

## **LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**31 MARCH 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 Monday, 31 March 2014

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

Councillors Marion Bateman, Amanda Bragg, Ian Dunbar, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

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

**SUBSTITUTES:** Councillors Ray Hughes (for Phil Lightfoot)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Ron Hampson, Stella Jones, Ann Minshull, Paul Shotton and David Williams.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Cabinet Member for Education, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Director of Lifelong Learning, Head of Development and Resources, Head of Schools Improvement Services, and Advisor for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

### **81. 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.

### **82. TERM OF OFFICE OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report to inform the Committee that the terms of office of two of the statutory co-opted Members had expired and to suggest an approach to ensure representation prior to an election being held.

The Member Engagement Manager provided background information and explained that the Lifelong Learning Directorate had initiated the election of parent governors. In the circumstances it was suggested that the most appropriate way of dealing with the issue was for the Committee to formally co-opt Mr. Hytch and Mrs. Stark until the results of the election of parent governor representatives was known. He advised that there was provision for this within section 76 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. This would ensure that the ability of the Committee to conduct its business was not impaired. For

the time being the co-optees would be able to retain their seats on the Committee with most arrangements remaining the same, apart from the loss of voting rights on education issues. The Member Engagement Manager apologised to Mrs. Stark and Mr. Hytch that this had happened and commented that he had taken steps to ensure that it didn't reoccur.

The Chairman asked the Committee to consider formally co-opting Mr David Hytch and Mrs Rebecca Stark from 1 March 2014 until such time as the results of the parent governor representative elections were known. Members voted on the proposal and this became the resolution of the Committee.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer asked when the results of the parent governor elections would be made available. The Member Engagement Manager advised that the process could take up to 6 weeks.

**RESOLVED:**

That Mr David Hytch and Mrs Rebecca Stark, parent governor co-optees, be co-opted to the Committee on a personal basis from 1 March 2014, until such time as the results of the parent governor representative elections were known.

**83. PUPIL ATTAINMENT**

The Director of Lifelong Learning introduced a report to provide Members with a summary of pupil attainment in statutory assessments across primary and secondary school phases for the school year 2012/13. He provided background information and advised that attached to the report was an analysis of pupil attainment in statutory assessment and public examinations in the academic year 2012/13 for pupils in years 2, 6, 9 and 11 in Flintshire.

The Director invited Mr. Kevin Grandfield, Head of Schools Improvement Services, to present the data on statutory teacher assessment and reporting at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. The Head of Schools Improvement Services also reported on the Key Stage 3 and 4 National Curriculum Assessment Results in Wales: 2013 and gave an overview of the trends in outcomes at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, and Key Stages 3 and 4.

The Director commented on the endeavours to secure high quality outcomes for learners. Officers reported on the targets for performance across secondary schools based on the proportion of learners entitled to claim Free School Meals and advised that the targets set for Flintshire were amongst the highest and most challenging in Wales. The outcomes were broadly in line with or above the targets set.

The Director invited Mr. David Messum, Advisor for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing, to present the data on attendance and exclusions in Flintshire Primary and Secondary Schools: 2013. Members were advised that school attendance was a high priority for the Welsh Government and local authorities in aiming to improve standards. There had been a trend of improvement in Flintshire schools with figures for both primary and secondary schools being above the national average for Wales. The Advisor for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing reported on

the range of attendance across schools, target setting, and the number of permanent and fixed exclusions from Flintshire schools.

The Chairman thanked the Director, Head of School Improvement Services and Advisor for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing, for their detailed presentations and invited Members to raise questions.

The Chairman drew attention to the robustness of data. He asked the Director if the Authority was satisfied with the teacher assessments made in Flintshire. The Director responded that he had confidence in the professionalism of teachers and the workforce in schools. He emphasised that he was aware of the level of challenge concerning assessments that teachers were undertaking in individual schools, however, he commented that he did not have the same confidence in the level of consistency across the country.

The Chairman asked if there was any evidence that schools were not completing the forms correctly in relation to teacher assessments. The Head of Schools Improvement Services responded and explained the difference which had occurred between Flintshire and other Authorities last year. The Chairman was given an assurance that there was no evidence that any other authorities were completing their forms incorrectly.

Mr. David Hytch commented on the Foundation Phase data and referred to the pressure on schools to report matters in a favourable light. He also referred to the subject of vocational courses and asked how widespread the use of such courses was in Flintshire and how they were used in making comparisons.

Mrs. Rebecca Stark expressed praise for the mechanism used for tracking and monitoring students attendance and progress in secondary schools. However, she raised concerns about the level of exclusions in primary schools. She also raised concerns around the pressure on teachers to produce assessments and to consistently strive for the highest levels. She commented on the ability of individual children and the need to be realistic and not overly ambitious. She also referred to the subject of Free School Meals and the impact of changes in the benefits system and the recording of figures across Wales.

Mrs. Stark referred to the literacy and numeracy results for next year and asked how figures compared with the rest of Wales. She commented on the need for sensitivity regarding how the information was delivered to parents and pupils.

Councillor Nancy Matthews acknowledged the progress made by schools in Flintshire in comparison across Wales but said there was also a need to view the "wider picture" and prepare pupils for work outside Wales. She said it would be helpful to have comparative data with England. In his response the Director gave examples of outcomes in nearby Authorities and the Head of School Improvement Services agreed to provide additional information to the Committee on school performance in England's local authorities

Officers gave detailed responses to the queries and concerns raised and referred to the work undertaken around aspirational target setting, performance

monitoring work for individual schools, high quality school leadership and teaching and learning, and the support provided by the Authority to schools and by schools to each other through sharing of good practice.

Members congratulated the Director and his team on the progress and achievements gained.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be received and the achievements of pupils be noted.

**84. INCIDENTS OF ARSON, VANDALISM AND BURGLARIES IN FLINTSHIRE SCHOOLS**

The Head of Development and Resources introduced a report to provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations submitted to and approved by the Executive early in 2006, regarding the review of measures taken to reduce and/or prevent arson, vandalism and burglaries to Flintshire schools.

The Head of Development and Resources commented on the progress which had been made in implementing a number of measures in consultation with the School Security Group and schools. He referred to training for Caretakers, the work undertaken to develop and formalise a multi-agency approach, Flintshire Neighbourhood Watch, "OWL" (Online Watch Link) communication system, School/Cocoon Watch, and the Y-Factor Youth Programme.

Councillor Ian Dunbar spoke in support of the OWL communication system and the positive response from the general public in terms of assisting crime prevention in local schools. He referred to Welsh Government (WG) funding for CCTV systems and expressed disappointment regarding the recent unsuccessful bids which had been made by some schools. He commented on the police support for CCTV security systems in schools which assisted in crime prevention. The Head of Development and Resources explained that there had been a number of successful bids made by schools during recent years, however, applications for funding were becoming increasingly competitive and there was less funding available from the WG for such bids than there had been previously.

Councillor Amanda Bragg reported that the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales had reduced funding for the "OWL" system for next year and suggested that the Committee may wish to write to Winston Roddick, QC, Police and Crime Commissioner, to make representation for the previous level of funding to the "OWL" service to be reinstated in recognition of its success.

During discussion the Head of Development and Resources provided further information to Mrs. Rebecca Stark around the "Teen Messaging" scheme and agreed to provide figures to her for the previous year in relation to burglary costs in schools.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee note the developments to date;
- (b) That the Committee specifically has regard to the contribution made by the "OWL" Online Watch Link to increasing public confidence in the Police; the reduction in the fear of crime and heightened levels of awareness of vigilance; and
- (c) That having regard to (2) above, that representation be made to the Police & Crime Commissioner for reinstatement of OWL funding.

## **85. REQUEST FROM A MEMBER**

The Member Engagement Manager introduced a report to receive a request for consideration of an item which had been made by a Member of the Committee.

Mr. Hytch expressed the view that there was an anomaly with the current structure of the Committee in that it did not have any direct representation from the Welsh Medium Education. He also referred to the Welsh Government request for all local authorities throughout Wales to produce and implement a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which encompassed a development strategy for both first and second language Welsh.

In his response the Director of Lifelong Learning referred to the five statutory co-optees currently on the Committee, three of which were elected by parent governors to represent them. He commented that the five statutory co-optees had the right to vote on all education issues considered by the Committee.

The Director commented on the collective responsibility of Members and Officers to promote the wellbeing of the Welsh language in all schools. He referred to the work of the Welsh Education Forum which was revived to strategically plan, monitor and evaluate the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2012-15 (WESP) and the clear expectation that the Authority would promote the principles underpinning the WESP. He reported that the Forum met regularly to refine and update the Plan.

During discussion the Chairman expressed the view that in granting the request a precedent may be created which could result in other parties making a request that they be considered for co-option to the Committee. This view, and those of the Director, were echoed by Councillor Nancy Matthews.

Councillor Colin Legg referred to the current size of the Committee which had 15 Members plus 5 co-opted members. He expressed the view that pupils should also be prepared for work and educational opportunities in Europe and other countries and suggested that the Committee might wish to consider co-option of a representative member from the sciences, mathematics or business community.

The Cabinet Member for Education reiterated the views expressed by the Director that Members and Officers had a responsibility to serve the interests of the Welsh medium sector on a daily basis.

The Chairman paid tribute to the consistent and valuable contribution made by the statutory co-optees to the work of the Committee. He commented that he was unconvinced that extending the number of current co-optees would make any significant improvement.

The Director advised that he would provide feedback to the Flintshire Governors Association and write to the Welsh Medium Schools to encourage participation in parent governor representative elections.

**RESOLVED:**

That the suggestion to co-opt a representative of the Welsh Education Forum to the Committee be not pursued for the reasons given in the meeting but that regular reports be made to the Committee on the Forum's progress.

**86. LIFELONG LEARNING FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. He informed Members that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 15 May 2014 would be held at Elfed High School, Buckley. 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.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items be considered at the next meeting on 10 April 2014:

- Quarterly Performance Reporting
- Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE)
- Facilities Review

Councillor Nancy Matthews requested that regular reports be provided to the Committee to update on progress on school modernisation. The Director indicated that this would be provided, starting in May, when the Committee would be receiving a report on the School Improvement Strategy.

**RESOLVED:**

That subject to the above the forward work programme be agreed.

**87. 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 10.00 am and ended at 12.07 pm)

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**Chairman**