

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
26 FEBRUARY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Mold Alun High School, Mold on Thursday, 26 February 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors Marion Bateman, Ian Dunbar, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Vicky Perfect, and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

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

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Paul Cunningham (for Ron Hampson)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Kevin Jones (Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection), Ray Hughes and Paul Shotton

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Chief Officer (Organisational Change (1)), Chief Officer (Organisational Change (2)), Secondary Schools Officer, Primary Link Officer, Principle Leisure Services Officer, Finance Manager – Technical Accountancy, Senior Technical Officer and Mr. Ashley Jones (GwE)

IN ATTENDANCE: Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Overview & Scrutiny Support Officer

The Chairman expressed thanks on behalf of the Committee to Mrs Cooper, Headteacher, Mold Alun High School, for her hospitality and to the pupils for escorting Members on their tour of the school.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

55. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 15th January, 21st January 2015 and 2nd February 2015 were submitted.

15th January 2015

Accuracy

Councillor Dave Mackie asked for clarification on the title of item 48 as shown in the minutes. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed that the title should read 'Statement of Special Educational Needs – Progress Report' and would be amended in the minutes.

23rd January, 2015

Matters arising

Mrs. Rebecca Stark commented on the concerns/comments which had been raised during the budget consultation meeting and said that her comments on the school music service had included that Schools would have to continue to subsidise this service in the future.

2nd February, 2015

Matters arising

Councillor Nancy Matthews said that she had asked Mr. David Jones to check whether the 90% overall successful completion at Coleg Cambria had been an indication of the number of student who had passed their course or included figures of students who had just attended the course. She said that she had not received a response from Mr. David Jones and the Housing & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator agreed to chase this up.

RESOLVED:

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

56. REVIEW OF SCHOOL SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) introduced a report to provide an update on the development of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) covering Property Repairs and Maintenance.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Education Act 2002 introduced the 'fair funding' model which sought to increase the autonomy of schools by delegating a fair share of funding to schools. The Chief Officer explained that it was proposed to delegate an increased proportion of funding to schools which had otherwise been retained for targeted repair and maintenance of the school estate. This would bring Flintshire more in line with the 'fair funding' principles.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer welcomed the report but asked if Schools would be given the opportunity to employ local builders who may be cheaper or would they have to use contractors currently on the Council's approved contractors list. The Chief Officer responded that Schools would need to use builders on the approved Contractor List to ensure safeguards were in place.

In response to comments on the increased costs of contractors on the approved contractors list and whether the list was reviewed, the Senior Technical Officer explained the current banding levels for contractors on the approved list and advised that the list was reviewed.

Mr. David Hytch welcomed the report as repairs were a concern for schools. He asked that repairs be carried out at schools outside of term time to allow for less disruption.

Mrs. Janine Beggan agreed in principle with the proposals but raised concerns around how schools would manage their budgets. Councillor Nancy Matthews commented on the funding schools would receive and asked how the calculations would be worked out per school. The Chief Officer explained that the SLA offered schools individual elements from which they were free to choose and select. Each element of the service was to be paid for separately. He also explained that the detail of how the calculations would be worked out per school had not been finalised, but could be per pupil or per square metre of floor area.

In response to questions from Mrs. Rebecca Stark around design plans and the approved contractors list, the Chief Officer explained that design plans would be undertaken by the Council's own architect team and that the approved contractors list was reviewed every 3 years. New contractors could apply to be added to the approved list at any time.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee receive a further report, outlining the proposals for School Service Level Agreements, in due course.

57. LEISURE SERVICES ASSETS - SCOPING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Organisational Change) introduced a report to advise on the current position with the condition of leisure centres, and to provide a series of principles for moving forward a range of actions in relation to the centres.

The Principle Leisure Services Officer detailed the requirements for work following the most recent building condition surveys for the Council's leisure facilities, together with the 2014/15 repairs and maintenance budget for each leisure centres, as shown in the report.

The Chief Officer advised that the current maintenance budget meant that leisure centres could address minor maintenance requirements and carry out some work related to Priority 2 requirements.

The Council was also progressing with a capital asset transfer programme and all leisure centres were included on the community asset list sent out to local communities. The key to this work was that good planning was done by the Council with any interested parties, to ensure the business model for how the facility was operated addressed the maintenance requirements.

In response to comments from Councillor Ian Dunbar on discussions around the possible community asset transfer of Connah's Quay swimming pool, the Chief Officer advised that in this instance, the Council, together with any interested parties, would need to consider jointly how best to address the maintenance requirements at the point of transfer. This could include, the

establishment of a sinking fund at the point of transfer, with a plan to increase the size of the sinking fund to address future maintenance requirements.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer commented on Holywell Leisure Centre. Whilst he supported the principle of establishing a sinking fund, he had concerns whether Holywell Town Council would be able to take on this facility and raise enough funds for its future maintenance. The Chief Officer explained that the total maintenance requirement figure would continue to be re-assessed up to the point of transfer. Discussions around community asset transfers were not only being held with Town and Community Councils, but with other interested stakeholder groups also.

Councillor Colin Legg questioned the 2014/15 budget allocated for repairs and maintenance at the Flint High School leisure facilities. The Principle Leisure Services Officer explained that this budget had been set, based on the previous year's budgets.

In response to a question from Mrs. Rebecca Stark around vending machines at leisure facilities in high schools, the Principle Leisure Services Officer explained that the Council were in the process of assessing the current product range to ensure healthier options were available. He agreed to speak to Mrs. Stark on this issue following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the approach to managing the condition of leisure assets be noted;
- (b) That a further report to provide details around the capital asset transfer programme be presented to the Committee in due course.

58. LEARNER OUTCOMES

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to provide the Committee with a summary of pupil attainment in statutory assessments across primary and secondary school phases for the school year 2013/14.

The Secondary Schools Officer and Primary Link Officer gave a presentation on the trends in outcomes at Foundation Phase and Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

The Chief Officer reported that a Workshop to provide all Members with information on the Learner Outcomes would be arranged in due course.

Councillor Nancy Matthews commented on the number of children entering school, but were not prepared for this, and asked how child care provision was being monitored. The Primary Link Officer responded that early entitlement was monitored through Flying Start with the focus being on the most vulnerable in society. The monitoring of early entitlement had been expanded throughout Wales.

Mrs. Janine Beggan raised concerns over the teacher/pupil ration and the risks associated with a reduction in teachers. The Primary Link Officer advised

that guidance on this was being awaited by Welsh Government (WG). Discussion on this matter were on-going across all Local Authorities. She agreed to provide the Committee with information on the new WG Foundation Phase Profile.

Mr. David Hytch commented on the Key Stage 2 result for Science, and Flintshire's ranking of 16 out of 22 Local Authorities. He asked why the target figure and increased significantly for next year. The Primary Link Officer explained that the target was based on the results expected from next year's cohort of pupils.

In response to comments from Mr. Hytch on able and talented pupils at Key Stage 1, Mr. Ashley Jones (GwE) explained how pupils gaining A* and A grades were monitored and measured.

RESOLVED:

That the report and attainment of Flintshire children and young people for the year 2013/14 be noted.

59. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the forward work programme of the Committee. She informed Members that it had been agreed that the next meeting of the Committee on 26 March, would be held at Hawarden High School. The Facilitator agreed to write to Members to inform them of the arrangements made with the School.

The Facilitator also suggested, following consultation with the Chair, that the Draft Improvement Plan 2015/16 be added to the forward work programme for the meeting scheduled for the 24 April, 2015. She also suggested that the Year End Performance Reports be moved back a cycle and submitted to the meeting scheduled for 16 July, 2015. This would allow for the meeting scheduled for the 4 June, 2015 to be a joint meeting with the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed with these suggestions.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer asked that a working group be set up to look at issues around the school transport policy. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) advised that there were no plans to amend the current policy. The Chairman suggested that a report outlining the current school transport policy be submitted to the next meeting scheduled for the 26 March, 2015, to allow Members to consider whether a working group should be set up to look at any issues.

Councillor Nancy Matthews said that a commitment had been given during the budget 2015/16 consultation meetings, that Overview & Scrutiny Committees would be reviewing the impact of budget decisions. She asked when the Committee would be undertaking this. The Facilitator explained that the Chief Executive was currently undertaking a piece of work to look at how Overview & Scrutiny Committees would be reviewing the impact of budget decisions over the next 12 months. This would then be fed into the Committees forward work programme.

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked when the Committee would receive a report on options around prudential borrowing for the schools repairs and maintenance budget. The Facilitator said that she would liaise with the Chief Officer (Organisational Change) to ask when it would be appropriate for a report to be submitted to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

60. 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 3.57 pm)

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Chairman