

**EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**20 OCTOBER 2022**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 20 October 2022.

**PRESENT: Councillor Teresa Carberry (Chair)**

Councillors: Bill Crease, Paul Cunningham, Dave Mackie, Ryan McKeown, Andrew Parkhurst, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson, Jason Shallcross and Arnold Woolley.

**CO-OPTEEs:** Mrs Wendy White

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Gladys Healey, Gina Maddison and Mrs Lynne Bartlett

**SUBSTITUTIONS:** Councillors: Tina Claydon (for Councillor Gladys Healey) and Linda Thomas (for Councillor Gina Maddison)

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Education & Youth), Play Development Officer and Senior Manager Integrated Youth Provision (for minute number 31) Senior Manager for School Improvement (for minute numbers 32 and 33) Learning Advisor for Post 16 and Adult Community Learning (for minute numbers 32)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

**29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**30. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING**

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme which had been updated to include the additional item on School Parking. This followed a request from the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Members of that Committee would be invited to join the meeting for that item. There were no further changes to the Forward Work Programme.

Referring to the Action Tracking Report the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator confirmed that all actions from the last meeting were included. She clarified that the action relating to the information requested by Councillor Crease was now

completed. The only ongoing action was the response to questions by Councillor Dave Mackie.

Following the last meeting a workshop had been arranged with GwE Officers for Monday 5 December at 2.00 pm and an email confirmation for Members would be sent to Committee Members following the meeting.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst thanked the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) for her response to his request on the attainment gap of looked after children. He was pleased that a review of the educational performance of looked after children was being presented to Committee later this year.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Carolyn Preece and seconded by Councillor Andrew Parkhurst.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (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; and
- (c) That the progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

**31. FLINTSHIRE COUNTY SUMMER PLAYScheme 2022**

In presenting the report the Senior Manager - Integrated Youth Provision said the successful Summer Playschemes had been running since 1996. He provided information on the 57 playschemes which included criteria for site locations, with the involvement of 30 Town & Community Councils and the 2 targeted Welsh language sites. A bi-lingual approach was being developed with all play workers receiving Welsh language training. Over the summer there were approaching 4,000 registrations, with 15,500 attending the 2 hours sessions with the data captured digitally for each session. This had enabled parents to enrol their children prior to attending ensuring the smooth running of the sessions with information in relation to the children already uploaded. He then outlined the on-line Health & Safety Risk Assessments and revenue received from Town & Community Councils, the Play Works Grant and the Summer of Fun Grant to support the schemes. The situation was still unclear regarding the funding for the Summer of Fun and Winter of Well Being. The Senior Manager also referred to the consultation undertaken with the young people and their families which was fed back to progress that provision and he outlined how the play provision could be developed.

The Senior Manager then reflected on the work undertaken by Janet Roberts over the last 26 years. Janet was retiring and he personally wanted to thank her for all her support. She left the service in a positive place with 90 young people employed over the summer with some retained to join the Youth Service.

Councillor Dave Mackie firstly said that he was sad that Janet was leaving and reflected on the discussions he had had with her at Committee over many years. He referred to workshops he had attended with Janet saying it was her enthusiasm which came across and said it had been a delight to be a part of her journey.

Referring to the report, Councillor Mackie said he would have liked to have seen the objectives and information on what they were trying to achieve during the preparation of the playschemes included with the outcomes highlighted in the report. He felt that this would enable the Committee to understand the direction the service was going and ask questions. In response, the Senior Manager - Integrated Youth Provision took Councillor Mackie's points on board saying that in January the service would be implementing a new system which would enable the mapping of provision against the play sufficiency assessment and other local data. He outlined how this data would highlight the reasons why schemes were placed in certain communities, the decision-making framework and where sustainable provision was determined.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Carolyn Preece, the Chief Officer agreed to take the comments on the letters to Town & Community Councils back to potentially getting the notifications out sooner and to also demonstrate how much their contribution made to the scheme. Referring to the Summer of Fun point she confirmed the Council would continue to press Welsh Government (WG) for further funding because of young peoples' emotional and physical well being

The Chief Officer was delighted that Janet Roberts (Play Development Officer) was present today to enable her to thank her for her years of service at Flintshire County Council. Her dedication to all things play had been Janet's drive and ambition and instrumental in making the playscheme programme such a success. The report provided information on the range of opportunities provided for children and young people through the playschemes. The Play Development Officer thanked Councillor Mackie and the Senior Manager for their comments. She said this work was so important and she thanked members for their support. She thanked her Chief Officer and Line Managers over the last 26 years who had been so supportive. She said that it had been her passion and privilege to work with the children of the county. The programme provided little moments of well being for children and young people and with schemes such as the buddy scheme, support for Ukrainian children and looked after children providing that 2 hour of play which in some cases had been the safest place for those children.

The Chair referred to the report where the terms "children with disabilities" and "vulnerable" were used and she said that the preferred terms now used were disabled children and at-risk children. She referred to the support provided to Ukrainian children and asked if support was also provided to Syrian and Afghan families. The Chief Officer confirmed that it was provided.

The Chair then spoke to Janet saying that although they had not met, she had heard so much about the work she had undertaken and said that on behalf of the Committee she would like to give a small gift as a token of their thanks.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Carolyn Preece and seconded by Councillor Ryan McKeown

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee acknowledge the effective partnership with local Town and Community Councils to deliver the universal playscheme offers for all children aged 5-12 years across the county during the summer and 5-17 years for the Flintshire Buddy scheme providing for children with disabilities;
- (b) That the Committee acknowledge the contribution from Welsh Government (WG) for summer play scheme via the Holiday Playworks grant and urge WG to continue to make this funding available; and
- (c) That the Committee note the ongoing developments within the service to strengthen the relationships with partner organisations to ensure that the most at-risk children in Flintshire were identified and provided with play opportunity in the summer.

**32. ESTYN INSPECTION OF ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING (ACL) WITHIN THE NORTH EAST WALES ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP**

The Chair congratulated the Adult Community Learning Team for achieving the positive Estyn Inspection Report. She was pleased to see that two-case studies had been requested by Estyn as they had observed best practice and would wish to share this. She was also satisfied that the areas for improvement mentioned in the report had already been previously acknowledged by the Adult Community Learning Partnership highlighting their robust self-evaluation.

The Senior Manager for School Improvement thanked the Chair for her comments. She provided a brief outline of the ambitious partnership working with Wrexham which had enabled the North-East Wales Adult Community Learning Partnership to scale up the provision and opportunities for adult learners. Much of this work had been undertaken during the pandemic with the Partnership growing during this time, especially the level of engagement with Partners. An outline of the progress since this period and discussions held with Estyn around the vision for the Partnership was given and the increased funding providing that momentum to ensure that this continued for many years to come. Referring to the report from Estyn and the request for two case studies which endorsed the vision and direction of the Partnership especially with recommendations 1 to 3 already identified in the Partnership's Quality Improvement plan (QIP) which was shared with Estyn during the Inspection. Regarding recommendation 4 the social media campaign provided during 2020/21 highlighted how opportunities for engagement were provided to learners during this time and she provided information on how learners can find out about and enrol on courses as well as plans for further engagement moving forward.

The Adviser for Post 16 and Adult Community Learning said the Partnership was delighted with the outcome of the report especially coming at the end of the first year. It had provided reassurance to the team around the processes such as the self-evaluation report and quality improvement plan. This had also helped identify

the next steps to improve the opportunities and outcomes of all adult learners in Flintshire.

Councillor Dave Mackie congratulated the team on the inspection report and the work undertaken within a year.

In response to several comments raised by Councillor Dave Mackie, the Senior Manager for School Improvement said these were the same questions raised at the Management Board, Curriculum and Quality meetings and sat within the Quality Improvement Plan for the Board. She hoped that future reports to Committee would provide information on the outcomes and achievements as the Partnership develops. The national data collection on attendance, completion rates and attainment rates had been paused during Covid, but she said that work was ongoing to ensure that the next collection of data was presented. A future report to Committee would highlight how those recommendations had been developed into actions and outcomes. She provided information on the mapping of provision, online presence, together with the buildings used and said that this information was fed into the Council's corporate plan and portfolio business plan. She then provided an update on family learning which had been embraced by schools.

The Adviser for Post 16 and Adult Community Learning provided an overview of the launch of the Family Learning Programme last year and the meetings held with Officers, Heads Federation, Deputy Heads of primary schools to promote Adult Community Learning. This had been successful with 14 primary schools and 2 high schools involved on different projects and she explained what topics they were covering. She provided information on the Wellies in the Wood programme working with 200 parents focusing on reading, communication and working outdoors.

Councillor Carolyn Preece commented that this was excellent, especially with Estyn asking for two best practice case studies to promote this programme across Wales. As the Estyn narrative and framework had changed, she wondered if a training session would be useful for Members to understand what Estyn looked at and the type of wording that they now used in their reports.

Councillor Bill Crease reported on his time working in adult education and understood the positive impacts that projects like this could make. Referring to the recommendations he said Scrutiny should be able to construct a series of measurable objectives from the four recommendations which the Committee could regularly review and measure progress.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) thanked Councillors Mackie and Crease for their helpful comments and the reassurance provided by the Senior Manager for School Improvement as regards to the next steps in taking the recommendations forward. The detailed action plans would be delivered through the Partnership and presented back to Committee for members to have that overview and scrutinise progress against those recommendations. She thanked the Senior Manager – School Improvement and the Adviser for Post 16 and Adult Community Learning and the team involved in the Partnership for their work which had resulted in a fantastic offer for residents in Flintshire and Wrexham.

Councillor Mackie referred to the overview provided by the Adviser for Post 16 and Adult Community Learning and said the need had clearly been identified and the department had looked at how to set up the process to support that need.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure added his congratulations to everyone involved saying it was a tremendous achievement and the accolades from Estyn were deserved.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Bill Crease and seconded by Councillor Jason Shallcross.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee note the findings of the Estyn Inspection and were assured by the positive outcomes for adult community learning provision in Flintshire.

## **33. LEARNING FROM THE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MONITORING GROUP**

In presenting the report the Senior Manager for School Improvement outlined the work of the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) which included the support provided and challenges faced by schools which were underperforming. She provided information on the constant changes within schools regarding school improvement whether locally or nationally with every school on their own improvement journey to better focus on the outcomes of their young people. All schools had support plans and mechanisms to assist with the delivery of their improvement priorities. Sometimes a more focused support was required, and she reported on the Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales (GwE) meetings which looked at the progress of individual schools and she outlined how schools would be approached. If a school required that extra support, then this would be escalated and then to the Quality Board for the Local Authority and GwE and a decision could then be made to escalate to the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG). This was a positive productive process which enabled rapid improvement. We would not want any school to fall under this process but with the challenges that schools faced it was inevitable that this would happen. During the pandemic this was paused, and the postponement of Estyn visits delayed some schools from coming out of SPMG. The key points were the next steps agreed to help schools improve and she explained the different framework for accountability.

Councillor Dave Mackie spoke as a previous panel member and explained with the support of the Chief Officer he had continued to learn. He said this process worked and created the right environment and right outcomes for schools to get back on track.

Councillor Carolyn Preece agreed said that she had attended many inspections where schools had been put into special measures. It was very clear when she re-visited the school with Estyn that it did work. She referred to the second recommendation and asked if her name could be put forward.

Mrs Wendy White referred to the faith schools within Flintshire and commended the Senior Manager and Chief Officer (Education & Youth) for the support provided and said Flintshire had the most positive way of working with the Catholic Diocese.

The Chief Officer confirmed that this was a well-established successful process which provided support and challenge to schools delivering that intervention prior to an Estyn Inspection. She referred to the Estyn inspection in 2011 which recommended that members sit on this panel to gain a better understanding of the situation in schools with officers appreciating the perspective of Members on that Panel. Members who were school governors had experience of their own school but having that objective view to enable to ask questions of schools and to challenge officers to ensure the right support was provided. Because of the regular meetings the progress of the support plans could be monitored and the impact on improvements could be highlighted. She suggested any member who was interested in being on the panel should email herself, the Senior Manager for School Improvement or the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator. A workshop would then be arranged with those members to provide extra detail.

The first recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Bill Crease.

The second recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Andrew Parkhurst and seconded by Councillor Paul Cunningham

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee note the work undertaken by the School Performance Monitoring Group and the transition from national categorisation of schools to the new school improvement framework; and
- (b) That the Committee confirm the following Members who would be available to represent the Committee at meetings of the School Performance Monitoring Group:-
  - Councillors: Bill Crease, Andrew Parkhurst, Carolyn Preece and Arnold Woolley

#### **34. COUNCIL PLAN 2023-28**

In presenting the Council Plan Report for 2023-28 the Chief Executive referred to the Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021 and said that there was no longer a statutory requirement to prepare a Council Plan. The Plan set out the basis upon which the Council was meeting the performance requirements with robust plans setting out the journey to meeting those requirements. He referred Members to section 1.02 of the report, and he explained how the review had been carried out. He then referred Members to section 1.04 of the report and to the Appendix which outlined the proposed priorities which would be reviewed by the Committee on a regular basis.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst referred to definitions under Education and Skills and could not see anything specific relating to equality of outcome especially for disadvantaged children and those going through the care system.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) referred to the first item on Education and Achievement and said she could not guarantee equality of outcome for every learner. Every learner would come with different backgrounds, experiences and cognitive abilities which would impact on their subsequent educational achievement. It was the council and school's role to provide an equality of opportunity to give all learners the opportunity to engage with the curriculum offer and with the broader extra curriculum offer on emotional health and wellbeing.

Councillor Parkhurst accepted it was outside the Council's ability to achieve that but did not see the desire or objective in there and was concerned that it would not receive the attention that it needed. The Chief Officer explained that this was a high-level objective and that within the Council Plan would be a series of specific targets for the portfolio to work to. She reassured Councillor Parkhurst that those targets were reflective of all learners within Flintshire and looked specifically at inequality and the impact that that had on education. She would take this back to ensure this was referenced in a way that was manageable and achievable.

The Chair thought that Flintshire was seen as providing opportunities for raising self-esteem, wellbeing and improving the education for a very diverse range of people. She thanked all of those who were making this possible, building confidence, providing safe spaces and preparing many to enhance their skills to take up more gainful employment and indeed improve their life and social skills. The impact of this work was finding its way into the wider community also and there was a definite recognition that working partnerships enhanced the offer. The Chair agreed with the suggestion made by Councillor Preece that an Estyn workshop would be of benefit to the Committee and suggested that this was put on the forward work programme.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Carolyn Preece and seconded by Councillor David Richardson.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee support the proposed Priorities, Sub-priorities and Well-being objectives of the Council Plan 2023-28, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

**35. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE**

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 p.m. and ended at 3.27 pm)

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**Chair**