about Parent Governor elections. It was also suggested that the School Governance Manager attend the meeting when the report was presented to answer any questions raised. This was agreed by the Committee. During further discussion it was agreed that the Chief Officer would produce a report on federation governance following the Hill Review and that the meeting would be governance themed.

The Chief Officer referred to the Year End Service performance report for the Development and Resource Service and summarised the main points for consideration. He commented on the outcome of a staffing review of the Youth Support Services and Facilities Services. The Chief Officer advised that a response was still awaited from the Welsh Government (WG) to the Statutory Notices issued last Summer and that Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council, had written to the WG to outline the Authority's concerns. The Chief Officer provided a verbal update on progress in relation to the Shotton Primary school project and advised that completion was

scheduled for the end of the Summer holidays and that the new Well House Primary School would open in September 2014.

Councillor Nigel Steele Mortimer asked for an update on the backlog of school maintenance and repair works. The Chief Officer advised that there had been a reduction in the repair and maintenance backlog due to the replacement of some old buildings by new, however, increases in repair and maintenance works would arise as buildings continued to age and deteriorate. Members were informed that the repair and maintenance budget had reduced by 10% in accordance with Council policy. The Chief Officer agreed to distribute the latest analysis to the Committee following the meeting. The Facilitator advised that the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee had requested that the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee look at the reduction of the schools maintenance backlog. She said this would be included on the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

In response to a question from Councillor Matthews around Welsh medium provision, the Chief Officer advised that progress in delivering additional Welsh medium provision in the Deeside area was on track and a satellite unit would open in Shotton Infants School in September 2014.

The Chief Officer reported on the Year end Service performance report for Culture and Leisure and drew attention to the key information around Living Well and active and healthier lifestyles.

During discussion the Chief Officer responded to the queries and comments raised by members concerning the Universal Class online learning opportunity, provision for public swimming and opening hours in Leisure Centres.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee's comments and observations be fed back to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of improvement targets.

13. YEAR END IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report on the 2013/14 Year End Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee. The report covered the period January – March 2014.

The Chief Officer advised that the following Improvement Plan sub-priority reports were attached to the report for the Committee's consideration:

- Modernised and High Performance Education
- Places of Modernised Learning
- Apprenticeships and Training

The Chairman invited members to raise questions.

Councillor Nancy Matthews expressed praise for the Catch Up scheme and the training provided to schools.

Councillor Marion Bateman referred to the comments on page 64 of the report concerning GwE and highlighted the issues which had been raised previously around service delivery. The Chief Officer responded to the comments and reported that arrangements were being made to ensure that all Headteachers had an advisor/System Leader working with them. He commented that there had been improvement but further work was to be undertaken for the service to be fully developed with a range of support networking being consistently available across the region. The Chief Officer suggested that Headteachers be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to outline what they felt did and did not work in terms of school to school support. It was suggested that an invitation be extended to Headteachers to attend a meeting of the Committee during early autumn.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That feedback be provided to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of improvement targets.

14. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting as the following item was considered to be exempt by virtue of Paragraph 15 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

15. INCLUSION SERVICE REVIEW

The Head of Inclusion Service introduced a report to inform members of the operational structure for the Inclusion Service from September 2014. She provided background information and advised that members were asked to consider the arrangements for revised service delivery against the priorities of provision and support for children and young people with additional learning needs.

The Head of Inclusion Service advised that in accordance with the Council's budgetary decisions for 2014-15, efficiencies had been identified through the restructure, some of which had already been achieved through the Value for Money project and the Voluntary Redundancy scheme which had been running concurrently to the review.

During discussion Officers responded to the questions raised by members around the consultation exercise, and the forthcoming Fixed Penalty Notices concerning pupils unauthorised absence from school. Councillor Stella Jones raised concerns around the waiting times for statements of special needs. The Head of Inclusion Service and the Chief Officer responded to the matters raised and agreed to provide a progress report to the Committee on how the system worked and to include performance indicators.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed arrangements to support children and young people through the Inclusion Service be approved; and
- (b) That the Committee continue to monitor the impact of the proposed arrangements for the Inclusion Service in 2014/15.

16. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

(The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.13pm)

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Chairman