

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 OCTOBER 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, 23 October 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors Marion Bateman, Adele Davies-Cooke, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Stella Jones, Phil Lightfoot, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Vicky Perfect, Paul Shotton, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Carolyn Thomas

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Janine Beggan, David Hytch, Rita Price and Rebecca Stark

APOLOGIES: Councillors Colin Legg and Mike Lowe. Reverend John Thelwell.

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Education. Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Organisational Change), Corporate Health and Safety Officer. (For minute no's. 28 & 29) Jeremy Griffiths (Headteacher, Ysgol Gwynedd) and Jane Edwards (Headteacher, Ysgol Sychdyn)

IN ATTENDANCE: Member Engagement Manager and Committee Officer

26. 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 Phil Lightfoot (who was not a school governor) declared an interest as school governors.

27. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 September 2014 were submitted.

Accuracy

The Member Engagement Manager pointed out that the meeting had been held in Trelawnyd Primary School and the first paragraph of the minutes on page 1 should be amended to reflect this.

Page 2, School transport. The final sentence in the first paragraph to be amended to read: 'However, some parents had been slow to apply for transport passes this year and the Council's eligibility policy must be enforced in future weeks and months'.

Page 4: The reference to Business Support Officer to be replaced by Governor Development Co-ordinating Manager in the second paragraph.

Matters arising

School Transport

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked if the item on School Transport which was scheduled on the Forward Work Programme for consideration at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 26 March 2015, could be brought forward.

Governor Training

Mr. David Hytch raised concerns that a charge was applied for governors who wished to attend the Child Protection training course. He commented on the voluntary role undertaken by school governors and expressed the view that it was “unreasonable” that a charge should be levied for training which was required to assist governors in their role and responsibilities.

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) acknowledged the concern raised and referred to the current financial restraints and the need to review funding measures in all areas. He advised that schools had arrangements in place to provide for the cost of staff training and anticipated that such provision would also apply to school governors as necessary. Councillor Matthews asked if training events could be held at schools.

School Modernisation

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) reported on a recent meeting which had been held with the Governing Bodies of John Summers High School and Queensferry Primary School. He referred to the key issues discussed concerning low level admissions and the Northern Gateway Housing Development and advised that a group of governors from both schools would be working with officers in the weeks ahead on data analysis for a full business case. The Chief Officer said a further update would be provided to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 4 December 2014.

RESOLVED:

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

28. LEARNING FROM THE SCHOOL STANDARDS MONITORING GROUP (SSMG)

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to update on Schools Standards Monitoring for underperforming schools in both primary and secondary phases. He provided background information and advised that the SSMG was established to ensure that schools which are under-performing were rigorously challenged by the Authority and also appropriately supported to make progress and improve outcomes for learners.

The Chief Officer introduced Jeremy Griffiths, Headteacher Ysgol Gwynedd, and Jane Edwards, Headteacher Ysgol Sychdyn, who had been invited to attend the meeting to provide information on their experience of school

to school support and collaborative working. The Chairman welcomed Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Edwards and invited them to give a presentation to the Committee.

Councillor Marion Bateman and Mrs Rebecca Stark commended both headteachers for their hard work and support and for the welfare of staff and pupils.

Councillor Nancy Matthews expressed concerns around the support network which was made available to schools and asked whether this could be undermining the work of GwE. She expressed further concerns that too many demands were being placed on teachers and that they may have to spend too much time away from the classroom.

Members were asked to endorse the work of the SSMG and for its continued role working in the same way with targeted schools in 2014-15. When put to the vote this was carried. Councillor Nancy Matthews abstained from voting.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Edwards for their attendance and valuable contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the work undertaken by the School Standards Monitoring Group and its continued role working in the same way with targeted schools in 2014-15 be endorsed.

29. COLLABORATIVE WORKING BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND FEDERATIONS

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to update on the progress made with developing collaborative working and federations between schools. He provided background information and advised that the Authority had responsibility to review and modernise all school provision to ensure it was providing the best possible opportunities for learners to achieve their full potential. He commented that although schools were no longer in “competition” with each other they had not yet reached the point where collaborative working arrangements were as embedded as they could be.

Jane Edwards gave an overview of her experience of collaborative working and federations between schools under the English system. During discussion she responded to the queries and concerns raised by Members around Local Authority involvement and school governance arrangements. The Chairman expressed concern that a move towards federation could negate the need to make decisions around the viability of some schools.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer spoke in support of the concept of informal federation or collaboration and emphasised the valuable role that schools held within their local communities and the need to retain rural provision where possible.

During discussion the Chief Officer, Mr. Griffiths and Ms. Edwards responded to the queries and concerns raised by members around recruitment of headteachers and workload. The Chief Officer commented on the need to foster a broader curriculum and referred to examples of shared posts and shared expertise between schools in Flintshire.

Mrs. Rita Price expressed concern that there was insufficient research into the long term effect of school federations. She referred to the financial implications, citing the cost of senior staff as an example, and expressed the view that forming a federation may not be cost effective. She also said that Welsh medium and Voluntary Aided schools could be disadvantaged as they could not create a single Governing Body.

RESOLVED:

That the framework for developing enhanced collaborative working and federations between schools be noted.

30. HEALTH & SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Celia Meredith, Health and Safety Advisor for Education. He invited her to present a report on accidents and incidents in schools during the academic year 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, and a summary of the actions taken by the Council to support schools in achieving healthy and safe environments.

The Health and Safety Advisor provided background information and context and reported on the number of accidents/incident report forms received for the above academic year. She referred to the number of accidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), and the type of incidents and injuries received.

The Health and Safety Advisor explained that school accidents and incidents were required to be reported to Corporate Health and Safety regardless of severity of injury. She advised that she monitored all accident and incident reports and followed up or investigated where necessary to ensure causes were identified and remedial action implemented to prevent recurrence. In response to the queries raised by members the Health and Safety Advisor explained that schools were encouraged to report all accidents and incidents arising on school premises including those which occurred out of school hours.

Councillor Stella Jones referred to the issue of asbestos management in schools. The Health and Safety Advisor referred to new guidance issued by the Welsh Government in February 2014 on Asbestos Management in Schools to ensure that head teachers and school governors were aware of requirements in respect of asbestos management procedures and legislation. She confirmed that all schools had been surveyed and all school premises issued with a current school asbestos survey containing a register of any asbestos containing materials, location and condition. Any asbestos containing materials in schools

had been risk assessed and where appropriate removed or encapsulated to prevent exposure.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

31. LIFELONG LEARNING FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Member Engagement Manager introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. He explained that it had been suggested that a meeting be held on 16 December 2014 to consider the item on Post 16 Commissioning Strategy 2015/16. Following discussion it was suggested that the item could be considered at a meeting of the Community Profile & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 2 February 2015 as the Principal of Coleg Cambria would be attending. It was agreed that the Member Engagement Manager make arrangements for the proposed meeting of the Community Profile and Partnerships Committee on 2 February 2015 to be held as a joint meeting with the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to her request to bring forward the item on school transport and raised a number of concerns around the transport arrangements for St. Richard Gwyn High School. It was proposed and agreed that the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 4 December 2014, be held at St. Richard Gwyn High School, Flint, and that the item on school transport be brought forward for consideration at the meeting.

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

- Quarterly performance reporting
- National Model for School Improvement
- School Modernisation (including School Repair and Maintenance)
- Playschemes – scoping reports

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed subject to the above;
- (b) That the Member Engagement Manager make arrangements for the proposed meeting of the Community Profile and Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 2 February 2015 to be held as a joint meeting with the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
- (c) That an item on the Post 16 Commissioning Strategy 2015/16 be considered at the above joint meeting; and
- (d) That the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 4 December 2014, be held at St. Richard Gwyn High School, Flint.

32. 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 2.00 pm and ended at 4.15 pm)

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Chairman