

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30 JANUARY 2014

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, 30 January 2014

PRESENT: **Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)**

Councillors Marion Bateman, Amanda Bragg, Adele Davies-Cooke, Ron Hampson, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch, Rebecca Stark, Reverend John Thelwell and Stephanie Williams

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors Ray Hughes (for Phil Lightfoot) and Carolyn Thomas (for David Williams)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ian Dunbar, Stella Jones, Ann Minshull and Paul Shotton.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Bernie Attridge and Dennis Hutchinson.
Corporate Finance Manager

CONTRIBUTORS: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Executive, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Culture and Leisure, Head of Finance, Finance Manager Lifelong Learning, and Principal Project Accountant

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

65. 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 Councillor Amanda Bragg and Reverend John Thelwell (who were not school governors) declared an interest as school governors.

66. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 December 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

67. LIFELONG LEARNING BUDGET CONSULTATION FOR 2014/15

The Chairman welcomed the contributors to the meeting.

The Head of Finance explained that in conjunction with the Chief Executive, an overview of the draft budget proposals for 2014/15 was being provided for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the proposals for the specific area covered by each Committee detailed at the meetings. She advised that the Director of Lifelong Learning, would present on the directorate specific aspects of the budget. The main features of the presentation were as follows:-

- National Context and Local Impact
- Budget overview
- How did the budget gap reduce?
- Organisational redesign and change
- Corporate VFM and Functional VFM
- Ongoing work
- Next Steps

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

- Inflation
- Transfers into Settlement
- Pressures and Investments
- Efficiencies
- Prior year decisions for information

Councillor Aaron Shotton referred to the unprecedented financial challenge faced by the Authority this year. He commented on the Authority's commitment, and a Ministerial expectation, to protect school budgets which had resulted in pressures across the remainder of the Council budget. He highlighted the challenges, in context of the financial gap, to protect non statutory areas of leisure and libraries and advised that there had been an increase of £1M in the funding for leisure this year.

Councillor Shotton referred to correspondence received from the Minister for Culture and Sport urging careful consideration be given to reducing services in leisure, libraries and culture, and said that he took pride in responding to the Minister, on behalf of the Council, to state that the Authority would not be reducing or closing any of the facilities in these areas. He cited as an example that the Authority was actually extending its culture heritage exhibition in the Connah's Quay Connects centre.

In summary Councillor Shotton advised that the Authority was exploring all opportunities through internal and management costs to achieve efficiencies and

referred to the need to consider alternative models of delivery in all services across the Council to sustain services going forward.

Councillor Chris Bithell reiterated the sentiments expressed by Councillor Shotton and commented that the Authority was working to achieve savings where it could through value for money (VFM). He also paid tribute to Officers in the Lifelong Learning directorate for their work in achieving efficiencies whilst endeavouring to protect schools services.

Councillor Kevin Jones referred to the significant work to reduce the level of expenditure in management costs in Leisure Services to ensure current services were maintained in the future. He also commented on the current review of "open spaces" and the intention to bring these areas under the management of Streetscene Services.

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

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

68. SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA REVIEW

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report to update Members on the outcome of the consultation regarding the Flintshire Schools' Funding Formula review, and to outline the final steps towards implementation of the new formula by April 2014.

The Director referred to the long and detailed process undertaken to review both the Primary and Secondary formulae and paid tribute to the commitment and hard work of officers, headteachers and governor representatives in developing a new set of principles to underpin the allocation of resources to schools.

The Finance Manager provided a presentation on the Schools Funding Formula Review. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- Post 16 Funding Formula
- Secondary Funding Formula Review
- Primary Funding Formula Review
- Consultation
- Formula Impact
- Formula Review Outcomes
- Transition/Damping
- Next Steps

Councillor Chris Bithell commented on the changes which had taken place within schools since the formula was developed and the new methodologies for distribution which had been added to historical arrangements. He said it had long been acknowledged that a review of the formula was overdue and commended all those who had been involved in undertaking the process.

Councillor Aaron Shotton advised that the revised funding formula would put the Authority in a good position to seek national change for funding. He commented that the proposed formula was still subject to consultation and Members would be able to comment on it if they wished.

Mr David Hytch endorsed the thanks which had been expressed by Members for the work involved in producing the new formulae and the sensitivity and collaboration with which the task had been undertaken. He said he was disappointed at the lack of response to the consultation exercise and emphasised that all interested parties had a role to play in achieving the best outcomes for young people in Flintshire.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed concerns around the reduction in Post 16 funding with effect from April 2014 and the possible impact on pupils who wished to study for A levels. The Finance Manager explained that the intention of the Welsh Government (WG) was to ensure that pupils were directed to the most appropriate pathway for learning and were advised of their options to make a transition from education to work.

Councillor Nancy Matthews reiterated the concerns expressed by Councillor Mackie around the reduction in funding for Post 16 education and revised methodology. She raised concerns that pupils who wished to study for less than 3 A levels may be disadvantaged. The Director and Finance Manager responded to the issues raised and commented on the WG intention for pupils to have a programme of learning that gave them the opportunity to progress.

Councillor Amanda Bragg sought clarification on the funding implications if pupils decided not to continue with their A level studies during the year. The Finance Manager explained that there was no funding adjustment for pupil “drop-out” part way through the year.

In response to the questions raised by Mrs Rebecca Stark, the Finance Manager advised that Post 16 funding was grant funded and did not form part of the school budget allocation. Mrs. Stark also asked what pupil numbers would be used to calculate the formula. The Project Manager explained that the Authority used the same pupil numbers as were currently used which were the September actuals and the following September estimates with a pupil number adjustment at the end of the year. In response to a further question around demography the Director and Finance Manager advised that there was no additional funding for demography, however, the Authority would look at projections for the future and put in a pressure bid if needed.

The Director and Finance Manager commented on the next steps and the need to review the formula on an ongoing basis

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the outcome of the formal and informal consultation process be noted; and
- (b) That the revised School Funding Formula be endorsed by the Committee.

69. 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 next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 6 March 2014 would be held at Ysgol Maes Garmon, Mold. It was agreed that Members would arrive at the School at 1.00 pm in order to be given a tour of the building before the Committee meeting started at 2.00 p.m. It was further agreed that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 15 May 2014 would be held at the Elfed High School, Buckley. Following the suggestions made by Members it was also agreed that St. Richard Gwyn High School and the Connah's Quay 6th Form Hub be contacted as possible venues for holding future meetings of the Committee.

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

- Incidents of arson, vandalism and burglaries in Flintshire schools
- Facilities Review
- Pupil Attainment
- Annual School Modernisation Report
- School Performance Report – including attendance and exclusions

In view of earlier discussions the Facilitator reported that the following reports would be added to the Forward Work Programme:

- How the Inclusion Service Review was being implemented in practice
- How the Authority worked with schools to commission Post 16 courses

Councillor David Mackie referred to the item on the Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) scheduled for the meeting of the Committee on 10 April 2014, and suggested that the Manager of the Eastern hub be invited to attend the meeting to provide an update on service delivery.

RESOLVED:

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

70. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 4.30pm)

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Chairman