

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 JANUARY 2013

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 Friday, 25 January 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors Amanda Bragg, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Stella Jones, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Carolyn Thomas

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch and Rebecca Stark

APOLOGIES: Councillors Marion Bateman and Phil Lightfoot. Chief Executive.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Bernie Attridge and Richard Jones

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cabinet Member for Education, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Leisure, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Finance, Head of Development and Resources, Head of Culture and Leisure, Finance Manager, and Finance Accountant

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

49. 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 R.C. Bithell, A. Bragg, W. P. Shotton, and A.I. Dunbar (who were not school governors) declared an interest as school governors.

50. BUDGET CONSULTATION FOR 2013/14

The Chairman welcomed the contributors to the meeting.

The Head of Finance explained that an overview of the budget was being provided for each Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the budget proposals for the specific area covered by each Committee detailed at the meetings.

The Head of Finance explained she was making a similar presentation to each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and that the Director of Lifelong Learning, together with officers from Lifelong Learning, would present on directorate specific aspects of the budget. The main features of the presentation were as follows:-

- National and Local context

- Council Fund Budget Strategy
- Budget Process
- Financial Overview
- Ongoing work
- Next Steps

The Director of Lifelong Learning continued with the directorate specific contents of the presentation and reported on the budget proposals and key service issues concerning:

- Pressures/Investments
- Efficiencies
- Live issues for the Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Key Service issues for Lifelong Learning in the medium term

The comments and questions which were raised by Members of the Committee, and the responses given are attached at Appendix 1.

Councillor C.A. Thomas reported on the Playschemes Task and Finish Group which had been formed to consider the arrangements for play schemes for 2013 and beyond. She advised that at the meeting of the Group held on 23 January 2013 the following proposal was put forward for submission to the Committee:

That having considered the available evidence, the Group proposed that Town and Community Councils who normally had more than two settings, which wanted to keep them and were prepared to match fund, would have the opportunity to do so, supported by match funding from Flintshire County Council. The Group emphasised the importance of maintaining positive relationships and working in partnership with Town and Community Councils and maintaining some consistency of provision within the budget restraints. The Group recommended a pressure bid of up to £11,700 to support the match funding scheme.

The proposal put forward by Councillor Thomas as Chair of the Group was seconded by Mr. D. Hytch and when put to the vote became the resolution of the Committee.

Councillor Thomas also requested that an item on the Youth Service be included on the Forward Work Programme for future consideration by the Committee and this was agreed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be noted;
- (b) That the Committee recommended a pressure bid of up to £11,700 to support the match funding scheme; and
- (c) That an item on the Youth Service be included on the Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

51. **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

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

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.15 pm)

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Chairman

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
Lifelong Learning - Initial Budget Proposals 2013/14

No.	Comments and Questions:	Responses:
1.0	<u>Corporate Comments / Issues</u>	
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will fees and charges be increased by 3 % across the board with consequent implications for users of the Council's youth centres? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be a general 3 % increase on fees and charges but also targeted increases resulting from specific proposals. The Youth Service is currently subsidising other users of its premises from within its own budget.
1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Leisure Services budget have to cover the loan repayments for the new developments? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes. The loan repayments are paid for out of the Leisure Services budget on the basis that these additional costs to the service will be covered by the increase in facilities charges.
1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A query was raised regarding the effects of inflation on schools energy budgets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is included within the delegation to schools, however, we are aiming to target energy inflation at those schools with higher inflationary pressures on energy we are also working with colleagues in Energy Services with a view to encouraging alternative forms of energy to replace oil, e.g. woodchips.

2.0	<u>Lifelong Learning Comments / Issues</u>	
2.1	<u>General Comments/Issues</u>	
2.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the budget for schools ever top-sliced within a financial year? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. The Council doesn't top-slice the schools budget in-year.
2.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback was given on the Play schemes Task and Finish group, with a request that £11,700 be added as a budget pressure to facilitate match funding to increase the new base provision of 3 weeks and 2 sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be considered alongside other bids within the budget process.
2.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will faster broadband be delivered to schools as promised by Welsh Government? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New grant funding of £39m across all Wales for 3 years has been approved by Welsh Government. This funding is to improve the broadband connections in schools and for the schools to purchase additional hardware.
2.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will increasing the fees and charges in Leisure Centres only lead to less people attending? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful benchmarking has been undertaken. Fees were increased in January and there was no drop-off in income.
2.1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding Play Areas - can we look at meeting the higher number of requests from Town and Community Councils? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This request will be looked at.
2.1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it cost the Council extra money when a teacher retires? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can depend on the individual circumstances of individual cases. Where this occurs for a school with a delegated budget the school would be able to capitalise the cost whereas the Council would be unable to.
2.1.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a lack of marketing for new developments at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members and Officers are conscious of the need for

<p>2.1.8</p>	<p>Deeside Leisure Centre?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification was sought on the delegation of Schools maternity pay costs. 	<p>marketing and are currently using a targeted approach including development of a strategy with Alliance Leisure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An amount is included in the Council's budget to stabilise the funding. The Directorate is currently working with schools to come up with an agreed scheme.
<p>2.1.9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently problems with parking at Buckley Leisure Centre which could perhaps be overcome by using additional parking at Ysgol Elfed subject to the need for CCTV. Is CCTV included within the budget? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A capital bid is being prepared relating to a number of issues at the Buckley Leisure Centre site.
<p>2.1.10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A query was raised regarding schools paying for the costs of swimming lessons for pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have an entitlement to swimming lessons under the Curriculum Entitlement (Wales) Regulations.
<p>2.2</p>		
<p>2.2.1</p>	<p><u>Pressures</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we giving Special Schools extra funding for the extra work that they are doing, which is proving invaluable in reducing the number and costs of our Out of County placements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pressure amount of £0.250m has been included in the budget proposals to help improve staffing levels. The special schools are proving to be a real success story for Flintshire.