

LIFELONG LEARNING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 MARCH, 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 22 March 2012

PRESENT: Councillor R.P. Macfarlane (Chairman)
Councillors: R.C. Bithell, J.C. Cattermoul, R. Dolphin, F. Gillmore, H.T. Isherwood, C. Legg and D.I. Mackie

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Mr. D. Hytch and Mrs. T. Millington

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor V. Gay for D.L. Mackie

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor K. Armstrong-Braun

APOLOGIES: Councillors E.F. Evans, H.T. Howorth, H.J. McGuill and W.O. Thomas. Ms. C. Burgess, Mrs. R. Price and Mrs. R. Stark

CONTRIBUTORS: Head of Schools Services, Head of Development and Resources, and Head of Culture and Leisure

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager, Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

85. 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 R.C. Bithell (who is not a school governor) declared an interest as school governors.

86. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 January, 2012 and 19 January 2012 were submitted.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 February, 2012 were submitted.

Accuracy

Councillor C. Legg commented on a grammatical error in paragraph 1, page 18, and said the word Council's should be replaced by Councils'.

RESOLVED:

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

87. WELSH EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP) FOR FLINTSHIRE 2012-2015

The Head of Schools Services introduced a report to seek endorsement of the draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for Flintshire Local Authority.

The Head of Service provided background information and commented on the positive feedback from the Members' workshop session which had been held on 31 January 2012 to consider specific outcomes within the plan. He advised that at the present time the Authority had not received feedback from the Department of Education and Skills (Dfes) and therefore was not in a position to convene any further meetings of the Forum which had been formulated to strategically plan, monitor and evaluate the Plan. Members were asked to consider the Draft WESP for Flintshire 2012-2015 which was attached to the report.

Councillor R.C. Bithell commended Officers on their work and achievements in the promotion of Welsh Medium education within the Authority. In terms of progressing Welsh medium education in non-Welsh medium schools, he suggested that any spare capacity in classroom space in schools could be utilised as a short term measure.

Councillor H.T. Isherwood emphasised the need to engage children at an early age and commented that the teaching of Welsh could start with children at nursery and reception level. She also suggested that the Authority could promote awareness of the opportunities for learning Welsh as a second language to Flintshire residents by sending information with its communications and cited Council Tax statements as an example.

Councillor Bithell referred to the data presented in Outcome 2.2, Key Stages 2 and 3 and requested that figures be provided on the number of Flintshire Welsh Medium learners that had transferred to Ysgol Glan Clwyd.

The Head of Service responded to the comments and questions raised and reported on the collaborative work undertaken between the Authority, Conway and Denbighshire to share resources.

Mr. D. Hytch said there was a need to make parents aware that all children had the right to attend welsh speaking schools and dispel the myth that it was the prerogative of welsh speaking children only.

During discussion Councillor D.I. Mackie proposed that the additional recommendation that the WESP Forum agree any necessary changes proposed to the WESP by the Welsh Government, be included to recommendations 4.01 and 4.02 in the report. This was agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made in the drafting and production of the WESP for Flintshire be noted;
- (b) That the draft strategic plan pending feedback for the Department of Education and Skills (DfeES) be endorsed;
- (c) That any changes proposed to the WESP by the Welsh Government be considered by the WESP Forum.

88. ESTYN INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Head of Schools Services introduced a report on the draft action plan following the 2011 Estyn Inspection of Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young People (LAESCYP).

The Head of Service advised that several sections of the Inspection report had matched the Authority's own views of its progress and performance including support for additional learning needs, promoting social inclusion and well-being, access and school places, partnership working and resource management. However, the Authority had registered concerns about Estyn's judgement of 'adequate' in relation to 'standards'. He referred to the key performance outcomes for key stages 1, 2 3, and 4 which were attached to the report and commented that the achievements contradicted the statements within the Estyn report 'standards' section.

Members were asked to consider the post-inspection Action Plan which had been produced by a project team working closely with service partners. The Action Plan was due for submission to Estyn by 4 April 2012.

Councillor J.C. Cattermoul expressed a number of concerns around a decline in performance outcomes for key stage 2 between 2010 and 2011 and asked if the cause could be identified and explained. The Head of Service suggested that he arrange a meeting for Councillor Cattermoul with Mrs. C. Homard, Early Years Officer, to provide further information and clarification. The Chair advised that the subject of pupil attainment had been considered in detail at the meeting of the Committee held on 22 February 2012.

Councillor R.C. Bithell raised a number of concerns around teacher assessment, attendance records, school exclusions and school balances. Mr. D. Hytch questioned the accuracy and robustness of the statistical data considered and interpreted by Estyn.

The Head of Service responded to the comments and questions raised and gave an assurance that discussions with Secondary and Primary Headteacher Federations were focussed on identifying the causes of the issues raised within the Estyn report.

Councillor R.C. Bithell commented on the roles and responsibilities of Governing Bodies and suggested that training be provided for Members and school governors to assist them to address the issues raised in the Estyn report. The Head of Service concurred that it would be helpful if a programme of workshops were arranged on key issues concerning school improvement to inform Members and school governors.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the Head of Service arrange a meeting between Councillor Cattermoul and Mrs. C. Homard, Early Years Officer, to provide further information on key stage 2 performance outcomes for 2010 and 2011; and
- (c) That a programme of workshops be arranged to address key issues concerning school improvement to inform Members and school governors.

89. ARSON, VANDALISM, AND BURGLARIES TO FLINTSHIRE SCHOOLS

The Head of Development and Resources introduced a report to update on the implementation of the recommendations submitted to and approved by the Executive early in 2006, regarding the review of measures taken to reduce and/or prevent arson, vandalism and burglaries to Flintshire schools.

The Head of Service commented on the progress which had been made since last year in implementing a number of measures in consultation with the Joint Action Group, School Security Group, and with schools to reduce incidents of arson, vandalism and burglary and make schools safer. He drew attention to the downward trend in costs for arson and vandalism, however, there was an increase in costs for burglary due to the general trend of metal thefts. In response to the concerns expressed by Members he outlined the preventative measures which were put in place to monitor and minimise the opportunities for such occurrences.

Councillor R.C. Bithell welcomed the preventative actions taken by the Authority. He referred to the training provided for school Caretakers and asked if attendance records were retained by the LEA. Councillor V. Gay suggested that it would be helpful if school governing bodies as well as headteachers were informed of the training provided and attended by school caretakers to assist them to fulfil their role and responsibilities.

Mr. D. Hytch commented that the preventative measures taken by the Authority to reduce and/or prevent incidents of crime was an excellent model of "invest to save".

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

90. 14-19 EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The Head of Development and Resources provided a verbal update. He explained that there were no developments to report until an announcement on capital funding was received from the Welsh Government (WG). He also commented on the awaited outcome of the School Modernisation consultation process and advised that work would be started to produce a business case in the interim period.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

91. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2011/12

The Chairman introduced a report to request that the Committee consider the 2011/12 Quarter 3 service performance reports, note the update on the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) contained within the performance reports and note progress made against the Improvement Target Action Plans contained within the performance reports.

Schools Services

The Head of Schools Services gave a short presentation to summarise key information including performance within each of the service areas, work undertaken to improve performance and any emerging issues.

Councillor H.T. Isherwood commented on the needs of young children who had vision or hearing problems and the detrimental impact this could have on their educational development if not diagnosed and supported. The Chair suggested that the matter be included as an agenda item for further discussion at a future meeting of the Committee.

Mr. D. Hytch commented on the revised format of quarterly reporting and expressed the view that the negative was accentuated rather than the positive achievements made by the Service. The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator explained that the current format was a pilot and feedback would be provided to the Performance Leads meeting.

Development and Resources

The Head of Development and Resources provided an overview of the key messages across all work streams in Development and Resources and highlighted both good and poor performance in each service area.

The Head of Service referred to the School Modernisation Area Schools Review and advised that a new phase of area review consultations was underway and would be completed by 27 April 2012. Responses would be considered during early Summer and a second round of consultation would begin late Summer. He reported that the Welsh Government had announced the approval in principle for a £64M investment in the Holywell and Connah's Quay areas under the 21st Century Schools Programme, however, the Authority would need to fund 50% of the cost. In response to Members' comments he explained that the Authority could not proceed with the projects until all funding was in place and it was satisfied that the 50% contribution to costs could be met.

The Head of Service responded to the questions raised by Councillor R.C. Bithell and H.T. Isherwood concerning a review of special/mainstream school and college transport. He also responded to the concerns made by Councillor V. Gay concerning the restructure of the Youth Strategy.

Culture and Leisure

The Head of Culture and Leisure gave an overview of the key issues across all work streams in Culture and Leisure. He reported on the performance within each of the service areas, outlining work undertaken to improve performance and areas where improvement was needed, as outlined within the report.

The Head of Service reported on the re-development work at Leisure Services within the Authority and highlighted the work undertaken at Deeside Leisure Centre in relation to Phase 2c and Phase 3. He advised that the number of recorded visitors to leisure centres in Quarter 3 2011/12 had risen by 7.15% on the figure for Quarter 3 2010/11.

The Head of Service responded in detail to the questions raised by Councillor R.C. Bithell concerning energy consumption at Deeside Leisure Centre, QUEST (UK Quality & Improvement Scheme for Sport & recreation), the Free Swimming Initiative, the introduction of a mobile library service for Bagillt, visits to the County Record Office.

In response to a request from Councillors Bithell and V. Gay concerning the development of a library for Saltney, the Head of Service gave an update on progress and developments to date. He advised that a feasibility study had been undertaken to consider the development of a multi function centre on the site adjacent to Morrison's supermarket. He also commented that there was a need to consider other site options within the area and if deemed suitable an options appraisal would then be put forward to the Executive.

Members congratulated the Head of Service and his Team on the success of the recent developments at Deeside Leisure Centre.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the reports be noted; and
- (b) That an item on the educational development of children with sensory impairment be included on the Forward Work Programme for future consideration by the Committee.

92. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. She advised Members that the next meeting of the Committee on 29 March 2012 would be a joint meeting with Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

- Children and Young People Plan
- Educational Attainment of Looked After Children
- Corporate Parenting
- Wrexham and Flintshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- Flying Start

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be agreed.

93. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

94. DURATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and concluded at 5.40 p.m.

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Chairman

**SUMMARY OF DECLARATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS
IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S
CODE OF CONDUCT**

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE		DATE: 22 March, 2012
MEMBER	ITEM	MINUTE NO.
Councillors: J.C. Cattermoul, R. Dolphin, F. Gillmore, H.T. Isherwood, C. Legg, D.I. Mackie and R.P. Macfarlane	Estyn inspection of local authority education services for children and young people	88
<u>Co-opted Members:</u> Mr. D. Hytch and Mrs. T. Millington	Arson, Vandalism, and Burglaries to Flintshire Schools	89