

EDUCATION AND YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 NOVEMBER 2019

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 CH7 6NA on Thursday, 7th November, 2019

PRESENT: Councillor David Healey (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Geoff Collett, Bob Connah, Andy Dunbobbin, Gladys Healey, Kevin Hughes, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith and Martin White.

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch (Vice-Chair) and Lynn Bartlett

SUBSTITUTES: Councillors: Joe Johnson (for Paul Cunningham) and Patrick Heesom (for David Williams)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Bernie Attridge and Senior Manager School Improvement Systems

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Education & Youth) Helen Vaughan-Evans (Project Manager) Principal Archivist (Flintshire Records Office) for minute 30 and Operations Manager (Flintshire Youth Justice Service) for minute 31

IN ATTENDANCE: Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Support Officer

24. THE LATE FORMER COUNCILLOR NIGEL STEELE-MORTIMER

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chair referred to the sad news of the death of Nigel Steele Mortimer, a highly respected former Councillor, Leader of the Conservative Group and Executive Member for Education. The Chair recalled a visit by Nigel as Executive Member to Castell Alun School which was greatly appreciated. He was a man with great integrity and had respect for everyone and invited Members to share their memories of Nigel.

Councillor Dave Mackie said he was shocked and deeply saddened by the news. Nigel was a great colleague and Executive Member for this committee at a time when contentious issues had to be considered. He was a true gentleman, thoughtful about what he said and could be forceful when he needed to get his point across but always had respect for others.

Councillor Patrick Heesom paid tribute to Nigel saying he was an exemplary Council Member with a great political mind but that did not intrude into his role as Executive Member. This committee and the Council were indebted to him for his work as Executive Member. His memory will be long and treasured.

The Leader echoed all the comments made and said despite their political differences he always got on very well with Nigel; an excellent local member and former Chair of Audit.

Councillor Janet Axworthy thanked Members for their kind words. Nigel had been well regarded within the Conservative group and had borne a long and debilitating illness with dignity.

There was a minute silence in Memory of former Councillor Nigel Steele Mortimer.

25. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair then reported on a change on the Agenda. The Learners Outcome item had been moved to the next meeting following ministerial guidance that a co-ordinated regional response was required which had not yet been prepared.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) referred Members to the GwE workshop being held on the 18th November which would provide Members with the opportunity to debate the changes to the performance measures.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

27. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 26 September 2019 were submitted.

The recommendation within the report were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Martin White.

RESOLVED:

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

28. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Democratic Services Manager informed Members that all actions had been completed. A letter had been sent to Kirstie Williams AM with a copy emailed to committee Members. Once a response was received this would also be circulated. A special meeting of the committee had been arranged on Friday 22nd November at 11.00 am to discuss the Budget report prior to County Council; the mid-year council Plan item had been moved to that meeting. Members were asked to note the December meeting had been changed to Friday 20th at 10.00 am.

A discussion followed with the Chief Officer answering questions and agreeing to liaise with the Facilitator and review the Forward Work Programme.

The recommendations within the report were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Mr David Hytch.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme as amended be approved;
- (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;
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions; and
- (d) That the Facilitator and the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) liaise to ensure that the outcomes of the Estyn Inspection are properly addressed within the Forward Work Programme.

29. ESTYN POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) presented the report which followed the Full Estyn Inspection held in June. Following on from this she agreed to bring a report to committee focusing on how the Council would manage the recommendations within the portfolio and the report was accompanied by the draft Post Inspection Action Plan, which was currently in the process of consultation. The Chief Officer went on to explain the business plans would be adjusted to reflect the priorities to enable delivery of the recommendations and outlined how the business plans had been split to ensure these actions were robust, easier to monitor and scrutinise at Committee.

Once the Plan had been scrutinised it would be shared with Head Teachers for their comments and then presented to Cabinet for approval. The Plan would be reviewed half- termly but as there were a number of actions and delivery dates it was proposed that a timescale of 12 – 18 months was envisaged for delivery of the core priorities with the Council Plan.

Councillor Kevin Hughes referred to unauthorised absences from school. The Chief Officer said it was the parents' responsibility to ensure their children attended school and that all schools had structured attendance management policies in place. A Charter was being produced outlining what parents and pupils can expect from schools and the local authority and what schools could expect from pupils and parents. This would give schools more confidence to challenge parents and not authorise absences.

Mr David Hytch asked questions on the remit of the Emotional Wellbeing Group; the management of school budgets, the work of the task group and the role of the section 151 officer. The Chief Officer responded that the Emotional Wellbeing Group worked across portfolios and with external organisations to map the interventions, resources and funding available. Welsh Government (WG) had recently announced additional funding to support Emotional Well Being and the Council had been requested to outline how the funding would be utilised to support pupils.

On budget deficits, the Chief Officer explained that a number of secondary schools were in deficit, some significantly. The reasons were very complex and a financial risk to the Council. She outlined the processes in place to support schools. The Task Group included the Chief Executive, Leader and the Corporate Finance Manager as Chief Financial or Section 151 Officer. It had

recently reviewed the guidance provided to schools which would be presented to the School Budget Forum in the New Year. If a school had done all it could but still had a deficit there was support and scope for the Council to intervene if necessary to manage this.

The Chair asked if there was scope to change the formula or inject more funding if the need arose. The Chief Officer explained the School Budget Forum would be reviewing all three formulas with school budgets being protected but that schools had to absorb costs. The Council was looking to WG for more support for school funding.

Councillor Gladys Healey asked whether parents who had dropped off their child at school but who had subsequently truanted would be held responsible. The Chief Officer explained that schools carry out registration in classes twice a day to ensure all pupils were present. If a pupil was missing there were procedures in place: this was also a safeguarding issue. On emotional welfare, Education Welfare Officers visit schools and are often aware of family issues and carry out home visits. This would be reviewed via the Action Plan and schools were addressing this by not allowing pupils out of the school grounds at lunchtime.

Mrs Lynn Bartlett said that there was a need to understand the data to establish where the issues were and asked if schools were approaching 95% attendance whether they were managing attendance well. The Chief Officer concurred but said there were still some concerns.

The Chief Officer then provided information on the progress of the recommendations.

The resolution within the report were moved by Councillor Kevin Hughes and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee endorses the draft post inspection action plan for agreement by Cabinet; and
- (b) That the committee congratulated the team for the work which they have done.

30. DENBIGHSHIRE AND FLINTSHIRE JOINT ARCHIVE PROJECT

The Chief Officer introduced Helen Vaughan-Evans (the Joint Project Manager) and Flintshire's Principal Archivist who would present the report outlining a plan to ensure Flintshire and Denbighshire's Archives Services had a robust future to carry out their statutory obligations.

The Project Manager thanked Members for the opportunity to address them and explained that this was a joint project between Flintshire and Denbighshire. During the presentation she would be highlighting the challenges faced by both Councils and the ways these were trying to be resolved. The presentation covered:-

- The opportunity we were trying to capture
- The ambition we were trying to reach
- There were 3 elements to this project
- What could it cost
- When would it happen
- What would Flintshire get specifically
- What happens if we don't deliver this project

Councillor Geoff Collett supported this project but queried the cost apportionment. The Leader explained that costs were based on the population size of both counties, similar to how it worked for GwE. The Project Manager added significant research had been undertaken and that the fairest way to approach this was the population size from the census. With regard to the second point she confirmed all future running and IT costs would be split this way.

Councillor Tudor Jones supported the proposals and asked questions on the split of the National Lottery Heritage funding, the Library proposals digital outreach and whether consideration had been given to incorporating a much needed museum for Mold which would attract more visitors to the town.

The Project Manager responded that the match funding was a 60 – 40 split with Denbighshire putting in £2m and Flintshire £3m. The National Lottery Heritage Funding would provide 70% of the project costs with the remaining 30%- Flintshire putting in 60% and Denbighshire 40%. The design would include an exhibition space to exhibit local and national treasures. Security to loan these valuable treasures had also been factored in. There would be access provision within each library but if there were changes, such provision could be moved to another location within that area. This would also increase the footfall within the libraries.

With regard to Digitalisation of materials, this was constantly changing and the focus was on the customer. Accessibility from home was beneficial but there would also need to be a research aspect as records in the future were more likely to be digital media rather than books, so this had been factored in to the plan.

Councillor Jones asked if training would be provided to Members to ensure records were preserved digitally in the future and referred to a group he was involved with where records were only kept on disc. The Principal Archivist confirmed the preservation of digital records was being considered and reported on a Wales wide Digital Working Group which was close to finalising a national storage facility. Advice could be given to record creators such as local groups, Town and Community councils etc. and digital archives could be saved in most formats.

The Chair asked whether community provided former Council libraries such as Mancot or Mynydd Isa would be outside the system. The Project Manager confirmed many communities could link into the outreach provision the project would put in place. Once the funding was finalised then consultation would take place to ascertain what communities wanted from this service. The

National Lottery Heritage funding would create posts for those officers to go out, develop and create activities within communities.

Mr Hytch asked what 'Passivhaus' meant and whether it would be linked to the Theatr. He also asked why the Council currently had to use commercial storage.

The Leader explained that Passivhaus technology was designed to keep the building at a constant temperature and thus keep costs down. This model was chosen following a number of site visits to similar facilities. It was hoped to have a link to the Theatr providing customers with access the shop and café there. The Principal Archivist explained that the Council had to comply with a stringent range of conditions for storage of archives, including security. The council did not have another building that could be used. She provided information on the current storage arrangements. The Project Manager explained how this project could dovetail with the Theatre's development and that they were working closely together.

Councillor Patrick Heesom acknowledged the aspirational project and agreed that the building in Hawarden was not fit for purpose but said so much information could now be accessed digitally. He had concerns on the location and felt the process of archiving materials and ensuring people could access that information should be the focus.

The Leader responded that the Council had a legal duty to provide safe and secure storage for Flintshire's heritage; bringing the two councils' archives services together had been a significant amount of work but that neither buildings were fit for purpose. When the new building was completed the council still had the asset of the Old Rectory in Hawarden and discussions for its future use were taking place. The Chief Officer had held discussions with Gladstone's Library to ensure that a presence was kept in Hawarden. With regard to the Digital, it was hoped all libraries, schools and colleges could access this.

Cllr Heesom clarified he was not against this project but that it needed to be accessible, working and at the right price. The Leader reiterated that this was a temperature and humidity controlled archive storage facility with capacity for future needs.

Councillor Ian Smith fully supported the proposals. He referred to digital preservation of documents and asked if they were saved in different formats as technology moved so fast sometimes these documents were very hard to read. The Principal Archivist confirmed they had accepted archive material in a number of different formats. Several copies had been saved on the Council's network and externally

Cllr. Tudor Jones asked whether this Council provided archive would be linked to the Council's internet and thus accessible by children in schools. The Principal Archivist responded that they were currently at creating joint archive website for the two services which would not wait for the new building and would happen next year.

Councillor Janet Axworthy thought this was an exciting investment potential for the future. Shared services were the way forward and key to procuring as much investment as possible to ensure access and preservation of these original documents was fundamental. Staffing numbers had dwindled over the years and she felt the use of apprenticeships were vital to ensure those skill were not lost.

The Chair thanked the Project Manager and Principal Archivist for their attendance today.

The resolution was moved by Councillor Kevin Hughes and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supports the new service delivery model that will:

- (a) Create a single shared and sustainable Archive Service with Denbighshire County Council
- (b) Provide a 'state of the art' Archive building, co-located with Theatr Clwyd, with an extensive digital archive network across both counties and an innovative public engagement and support programme.

31. FLINTSHIRE YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE - OVERVIEW

The Chief Officer introduced James Warr, Operations Manager, Youth Justice Service (YJS) which sat within the Integrated Youth Provision. This report provided an overview of the statutory responsibility of this service which was very important but also had a number challenges.

The Operations Manager provided an overview of the work of the YJS which was a small service within the portfolio. All Local Authorities were required to have a YJS which would vary depend on the population and needs of that organisation. The service had a wide remit which had shifted and changed over the years. Originally the work was centred around court work and court orders but this had changed and was now focused on prevention and early help offer to identify and tackle issues early within our communities.

The Operations Manager then provided information on the statutory Governance through the Crime & Disorder Act and an Executive Management Board which was chaired by the Chief Executive with the service Chief Officer as Deputy Chair. The service worked closely with their partners which now included more organisations. The service was required to provide a Youth Justice Plan which was revised annually. The service was inspected by HM Inspectorate for Probation and had received very favourable inspections in the past. He explained the upcoming inspection, service priorities and the impact of criminal exploitation such as county lines and child exploitation.

The service also provided support to colleagues in education to reduce the number of exclusions and was developing programmes to divert these pupils from longer term exclusions and provide interventions to minimise the risk of criminal exploitation.

The challenge was working with reduced resources and still providing a service to the community. There were risks and challenges for the service with uncertainty of funding from the Youth Justice Board: it arrived late, in June or July which impacted the service greatly and militated against effective planning.

Councillor Dave Mackie remembered being very impressed by this service when he was first elected. He said that the late funding issue was not acceptable. He suggested inviting the Youth Justice Board to attend Committee to explain this. He was also concerned at the local Analysis from January to June 2019 which said that 27% of children not accessing 25 hours in school and was concerned that this was a very high percentage.

The Operations Manager explained the local analysis was for the 66 young people and that the size of the cohort was split with young people who should be receiving statutory education and post 16 young people. At any one time that could mean eight young people who did not receive that education. It was not that this was not offered and went on to explain the challenges with parents, roles of schools and other challenges. Recognition of the wider issues such as modern day slavery and county lines was also included in this.

As regards the funding question this was something that the Chief Executive and the Management Board had highlighted year on year and that the Local Authority took the risks of the staff being on temporary contracts.

The Chief Officer said that the committee could write to the Youth Justice Board as this was a considerable risk to the service, creating uncertainty for staff with the service then losing good people because their future could not be guaranteed. The Chair agreed and sought the appropriate recommendation for this.

Councillor Geoff Collett was concerned at the reference to 'unpaid work.' The Operations Manager replied that the service employed a project manager who visited communities to procure projects for people to complete their unpaid work hours for their court orders and out of court disposal and provided information on the various projects in the communities and schools.

Councillor Gladys Healey asked what was being done to educate our young people to not carry knives.

The Operations Manager said the statistics in the Youth Justice Plan were for last year and demonstrated the offenses and outcomes which were delivered but the figures were constantly changing. Programmes were being developed within the Youth Justice Centre and also working within Education to provide schools with access to those programmes. There had been an increase in substance misuse and knife offences. Schools required support with this and the service had presented a number of options to Head Teachers. A Knife Crime Task Group had been formed to ensure resources were targeted where needed. This would enable a multiagency approach to be deployed in an area considered to be at risk to provide reassurance and engage with those young people.

The Chief Officer explained that this was in addition to the personal and social education programme delivered in primary and secondary schools supported by the school liaison officer. She also welcomed the emphasis Welsh Government was now placing on this in schools.

Councillor Heesom said it was a very good report and fully supported this service and but there was a real issue in addressing the needs of young people out of school because the funding was not there.

Councillor Martin White asked whether the Board was represented on the Early Health Hub. It was confirmed it was.

Councillor Kevin Hughes referred to the county lines issue saying that this was not a new problem and would always be there. The Chief Officer said it was the use of new technologies that was making things more difficult. The Operations Manager added then when a group was removed by the Police they adapted and set up another line very quickly. This was very difficult for the police and as a result the criminal exploitation of young people continued.

Mr David Hytch commented that the underlying theme was of a neglected service as regards funding and staffing. Weapons in schools may not a huge issue at the moment but this needed to be stopped before it escalated. The Operations Manager confirmed there was a very skilled highly trained team in place and that the Board had assisted them to gain funding to obtain the right staff members for the service.

The Chief Officer suggested the Committee could write a letter expressing concerns regarding funding but understood the board was currently without a Chair.

The Chair thanked the Operations Manager for his attendance and the committee for their engagement with this item.

The resolution within the report was proposed by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Janet Axworthy.

Councillor Heesom abstained on this vote.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee express support for the positive work undertaken by the Youth Justice Service and its impact on children and young people; and
- (b) That the Committee sends a letter to the Youth Justice Board to deplore the late confirmation of the annual funding for the Youth Justice Services in Flintshire.

32. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.50 pm)

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Chairman