

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 DECEMBER 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 Thursday, 19 December 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors Marion Bateman, Amanda Bragg, Adele Davies-Cooke, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Stella Jones, Phil Lightfoot, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and David Williams

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch and Rebecca Stark

APOLOGY: Stephanie Williams.

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Cabinet Member for Education, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Culture and Leisure, Secondary Schools Advisor, and the Arts Culture and Events Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

56. 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 Amanda Bragg, Chris Bithell and Phil Lightfoot (who were not school governors) declared an interest as school governors.

Mr. David Hytch and Mrs Rebecca Stark also declared an interest in agenda item 5, the Flintshire Music Service Review.

57. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 November 2013 were submitted.

Mid Year Service Performance Report

Councillor Ian Dunbar referred to his comments concerning the work undertaken in partnership with Fields in Trust to secure a protection in perpetuity of recreation grounds nominated as designated Queen Elizabeth 11 Fields. He commented on a presentation which had been held at Wepre Park and expressed his disappointment that the two Ward Members had not been invited to the event. The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, explained that he was seeking clarification on how invitations to the event had been determined.

RESOLVED:

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

58. COMMUNITY EVENTS STRATEGY 2014 -2017

The Arts Culture and Events Manager introduced a report to seek endorsement of the Community Events Strategy 2014-2017. She provided background information and outlined the Strategy's four objectives which were detailed in the report. She advised that the Strategy would be supported by an annual business plan.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the Strategy and commented on the opportunities to showcase the historical and industrial heritage of Flintshire.

Councillor Nancy Matthews suggested that communication with Town & Community Councils could be improved and that they should be given access to the Council's own event calendar to avoid clashes of events in future. The Arts Culture and Events Manager advised that it was intended to create a network of events organised across the County and that she would see if communication between the Council and Town and Community Councils could be strengthened within the Strategy.

Councillor Ian Dunbar commented on the many events which were organised within Flintshire by Town and Community Councils, and community and voluntary groups, and asked what support the Authority could provide to such bodies. The Arts Culture and Events Manager advised that a draft Event's Organiser's Pack was being produced for external partners and for use within the Authority and would be available in the New Year. The Pack contained contact details and guidance in relation to the facilities and equipment which was available and could be shared across the County to provide assistance for arranging such events. She gave assurance that the Authority's Arts, Culture and Events services would be working closely with Town and Community Councils in the future concerning the County's events strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee endorsed the Community Events Strategy and its four objectives as a blueprint for the delivery and support of community events during the next three years.

59. FLINTSHIRE MUSIC SERVICE REVIEW

The Secondary Schools Officer introduced a report to update the Committee on progress in developing the Flintshire Music School operating model approved by Cabinet in 2013. He provided background information and advised that all schools had identified their service needs for 2013-14, although five primary schools had chosen not to participate in the service. Participating

schools had increased their “order” for hours of tuition and had chosen from the wider range of opportunities offered. In addition there had also been some requests for Music Service staff to conduct school ensembles and choirs.

During discussion the Secondary Schools Officer responded to the questions and concerns expressed by members concerning the remit of the Music Service, in-service training for teachers, and the implications for schools if insufficient pupils committed to places. Councillor Dave Mackie asked if an update report on the Service could be submitted to the Committee at the end of the academic year which included the number of pupils who had requested tuition but had given up after a short period of time.

Councillor Ian Dunbar commented on the difficulties encountered by schools around the non-payment of fees for tuition and the additional administrative burden imposed on schools as a result. The Secondary Schools Officer acknowledged the issue and explained that schools had to balance their budgets and to this end should request payment in advance. He advised that the remissions process supported families with learners receiving Free School Meals.

Councillor Stella Jones sought clarification on the role and appointment of a part time Business Manager. The Director of Lifelong Learning advised that the post was being kept under review in light of the current financial restraints.

Mrs Rebecca Stark commented on the provision of tuition and asked how the number of hours that children received were monitored. The Secondary Schools Officer advised that each lesson was recorded and information fed back into the Music Service. The Secondary Schools Officer also responded to the further concerns raised by Mrs. Stark around the legal validity of the forms of agreement which should be personalised by schools and then sent to parents, and on the deferment of the Summer music exams until November 2013.

Mrs. Stark asked if consideration could be given to providing “taster sessions” to pupils who wanted to learn a musical instrument to help them to decide if they wanted to receive lessons. She suggested that this facility may also assist with the problem of non payment of fees as some parents may be reluctant to pay for music lessons in advance unless their child made a commitment.

Councillor Amanda Bragg referred to provision for “gifted” pupils and also asked if any financial support was made available for parents if they were unable to pay the annual tuition fees. The Secondary Schools Officer reiterated the support process provided to families with learners who received Free School Meals.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the progress made on implementation of the revised operating model for the School Music Service be noted;
- (b) That the Committee receive an update report, to include information on the number of pupils who had requested tuition but had given up after a short period of time, at the end of the academic year; and

- (c) That the Committee request that the Schools Music Service consider providing “taster sessions” to pupils.

60. HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Culture and Leisure introduced a report to provide the Committee with a summary on accidents and incidents in schools during the academic year September 2012 to August 2013 and a summary of actions taken by the Council to support schools in achieving healthy and safe learning environments.

The Head of Culture and Leisure provided background information and reported that the total number of accident/incident report forms received for the above academic year had reduced. He also referred to the number of accidents to pupils, accidents to employees, and accidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

Councillor Paul Shotton referred to the programme for re-inspection/asbestos surveys in schools and asked if the two year programme which had commenced would be continued in the future. Councillor Shotton also referred to the cleaning of schools and asked if there was consistency in the standard of cleaning across all schools. In his response to the questions the Director of Lifelong Learning outlined the very detailed regime in place concerning inspection of asbestos in schools. Regarding the comments on cleaning standards he agreed to provide the Committee with a summary of School Cleaning Schedules.

Councillor Nigel Steele- Mortimer asked if more funding could be made available to protect school staff from incidents or threats of verbal and physical abuse. Mr. David Hytch also raised concerns about the protection of staff from assault and commented on the measures taken in other public services to protect employees, citing hospitals as an example. The Director of Lifelong Learning assured members that the Authority intervened strongly wherever it could and had seen an upturn in incidents where it had been able to intervene which included online abuse through the use of social media.

Councillor Ian Dunbar raised concerns about the procedure for reporting health and safety matters in schools and cited the example of an incident concerning a ramp to a portacabin which had been reported a number of times. The Head of Culture and Leisure responded and said he would circulate a copy of the frequency of inspection and reporting procedures to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report and initiatives taken to improve health and safety in schools be noted; and

- (b) That the monitoring and evaluation role of the Corporate Health and Safety Steering Group be recognised.

61. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PLAYScheme TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report on the recommendations of the Playscheme Task and Finish Group to provide sustainable play provision from April 2014 with reference to the summer play scheme programme.

The Facilitator provided background information and advised that the Playscheme Task and Finish Group had met in November 2013 to consider feedback from users of the 2013 Summer Playscheme. The Group had agreed that the playschemes provided invaluable facilities for children during the summer holidays and were important for families who could not afford to take their children on holiday. The Group had also emphasised the importance of the scheme in developing children's play, co-ordination and social skills.

RESOLVED

That the Committee recommend to Cabinet that:-

- Subject to confirmation of Families First funding, the Head of Culture and Leisure write to all Town and Community Councils advising them that the number of Playschemes available to them during the summer of 2014 and beyond be limited to a maximum of two each and that summer Playscheme provision be reduced from five weeks to three weeks at locations to be agreed through local consultation.
- Town and Community Councils who are keen to increase the complement of Playscheme sites in their area above the 2 offered are given the opportunity to increase the provision through match funding.
- A pressure bid of up to £12,000 be allocated to support match funding for Town and Community Councils.
- If confirmation was received that there would be a reduction in Families First funding; the Playscheme Task & Finish Group should meet again to consider how best to provide sustainable play provision from April 2014 with reference to the summer play scheme programme.

62. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE LEISURE FINANCE TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report on the Terms of Reference of the Leisure Finance Task and Finish Group. She provided background information and advised that the Leisure Finance Task and Finish Group had met in November 2013 and a copy of the Terms of Reference, as agreed by the Group, was appended to the report for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the Terms of Reference of the Leisure Finance Task & Finish Group as shown at Appendix 1 of the report be supported.

63. LIFELONG LEARNING FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee.

The Facilitator informed members that the venue for the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 30 January, 2014 had been changed to County Hall, Mold, instead of Ysgol Maes Garmon as previously arranged. It had also been agreed that the meeting would commence at 1.30pm and that the items on Pupil Attainment, Annual School Modernisation, and School Performance be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 6 March 2014.

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

- Budget 2014/2015
- School Funding Formula Review

Following the suggestions made by Members it was agreed that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 6 March 2014 be held at Ysgol Maes Garmon and that the Elfed High School and John Summers High School be contacted as possible venues for holding future meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above the Forward Work Programme be agreed.

64. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.15 pm and ended at 3.40 pm)

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Chairman