

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 JULY 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Thursday, 12 July 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors Marion Bateman, Amanda Bragg, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Stella Jones, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton and Carolyn Thomas

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Carole Burgess, David Hytch, Rita Price and Rebecca Stark

APOLOGIES: Councillors Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Theresa Millington.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Bernie Attridge, Dennis Hutchinson, and Richard Lloyd

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader, Cabinet Member for Education, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Leisure, Chief Executive, Director of Lifelong Learning, 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

7. 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 Councillors A.M. Bragg, R.C. Bithell and P.R. Lightfoot (who were not school governors) declared an interest as school governors.

8. ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Chairman announced that he had decided that the Committee should consider an additional item on the grounds of urgency, as provided for under Section 100 B(4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The item was to consider School Modernisation – Area Reviews.

9. SCHOOL MODERNISATION - AREA REVIEWS

The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council to comment on the issue of School Modernisation. The Leader referred to the need for quick and decisive action on the issue to bring certainty for schools prior to the Summer recess. He

referred to the importance of listening to the outcomes of consultations and the need for further consultation of the preferred options alongside business case planning for capital projects.

Copies of a report which was to be considered at the Cabinet on 17 July were circulated.

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced the report on the selection of preferred options for further consultations in each of the three designated areas of Holywell, Connah's Quay/Queensferry/ Shotton, and Buckley/Mynydd Isa/Mold. He provided background information and gave an overview of the options for the areas as detailed in the report.

The Director advised that the report on School Modernisation, Area Reviews, would be submitted to a meeting of Cabinet to be held on 17 July 2012. Regular update reports would also continue to be submitted to the Committee to inform members of the progress relating to the School Modernisation Strategy. He commented on the careful consideration of the dynamics and needs of communities in area reviews as well as the prospects for educational improvement and sustainability.

The Director paid tribute to the Members, Officers, and school staff who had contributed to the consultation exercise which provided a positive platform to take discussion forward.

The Chief Executive emphasised that the special meeting on the 17th July had been called to enable the preferred options to be agreed prior to schools closing for the summer holidays. He advised that there was further important work to be undertaken in terms of practical determinations, academic performance and long term sustainability. The Chief Executive commented on the importance of trust and confidence in a fair and transparent consultation process to progress the work.

During discussion Members expressed their views concerning the options as detailed in the report for the three areas. In response to a query raised by Councillor C.A. Thomas the Head of Development and Resources advised that a series of consultations on a single preferred option for each area would take place in the Autumn term, subject to Cabinet approval.

Officers responded in further detail to the additional queries and concerns raised by Members around sixth form provision, surplus capacity in schools, and rationalisation. In response to a request from Mrs. R. Price the Director agreed to involve Diocesan representatives in future discussions regarding School Modernisation.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation: to report to Cabinet "That the consultations in relation to the preferred options, to be scheduled to take place early in the new academic year in accordance with the timetable for Area Reviews be agreed." be endorsed by the Committee

10. SCHOOL MODERNISATION

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report to inform members of the progress relating to the School Modernisation Strategy. He provided background information and advised that the Strategy contained a number of criteria for the review of schools including the percentage of surplus places. The reduction of surplus places in schools was a priority of the WG and the outcome of consultations with relevant groups including school staff, governors, pupils, young people and parents on secondary area reviews was reported to Members in June 2012.

The Director provided an update on Rhes-Y-Cae Primary School, the proposed amalgamation of Hawarden Infant School and Rector Drew Junior School, and the building of a new primary school in Shotton to replace Shotton Infant School and Taliesin Junior School.

Councillor C. Legg expressed a number of concerns around Rhes y Cae Primary School and commented on the detrimental impact on staff, governors and parents. The Director acknowledged the sentiments expressed and reported that Officers would be working closely and sensitively with staff and families to give advice and support in the months ahead.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

11. ESTYN ACTION PLAN

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report to update on progress with implementation of the Action Plan following the 2011 Estyn Inspection of Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young People (LAESCYP).

The Director provided background information and reported that the Authority had submitted an action plan to Estyn in April 2012 to address the recommendations made following the inspection. He advised that the LAESCYP Inspection Action Plan Progress Monitoring Report was attached as an appendix to the report and progress with implementation of the action plan would be monitored by an Estyn team in early 2013.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report to seek views on the creation of a renewed group to monitor and support the improvement of school standards in Flintshire.

The Director advised that attached to the report was a draft 'terms of reference' for a working group of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee to monitor school improvement work with individual schools. The monitoring of overall school improvement performance and strategies would remain with the full Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair suggested that a small 'working group' of members be formed to establish a School Performance Monitoring Group and asked for volunteers. Mr. D. Hytch volunteered to serve on the Group along with Councillors C.A. Thomas, N.M. Matthews, P.R. Lightfoot and the Chairman.

During discussion the Cabinet Member for Education and Director responded to the queries raised concerning monitoring and school performance. The Chair suggested that an additional bullet point be added to the draft terms of reference for the Group to include school leadership and performance.

Councillor N.M Matthews raised the subject of mandatory training for school governors and commented on the role and responsibilities of governing bodies. In his response the Director advised that a specific training session on performance information, similar to that offered to Governors, could be provided to Members in the Autumn if they wanted.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and attached terms of reference be noted;
- (b) That the Chairman, Mr. D. Hytch. Councillors C.A. Thomas, N.M. Matthews and P.R. Lightfoot become members of the School Performance Monitoring Group; and
- (c) That a specific training session on performance information be provided to Members in the Autumn.

13. LEISURE CENTRES DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Head of Culture and Leisure Services introduced a progress report concerning the re-development of Flintshire's Leisure Centres and the Partnership Agreement with Alliance Leisure Services.

The Head of Service gave an overview of the redevelopment work which had been undertaken at The Pavilion, Flint. He also commented on the on-going work on the new Ten Pin and Indoor Bowling facilities, specialist indoor flat green bowling installation, soft play area, and catering amenities. He advised that marketing and promotional activity had commenced to raise public awareness and staff training sessions were planned. Total project costs for The Pavilion, Flint, were currently within budget.

The Head of Service advised that Alliance Leisure Services was supporting all new areas of operation through its partnership contract and operations meetings were held to monitor performance and develop all leisure

centres' culture and programmes further. Developments and Deeside Leisure Centre and the Pavilion Flint have increased the sporting opportunities and choices for Flintshire residents, promoting social cohesion and supporting the community safety agenda.

Councillor S. Jones welcomed the positive re-development of The Pavilion and Deeside Leisure Centres, however, she raised the issue of a lack of facilities in rural areas and emphasised the need for further development in all areas of Flintshire. The Head of Service acknowledged the concerns raised by Councillor Jones and commented on the need to prioritise within a limited capital programme the leisure facilities in other areas.

During discussion Officers responded to the further concerns and queries raised regarding a shortfall in the year one project business plans for The Pavilion and Deeside Leisure Centre, rural transport facilities, the central booking service, and locker provision at Deeside Leisure Centre.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

14. QUARTER 4/YEAR END SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Director introduced a report to request that the Committee consider the 2011/12 Quarter 4/Year End service performance reports for the period January to March 2012, note the draft year end position of the Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC) contained within the performance reports, and the progress made against the Improvement Targets contained within the performance reports.

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

Schools' Services

In response to a query raised by Councillor C.A. Thomas concerning the Inclusion Service the Director reported that there was an ongoing programme for increasing delegation for Additional Learning Needs. Mr. D. Hytch commented on the use of acronyms on the reporting of information on the Inclusion Service and asked that an explanation be provided in future reports. The Director responded in detail to the further queries raised by Mr. Hytch around Welsh medium provision, leadership and performance management, and more able and talented pupils.

Development and Resources

The Head of Development and Resources gave an overview of the key messages across work streams in Development and Resources. He commented on the repair and maintenance budget and advised that actions to mitigate risks were progressing. He continued that the amalgamation of schools which had resulted in closure of existing buildings and establishment of new schools had

facilitated significant savings in some areas. However, the issue was a long term risk and would take many years to address. In response to the examples of repair and maintenance issues raised by Mr. D. Hytch the Head of Service advised that he would address the specific requests raised around individual schools.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the reports be noted;
- (b) That an explanation is provided of the acronyms used in future performance reporting.

15. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Learning and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. She advised Members that following the Chairman's suggestion that some of the Committee's meetings be held at alternative venues in the County, it was proposed that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 20 September 2012 be held at The Pavilion, Flint.

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

- Formula Review update/budget strategy
- Community Play Project
- Corporate Parenting
- Educational development of children with a sensory impairment
- Q1 Performance Reporting

Councillor W.P. Shotton raised the subject of child obesity and risk of diabetes and it was agreed that an item on Healthy Schools be included on the Forward Work Programme for consideration by the Committee and that Members of the Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to join the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed; and
- (b) That the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 20 September 2012 be held at The Pavilion, Flint; and
- (c) That an item on Healthy Schools be included on the Forward Work Programme for consideration by the Committee.

16. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.50 pm)

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Chairman