

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 DECEMBER 2022

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 1 December 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor Teresa Carberry (Chair)

Councillors: Bill Crease, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Gina Maddison, Dave Mackie, Andrew Parkhurst, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson, Jason Shallcross and Arnold Woolley.

CO-OPTEE: Mrs Lynne Bartlett

APOLOGY: Mrs Wendy White

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor: Linda Thomas (for Councillor Ryan McKeown)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure; Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Education & Youth); Corporate Finance Manager; Strategic Finance Manager (Capital Technical and Financial Systems); Strategic Finance Manager (Financial Strategy and Insurance); Senior Manager Inclusion & Progression; Senior Learning Advisor – Engagement and Operations Manager – Youth Justice Service

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

35. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10 October 2022 were approved as moved and seconded by Councillors Dave Mackie and Carolyn Preece.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20 October 2022 were approved as moved and seconded by Councillors Bill Crease and Carolyn Preece.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 10th and 20th October be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

36. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme which was attached at Appendix 1 of the report and confirmed that there were no proposed changes to the items listed. She confirmed that all actions from the last meeting had been completed. Information was provided on the Estyn workshop and School Performance Monitoring Group briefing session together with a reminder that the GwE workshop was taking place on Monday 5 December at 2.00 pm

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Mrs Lynne Bartlett and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

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.

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 for the following item as this was considered to contain exempt information by virtue of paragraphs 15 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

37. MTFS AND BUDGET SETTING 2023/24

A joint presentation was provided by the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) and Strategic Finance Manager (Financial Strategy and Insurance) which covered the following areas:

- Purpose and Background
- Reminder of the Council's Budget position
- Education and Youth Cost Pressures
- Education and Youth Budget Reductions
- Schools Cost Pressures
- Schools Budget Reductions
- Schools Funding – 2022/23
- Out of County Cost Pressure
- Next steps for the Budget Setting Process 2023/24

Members thanked officers for the presentation and detail provided and the work undertaken in engaging with schools across Flintshire. Comments were made around the unprecedented situation but there were positive initiatives to note, notably the rollout of Free School Meals.

The Leader of the Council responded to the comments made by Members around the need for schools to receive clarity and certainty on their budgets as soon as possible and agreed with the comments. He hoped that the provisional settlement from Welsh Government to be received on 14 December would provide this.

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

RESOLVED:

That the comments made by the Committee be collated and shared with Cabinet ahead of its meeting on 20 December 2022.

38. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

The Senior Manager, Inclusion & Progression presented the report which contained information on the number of children who were being electively home schooled. The report provided information on the rate and numbers for Flintshire, which was below the Welsh average at present and an outline was provided of the percentage of pupils becoming Elective Home Educated (EHE) and when this happened with year 7 a pivotal year for this when children moved to secondary school.

The Senior Manager reported that parents were not required to seek approval or notify the Authority that they were electively home educating their child. There were processes to enable questions to be asked of parents and provide advice and support to them and she outlined some of the reasons given by parents. The Authority was not required to provide financial support to parents but grant funding had been made available to support this and work was ongoing with families to determine how best to use that resource. The Authority had a duty to monitor the families, and if concerns were raised it could issue a School Attendance Order and nominate a school which the child must attend. No Orders had been issued during the last year. Information was provided on the monitoring role of the service and appointment of the Education Support Officer who was supported by the Education Welfare Service when raising concerns. The Education Support Officer had received positive responses to meetings, and she highlighted some of the issues raised by parents and resolutions made. The Authority was part of the regional and national forums and reassurance had been provided that revised guidance would be provided next year. A mandatory database of all pupils who were EHE had been proposed by Welsh Government (WG) but this was being resisted by the EHE community so guidance on this was being awaited.

In response to questions from Councillor Dave Mackie, the Senior Manager thanked him for his positive comments which she would feed back to the team. With regards to groups or similarities she said that this varied with some still experiencing high levels of anxiety and these children were able to access their education outside of school. She explained some parents chose to do this because of pressure being

put on them because of school attendance. This was where the Education Welfare Service challenged parents to find out if this was right for the young person and the young person's comments and involvement were part of this process. She then highlighted the number of pupils who had returned to school following the proactive work undertaken by schools and the team.

In response to a question from Councillor Andrew Parkhurst on the monitoring of children who were not in education, the Senior Manager reported that previously colleagues in health notified the Authority for children in nursery and reception years. This enabled contact with those parents when the children did not enrol in a school, but the Authority was challenged on this and told it was not entitled to this information. There was no requirement for a parent to register with the Authority if they had not been in school. WG hoped to remedy this through the national database but there was a strong lobby from the EHE community against this.

In response to a question from Councillor Parkhurst on joint working, the Senior Manager confirmed there were very strong relationships across Council services with an Education Welfare Officer part of the Early Help Hub. Contact would be made with the parents to discuss the education that was being provided but had no right to enter a property. Any concerns would be raised with colleagues in Social Services for them to visit

The Senior Learning Adviser – Engagement confirmed that there were several partner agencies and other Local Authorities across Wales involved ensuring anyone who moved into the area could be identified. There was also a substantive, coordinated partnership with the Community Team, Youth Service and Progression Team who were constantly out in the community talking to young people and it was sometimes the children who were not in school who were identified which enabled steps to be taken to make the safeguarding enquires.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Bill Crease on children falling through the process when moving from one Authority area to another, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) said the portfolio shared these concerns. She reported that the previous Committee had written to WG specifically asking the question around their intention to create a national database. Many parents made this choice and were protective of their right to make that choice which had to be respected. The Authority also had significant responsibilities around the safeguarding of children and young people and felt the systems were as robust as possible within the absence of that database.

In response to questions from Councillor Gladys Healey around safeguarding and the level of education provided, the Chief Officer said the portfolio also shared these concerns, but that Members had been provided with that re-assurance from the report by the Senior Manager and the Senior Learning Advisor. She said that within the remit and powers available the Authority was endeavouring to work constructively with families who had made those choices and were undertaking that monitoring role and any safeguarding concerns were raised with the Children's Services team. The Authority was continuing to press WG for that national database and agreed with Councillor Healey's comments that every child developed the skills and knowledge to achieve their potential later in life with core skills vital for that.

The Chair thanked the Senior Manager and her team and commented that she was not surprised by the increase in numbers in secondary schools with pupils transitioning from primary. She reported on her visits to primary schools to visit pupils who were moving up and felt that it was often the parents who were very concerned. It was understandable that the past two years had heightened those concerns and the impacts had been felt with the children spending less time with their peers. The work the team carried out was extremely important.

The Chair suggested that the Committee write to the WG to outline their concerns around the need for a national database. This suggestion was supported by Members of the Committee.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, together with an additional recommendation that a letter be written to the WG to encourage the creation of a national register database for children who were home educated, was moved by Councillor Bill Crease and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recognise the importance of ongoing dedicated officer time to support and monitor provision for this particular cohort of children; and
- (b) That a letter be written to the WG to encourage the creation of a national register database for children who were home educated.

39. INTEGRATED YOUTH PROVISION – DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) reported that the Senior Manager, Integrated Youth Provision had not been able to attend the meeting, but he had prepared the report and she agreed to provide feedback and questions from Members to him following the meeting.

The Chief Officer outlined the partnership working to support young people as detailed in the report. She provided information on the support, development and training being provided to those partners to enable effective service delivery. She explained that there were significant recruitment challenges for this service which had impacted on the service which could be delivered but explained that youth work was very rewarding and had to incorporate progression pathways for young people who use the service to consider developing a career in that service. She referenced the Apprenticeship Framework partnership working with Adult Learning Wales and Glyndwr University to ensure there were qualifications available for those young people to undertake locally.

The Chief Officer reported that the Senior Manager, Integrated Youth Provision was looking at how he could quantify, set targets, and monitor outputs for the service and the impacts on young people. The changes he was proposing included changing the supplier for the electronic monitoring system to a more effective model and information on this was provided within the report. The Senior

Manager, Integrated Youth Provision also wanted to use all the information contained in the report and appendices to shape the services moving forward to support young people. The Chief Officer said that by supporting young people's emotional well being helped them engage more at school and had a positive impact on their lives.

In response to the question of clarity at point 1.03 of the report from Councillor Dave Macie, the Chief Officer explained that it referred to the Duke of Edinburgh Award which a significant number of schools had signed up to and which was very beneficial for young people. The retiring Senior Youth Worker was also the Duke of Edinburgh lead and provided support to schools to run their own programmes and meet the accreditation processes. She provided information on the open access centre in Mold and steps being undertaken to enable this to continue.

Councillor Dave Mackie suggested that a workshop for Committee Members to outline how the objectives within the Delivery Plan 2021-2024 would be delivered. The Chief Officer welcomed this suggestion and said that a workshop could be arranged for later in the 2023 year and that young people could be invited to the workshop to outline their perspective to the Committee.

Councillor Paul Cunningham referred to the Apprenticeship Framework and said that this was excellent saying University was not for everyone. He was pleased that this was being put forward as a qualification for young people to join the Youth Service via the Apprentice Framework.

In response to comments made by Councillor Bill Crease on the four recommendations and data management systems, the Chief Officer agreed that quotative data was very important for scrutiny to hold officers to account but was not the only way to evaluate outcomes. She felt it was the voices of the young people who would be vital in demonstrating how the service was having a positive impact on their lives.

In response to a question from Mrs Lynne Bartlett on the availability of a map of the County outlining the location of youth clubs, where partnership provision was located and how this linked in with anti-social behaviour, the Chief Officer confirmed there was such a map. The GIS mapping system was used for many of the Councils provisions and was currently being updated by the Senior Manager, Integrated Youth Provision and the Senior Manager, Youth Justice Service. She explained that mapping where the youth clubs were located and looking at the data for incidents of anti-social behaviour enabled the resources to be targeted in an effective way.

The Senior Manager, Youth Justice Service outlined the close working relationships with the Youth Services and partners in North Wales Police around issues linked to anti-social behaviour. He explained how the IT department were linking the information currently held with the GIS Framework within the Council. Both Youth Justice and Youth Services attended the Community Demand Reduction Partnership which was the Police led anti-social behaviour task group. The information received from this Group together with the information received from the Youth Justice Team enabled work to be undertaken with Youth Services, Flintshire Sorted and Youth Justice to look at developing outreach models to target those

resources where anti-social behaviour was located. Monthly meetings were held with the community beat sergeants in Flintshire North and South with data received at those meetings included to target services to the areas that needed it most.

Councillor Carolyn Preece spoke in support of the Upshot System which would save the Council money over the next three years.

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

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee approve the decision to replace the QES system with Upshot, allowing for more efficient and effective data collation across all IYP programmes, thus allowing improved monitoring, evaluation and learning which would lead to improved service delivery;
- (b) That the Committee endorse the facilitation of training for partner organisations, such as sports clubs and uniformed organisations, in order to grow the reach of youth work informed practice, further supporting the health and well-being of young people in Flintshire;
- (c) That the Committee acknowledge that progress has been made against the plan and that future revisions to the plan should be carefully considered by the wider IYP team in line with feedback from young people; and
- (d) That the Committee support the decision to begin the Quality Mark Accreditation process in the Spring, beginning at Bronze and following the key recommendations from this process, bring the action plan back to Cabinet to agree progression towards Silver and Gold.

40. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 14.00 p.m. and ended at 15.52 pm)

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Chair