

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 JULY 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire on Friday, 28 July 2017.

PRESENT: David Healey (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Geoff Collett, Paul Cunningham, Andy Dunbobbin, Patrick Heesom, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie, Martin White and David Williams

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Lynn Bartlett, David Hytch, and Bernard Stuart

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor David Cox (for Ian Smith)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Sian Braun. Mrs Rebecca Stark.

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts (Cabinet Member for Education), Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression), and Senior Manager Integrated Youth Services

IN ATTENDANCE:

Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 June 2017 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

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

8. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Following a suggestion by the Chair, a change in the order of business was agreed to bring forward agenda item 7, Improvement Plan 2016/17 Outturn Report.

9. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2016/17 OUTTURN REPORT

The Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth) presented a report on the Improvement Plan 2016/17 Outturn Report to consider progress towards the delivery of the impacts set out in the 2016/17 Improvement Plan,

focussing on the areas of under-performance relevant to the Committee at the end of year.

Mr David Hytch asked if there was a problem recruiting teaching staff in schools. The Interim Chief Officer advised that schools in Flintshire had been able to recruit to leadership positions without difficulty, however, there was a decline in the number of applications received. She commented that there was a general concern around applications for senior leadership roles in schools.

Mr David Hytch referred to page 86 of the report, and the strategy for repairs and maintenance of school buildings and expressed concern that the Authority did not have the financial capacity to fully address the matter. The Interim Chief Officer acknowledged that it was a challenging situation and managed as best as possible with the resources available. She explained that there was a detailed matrix to support the repair and maintenance of school buildings.

Councillor David Williams sought clarification around support for the Youth Service, wellbeing and health, and adult education. The Interim Chief Officer gave reassurance that the Youth Service was part of the Service portfolio and advised that the Education Improvement Strategy was a more detailed plan which drove the day to day business of the Service. She offered to provide more information on the Youth Service to a future meeting of the Committee.

During discussion the Officers responded to questions and referred to the qualifications, training, and pathways provided for young people through the accreditation framework within the Youth Service. Responding to further questions around adult education, the Head of the Inclusion Service explained that the grant for adult learning was low but work was ongoing with the Welsh Government (WG) to review the grant and with Coleg Cambria and Adult Learning Wales around adult education provision.

In response to comments from Councillor Andy Dunbobbin concerning Welsh outcomes at KS2 and Foundation Phase, the Interim Chief Officer explained that the Welsh cohort within Flintshire primary schools was small and the data could be variable. She referred to the dedicated support which was provided by the Authority's Welsh Advisory Team and the Regional Service.

The Interim Chief Officer responded to the comments and concerns from Mr. Hytch regarding performance and target setting and reported on the target setting methodology between the Authority and the Regional Service.

RESOLVED

That the Committee welcomed the Improvement Plan 2016/17 out-turn monitoring report and congratulated the Service on its achievements.

10. COUNCIL (IMPROVEMENT) PLAN 2017-23

The Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the report to consider the targets and milestones document, the Council (Improvement) Plan 2017-23, and provide feedback to Cabinet prior to adoption by the County Council for final publication.

The Interim Chief Officer provided background information and reported on the draft Council (Improvement) Plan 2017-23, and proposed "How we Measure" document which were appended to the report. She advised that the super-structure of the Plan remained the same as previous plans and comprised of six priorities and relevant sub priorities. The six priorities took a long term view of the Authority's projects and ambitions over the next five years.

Councillor David Mackie referred to page 49 of the report and expressed concerns around the targets which were set. In response the Interim Chief Officer explained the target setting methodology and the difficulties experienced by Headteachers in setting targets for performance. She advised that in general progress year on year was positive and there was an uplift in pupils' performance following Foundation Phase. She explained that schools set their own targets and commented on the difficulty to anticipate performance of young children at an early age.

Councillor Ian Roberts commented that it was a credit to schools that they achieved above the aspirational targets.

Referring to pages 48 and 49 of the report, Councillor Tudor Jones commented on the need to support teachers who experienced difficult and challenging behaviour in the classroom and said there seemed to be no reference in the Plan to external bodies; citing Barnardo's and NHS psychological family services as an example. He also said that the uptake of Free School Meals needed to be encouraged. In response the Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) explained the inclusion plan and support in place for pupils and teachers to work effectively.

Councillor Kevin Hughes asked how the issue of unauthorised absences of pupils from school was addressed. The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) advised that unauthorised attendance in Flintshire was low, however, there was a high level of authorised absences and a Task and Finish Group had been set up, with headteachers and relevant agencies, to address the issue. She advised that headteachers could authorise 10 days holiday absence for pupils.

RESOLVED

That the Committee supports the targets and milestones in the Measures and Milestones document (appendix 2) and the Council (Improvement) Plan 2017-23 and informs the cabinet, prior to adoption by the County Council for final publication.

11. FLINTSHIRE EARLY HELP HUB

The Senior Manager Integrated Youth Services introduced a report on new multi-agency arrangements for early intervention to address adverse childhood experiences. She provided background information and outlined the key aim of the Early Help Hub (EH Hub) which was to address key legislative and regulatory requirements and the PSB ambition for better quality, cost effective services that secured good outcomes for all in Flintshire. The Senior Manager Integrated Youth Services advised that the Hub commenced a soft launch on 30 June 2017. The soft launch responds to existing referrals from partner agencies and a full launch will take place in October 2017 following wider information seminars.

During discussion the Senior Manager Integrated Youth Services responded to the questions concerning referrals from Health services, and early intervention strategies.

Members supported the development of the EH Hub and commended all those who were involved in establishing it.

RESOLVED:

That the committee supports the development of the EH hub and endorses proposals for a full launch in the autumn of 2017

12. TRAC/WELLBEING

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) introduced a report to provide an update on the recent developments to support wellbeing, with particular reference to the use of European Social Funding. She provided background information and reported on the main points of consideration as detailed the report.

In response to a comment from the Chairman concerning access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) advised that CAMHS were operating within timescales and did not have a waiting list in Flintshire.

During discussion the issue of mental health and wellbeing and the effect of the use of social media and bullying on children was raised.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee acknowledges the importance of developing and embedding partnership working around the area of wellbeing and endorses the development of the Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Group.
- (b) That the Committee endorses the proposed extension of the TRAC project to 2022.

13. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Manager presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration.

Councillor David Williams asked if an update could be provided on 21st Century Schools funding. It was agreed that the School Organisation report to be submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 5 October 2017 would include progress on 21st Century Schools.

In response to the concerns raised by the Committee around use of social media and internet safety it was agreed that a report on the Use of Social Media and Internet Safety be prepared for the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 23 November 2017.

Referring to the report on Healthy Schools and Pre-School Programme which was to be submitted to the meeting of the Committee in November, the Interim Chief Officer offered to approach schools with a view to inviting a representative to attend the meeting to provide more understanding and detail around the Programme.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee approves the draft Forward Work programme; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

14. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There no members of the public and one member of the press in attendance

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.55 am)

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Chairman