

EDUCATION AND YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire on Thursday, 23 November 2017.

PRESENT: Councillor David Healey (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Sian Braun, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith, Martin White and David Williams

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Lynn Bartlett and Rebecca Stark

SUBSTITUTES: Councillor Gladys Healey (for Andy Dunbobbin)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Geoff Collett. Mr David Hytch and Mr Bernard Stuart. Interim Senior Manager School Improvement Systems

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts (Cabinet Member for Education), Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Senior Manager School Planning and Provision, Early Years and Family Support Manager, and Learning Advisor – Health Wellbeing and Safeguarding

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

25. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 October 2017 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Councillor Paul Cunningham said he had submitted his apologies to the meeting but this had not been recorded.

Councillor Patrick Heesom expressed concerns that the comments he had made about the Rural Small Schools Grant had not been recorded in the minutes and said that in light of the advice now available about the criteria from Welsh Government on the Grant being provided to schools with pupil numbers higher than 90, the recommendation be reviewed. He also expressed concern that his comments on the Youth Service had not been recorded and asked that a report on the Youth Service be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor David Williams commented on the proposals for the new school in Penyffordd and the forthcoming meeting with teachers. The Senior Manager

School Planning and Provision invited Councillor Williams to speak to him following the meeting but commented that the Council was seeking to put forward the best possible proposal for Penyffordd.

RESOLVED:

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

26. FREE CHILDCARE OFFER

The Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to provide an update on the developing Free Childcare Offer and seek agreement to extend the Offer to other areas of Flintshire. She invited the Early Years and Family Support Manager to present the report.

The Early Years and Family Support Manager provided background information and advised that the Offer was currently being piloted in specific areas within Flintshire and that the Authority was working with the Welsh Government to develop local models for the further full national roll out. She gave a presentation on the Funded Childcare Offer for 3 and 4 year olds which covered the following main points:

- the value of quality childcare
- what is the Childcare Offer
- what does it mean for a parent
- what is early education
- how will parents know if they are eligible
- aims of the pilot/early implementers
- can a parent choose any childcare provider
- will a parent have to pay for anything
- how do parents apply

The Chairman thanked the Early Years and Family Support Manager for her work and an informative presentation.

In response to a question from Councillor Kevin Hughes around the list of areas where people could apply for free childcare which had been circulated to Members, the Early Years and Family Support Manager agreed to check that the list was accurate and inform the Committee following the meeting. Councillor Hughes also asked when the scheme would be provided in rural areas. Officers advised that the WG was committed to a full national roll out of the funded childcare offer by the end of the current Welsh Assembly in 2021, however, appropriate resources would need to be provided. The Interim Chief Officer reported there had been positive feedback from the WG regarding the progress of the scheme in Flintshire.

Members spoke in support of the Childcare Offer and expressed their agreement to extend the offer to other areas of Flintshire. Mrs. Rebecca Stark asked that the Committee's thanks be forwarded to the Team for their hard work in implementing the Childcare offer. The Early Years and Family Support

Manager agreed to pass on the favourable comments which had been expressed by the Committee to her team at the next meeting of the Task Group.

RESOLVED:

The Committee welcomed the progress made with implementation of the Childcare offer and look forward to the proposed extension of the pilot to all areas within Flintshire.

27. CLASS SIZES

The Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the report to inform of the Welsh Government's (WG) Reducing Infants Class Sizes and Raising Standards Grant. She advised that the Cabinet Secretary for Education had announced details of a new £36m fund to address infant class sizes and raise standards which was being made available nationally from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. The Interim Chief Officer reported on the main considerations, as detailed in the report, and drew attention to the criteria for the grant funding and the Council's submission to the WG which outlined how it proposed to use the revenue funding to raise standards in targeted schools.

Councillor Kevin Hughes referred to the two proposed projects identified in the report and asked what work had been undertaken around the suitability/circumstances issues. In response, the Senior Manager, School Planning and Provision outlined the objectives and criteria for identifying projects and explained that there were currently 78 schools across the County with class sizes larger than 29 pupils.

In response to a query from Mrs Rebecca Stark regarding how the proposal would impact on pupils in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) the Interim Chief Officer advised that only one school had been identified as in an amber category for support.

Councillor Patrick Heesom asked that a further report on how the 21st Century Band B school programme aligned with the class sizes grant from Welsh Government be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. Officers agreed to provide a report in the New Year.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the contents of the report and expressed support for the business case presented to the Welsh Government.

28. COUNCIL PLAN 2017/18 - MID YEAR MONITORING

The Interim Chief Officer introduced a report to review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities, performance levels and current risks, as identified in the Council Plan 2017/18. She advised that it was a positive report with 88% of activities being assessed as making good progress and 67% likely to achieve the desired outcome. In addition 65% of performance indicators met or exceeded target. Risks were also being successfully managed with the majority being assessed as moderate or minor. The Interim Chief Officer referred to the

three major risks, as detailed in the report, and referring to the sustainability of funding streams she advised that the Council had recently received notice, without prior warning, that the WG had made an 11% cut to the Education Improvement Grant (EIG).

Councillor Ian Roberts explained that in addition to the cut in funding to the EIG the School Uniform Grant for year 7 pupils entitled to Free School Meals had also been withdrawn without prior notice.

During discussion Members expressed a number of concerns regarding the cuts in grant funding and the lack of notice to enable the Council and schools to plan for the impact. Councillor Ian Roberts commented on the implications of the teachers pay rise next year and commented that any increase above 1% in public sector pay would need to be funded centrally. Councillor Patrick Heesom proposed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to outline the Committee's concerns and this was seconded by Councillor Ted Palmer. It was agreed that a letter be written to Mrs Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education, outlining the following issues:-

- The proposed 11% reduction to the Education Improvement Grant
- The removal of the Small and Rural School Grant
- The withdrawal of the School Uniform Grant for year 7 pupils entitled to Free School Meals

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed a number of concerns around the format of the performance monitoring report shown at Appendix 1. The Facilitator agreed to speak to the Performance Team to ensure that the formatting was improved for future reports. Councillor Mackie commented that there had been previous proposals to provide training for Members to enable them to better understand the performance information presented and asked if this was going to be progressed. The Facilitator agreed to raise this matter with the Democratic Services Manager as part of the Member Development Programme.

Councillor Mackie queried the figures shown on page 51 of the report concerning the 'percentage of young people aged 16 – 18 in the youth justice system offered education, training or employment'. It was agreed that the Facilitator would contact the Youth Justice Manager to seek clarification on the figures presented.

Mrs Rebecca Stark commented on the risk around leadership capacity as referred to in the progress report and asked if there was a risk that there could be insufficient qualified or suitable Headteachers in the future. The Interim Chief Officer commented that the situation was becoming more challenging, however, schools in Flintshire had not had a problem in appointing robust candidates. She explained that GwE had developed a strong professional development opportunities programme to support current postholders and ensure there were suitable candidates for the future.

Ms Rebecca Stark referred to the risk relating to the requirements placed on the Council and schools by the forthcoming Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill resulting in the need for additional resources in terms of specialist services and provision. The Interim Chief Officer explained

that every school should have an early years Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Co-ordinator and that the Authority was working hard for a dedicated ALN co-ordinator to prepare for 2020 planning.

Councillor Patrick Heesom raised concerns that no progress was being made on the provision of a satisfactory Youth Service in Flintshire. In response Councillor Ian Roberts explained that work was progressing on the Youth Council and suggested that the item be included on the Forward Work Programme so that an update could be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the mid-year monitoring report;
- (b) That the Committee seek clarity in future presentation of performance monitoring reports; and
- (c) That a letter be written to Mrs Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education, outlining the concerns raised by the Committee on the following issues:-
 - The proposed 11% reduction to the Education Improvement Grant;
 - The removal of the Small and Rural School Grant;
 - The withdrawal of the School Uniform Grant for year 7 pupils entitled to Free School Meals

29. SOCIAL MEDIA & INTERNET SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

The Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to provide details of social media and internet safety provided to schools. She introduced Claire Sinnott, Learning Advisor – Health Wellbeing and Safeguarding and invited her to present the report.

The Learning Advisor explained that the report had been produced in response to Members seeking reassurance that children and young people in Flintshire schools were receiving appropriate support to develop their skills regarding the use of social media and internet safety. She provided background information and context and reported on the national, regional, and local developments, as detailed in the report.

Councillor Kevin Hughes spoke in support of the 360 Degree Safe Cymru e-safety self-review tool and said all schools in Wales should be encouraged to take up the tool. He congratulated Cornist Park Primary School on gaining the Online Safety Mark and emphasised the need for parental engagement and for peer to peer support to be encouraged in schools. During discussion it was agreed that Councillor Kevin Hughes would produce a statement for local newspapers on the support being provided by the Council to children, young people, and teachers on social media and internet safety and that this would be circulated to the Committee.

In response to the questions and comments from the Chairman and Councillor Dave Mackie around compiling all the information for teachers to

access in a pack, the Learning Advisor agreed to provide an information pack and circulate to all Schools.

In response to a query from Councillor Tudor Jones about how the work to raise awareness amongst pupils was measured to ensure its effectiveness, the Learning Advisor explained that the Schools Health Research Network Services take part in secondary schools every two years and all schools were signed up. She agreed to share the findings on how effective the work to raise awareness had been measured.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee notes the report on social media and internet safety and confirm that it has received an appropriate level of assurance about the support being provided to children, young people and teachers to keep themselves safe;
- (b) That the support for schools in the ongoing development of the Digital Competence Framework (DCF) and utilising the 360 Degree Safe Cymru tool be acknowledged; and
- (c) That the Committee receive regular update reports on social media and internet safety support being provided to children, young people and teachers.

30. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. She advised that it had been agreed that the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 21 December 2017 would be cancelled and the items to be considered at the meeting would be moved to the next meeting on 1 February 2018. She explained that it was proposed that the briefing session on Corporate Safeguarding which was to be held prior to the start of the December meeting, be held prior to a meeting of the County Council.

During discussion the following amendments were proposed to the Forward Work Programme:

- that a report on the Youth Service be brought to a future meeting of the Committee;
- that social media and internet safety in schools be a regular item on the Committee's forward work programme
- that a report on how the 21st Century Band B school programme aligned with the class sizes grant from welsh government be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee
- that an update report on the rollout of free childcare provision be submitted to a joint meeting of the Education & Youth and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committees

- that an update report on the Early Entitlement Hub be submitted to a joint meeting of the Education & Youth and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

The Facilitator drew attention to paragraph 1.03 of the report and advised that at the meeting of the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee held on 25 October 2017, it was resolved that each Committee should be canvassed for views on its meeting preference as part of its forward work programme. She referred to the options as detailed in the report and asked the Committee to express a preference for its meeting pattern. The outcome would be reported back to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee.

Councillor Patrick Heesom proposed that the Committee retained its current arrangement to meet on a Thursday afternoon at 2.00 p.m. This was seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie and when put to the vote was agreed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be amended;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee's preference to meet at 2pm on Thursdays be reported back to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee.

31. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.33 pm)

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Chairman