

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3 FEBRUARY 2022

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 3 February 2022.

PRESENT: Councillor David Healey (Chair)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom, Joe Johnson, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith, and Martin White

CO-OPTED MEMBER:

Lynn Bartlett

SUBSTITUTE:

Councillor Sean Bibby (for Councillor Gladys Healey)

APOLOGIES:

Mrs Wendy White

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education. Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and Senior Manager for School Improvement Senior Youth & Community Worker and Youth Forum Worker (for agenda item 6) Senior Manager School Planning & Provision (for agenda item 7) Strategic Performance Advisor (for agenda item 8)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

38. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2021 were received.

Accuracy:

Councillor Tudor Jones referred to page 7 of the minutes and suggested that the fourth paragraph be amended to read: -

Councillor Tudor Jones commented on the way ALN funding was allocated and distributed to individual schools. He suggested that funding would be required in the case of an increase in ALN pupil numbers or an individual with greater needs in one school while requirements in another school declined. The Senior Manager agreed to feedback this suggestion to SSCE Cymru following the meeting.

Councillor Tudor Jones also suggested the following amendments to paragraph 1 on page 9 of the minutes: -

- Line 2 - fluent Welsh Speakers to be inside inverted commas; and
- Line 5 to be amended to read - He felt that the term 'conversational Welsh' would be more appropriate. Councillor Jones provided the accepted definitions for the terms 'fluent' and 'conversational' speakers.

Subject to the amendments listed above, the minutes were moved as a correct record by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Martin White.

RESOLVED:

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

39. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the draft Forward Work Programme and confirmed the next scheduled meeting on the 24th of March had been cancelled. She provided an outline of the reports to be presented at the meetings which followed the Local Government Elections in May. Moving on to the Action Tracking report she confirmed that all actions arising from the last meeting, as shown at Appendix 2 of the report, had been completed.

The Chairman suggested that the Committee add two reports to the FWP to cover the following areas: -

- The impact the pandemic had had on literacy and numeracy skills and how this was being dealt with; and
- The skill shortage across North Wales and how this was being addressed.

The Chairman referred to the recent Recovery Committee meeting where the issue of skills shortages was discussed. An explanation was provided of the work undertaken by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board with the education sector to promote educational/work opportunities to address the skills shortages across North Wales. The Facilitator explained that following the Recovery Committee meeting, Mrs. Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board had agreed to attend the next meeting of the Recovery Committee to outline the work being carried out by the Regional Skills Partnership for North Wales and the education sector. She suggested that the presentation given at the Recovery Committee would provide information to inform the reports to be added to the Forward Work Programme.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) thanked the Chairman and suggested that the following two reports be presented to the Committee: -

- 1) a report to provide an overview of the impact the pandemic was having on the core skills of pupils and how interventions and plans were being deployed to ensure learners were maximising their skills development.
- 2) a report to align the work being carried out by the Regional Skills Partnership and the Senior Manager for School Improvement through Adult Community Learning, to assist members of the community in improving their skills.

The Committee supported the suggestions made by the Chairman and Chief Officer.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Dave Mackie, and seconded by Councillor Paul Cunningham.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted.
- (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 progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

40. LEARNER OUTCOME ASSESSMENT PROCESSES FOR 2022

In presenting the report the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) explained that during the last two years there had been different approaches for key stage 4 and 5 learners. This report provided an update for this year following arrangements put in place by Welsh Government (WG)

The Senior Manager for School Improvement provided an update on the preparations for this year for GCSE and A Level examinations. During the past two years, due to the pandemic, these had been cancelled and replaced with Centre Assessed Grades in 2020 and Centre Determined Grades in 2021. The report presented the current position and the contingency plans and assessments which would be put in place if circumstances changed. These had been shared with schools, parents and learners who were sitting examinations at GCSE and A Level this summer. She confirmed that the spring examinations had taken place in January and praised the schools for the hard work they had undertaken and the support they were providing to learners.

Councillor Martin White referred to the upheaval and changes that the students had endured during the last two years with this year's students finding it more challenging preparing for the examinations. The Chair agreed saying the pandemic had impacted the learning of our young people but praised the way they had coped, and the support provided by schools and parents.

The Senior Manager for School Improvement agreed saying everyone was aware of the challenges faced by these young people and paid tribute to their resilience. Despite the disruption some mock examination had been able to take place. She provided information on the work undertaken with Qualifications Wales and the WJEC on the paperwork and support provided to enable these young people to succeed.

The Chair sought reassurance that the papers would allow flexibility as some learners may have missed topics because of self-isolation or school closures. In response the Senior Manager for School Improvement confirmed that Qualifications Wales and the WJEC had provided schools with information in

advance on the requirements for the adapted examinations. The challenges were different across Wales and the new curriculum would be delivering teaching content and skills to learners at a local level. This information would form part of discussions on what qualifications and assessments would look like for learners in the future and how this would fit into the new curriculum from next September. There were a lot of positive outcomes coming from this.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Janet Axworthy, and seconded by Councillor Tudor Jones.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the arrangements currently in place for assessments in 2022 and recognise the hard work of secondary schools in Flintshire in supporting their examination year groups.

41. MULTIPLYING IMPACT – FLINTSHIRE INTEGRATED YOUTH PROVISION DELIVERY PLAN 2021-2024

Prior to consideration of the report, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) reported that Mrs. Ann Roberts, Senior Officer of the Integrated Youth Provision, would be retiring from her role at the beginning of March. She commented on the tremendous contribution Ann Roberts had made to the Committee and her passion and commitment for delivering high quality services to young people. There would be an opportunity for Members of the Committee to send comments which would be collated and presented to Ann Roberts during her leaving presentation. The Chair suggested that the Committee send a letter of appreciation to Ann Roberts for what she had achieved for the education service over the years and to wish her well for the future. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) introduced Mick Holt (Senior Youth & Community Worker) and Ali Thomas (Youth Forum Worker), the two Senior Youth Workers, to the Committee and thanked them for their assistance. She outlined the current position, explaining the Plan was developed, following a wide-ranging consultation with young people in Flintshire who used this service, the Youth Team and a range of partners' delivering these services to young people in the 11-to-25-year age group. The aspirations for the young people were explained together with the support provided by the Youth Service. The digital provision was beneficial but as restrictions were being lifted more face-to-face services were able to be delivered. The Children's Commissioner and Welsh Government (WG) had recognised the value of Youth Services and that this was now at the forefront of the new inspection regime of Local Government and Education Services. The Youth Service and Youth Workers were a highly skilled and valued part of the Education Services.

The Chief Officer referred to the key purposes at section 1.06 of the report which tied in with the national curriculum and provided information on the key partnership working. Young people valued the services they received through the Integrated Youth Provision and that this plan would provide a route map for the next three years on how services were embedded and expanded to support them. She referred to the Welsh in Education Strategy which was discussed at

the last meeting and said that the focus was to provide services through the medium of Welsh to improve their opportunities moving forward.

In response to questions from Councillor Dave Mackie on the Toolkit, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) said the Integrated Impact Assessment was completed as part of the statutory process for reporting to Committee. This was a standard template which had to be used and agreed there were elements which were repetitive. The Youth Forum Worker confirmed that the multiplying impact reporter was used with elements included in the report and confirmed that some of the services were face to face with others going online. Although it appeared that this was repeated wording, a blended approach and different service delivery was being looked at.

Councillor Dave Mackie referred to section 1.07 of the report which referred to the number of young people in this category aged between 11 – 25 years which totalled nearly 24,000. He asked how these individuals, who could be spread across the County, could be contacted to understand what their needs were. In response the Chief Office (Education & Youth) referred to the Summer of Fun Programme which focused on delivering opportunities for the “older” young people. Schools and youth workers would signpost this, but it was how the range of activities and services on offer were promoted (through social media etc.), enabled this group to engage.

The Senior Youth & Community Worker confirmed that for the past 6 years he had line managed the NEETS Officers. Every September the team spent six weeks working through lists of young people over the age of 18 carrying out a door knocking exercise to establish where these individuals were and speaking with them to outline what services were being provided. The vast majority said that they were in college, some had jobs, with some who were not at home or had moved. It was felt that this was the best way to reach out to these young people. This was also advertised through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and through the Colleges. He also referred to the joint working with the family workers in the Social Services team and reported on projects held during the summer with families with children under the age of 5.

Councillor Dave Mackie suggested that this information should be included within the report and congratulated the team on the work being carried out. The Senior Youth & Community Worker explained that this information was not included in the report, and it was work carried out by the NEETS team but could be included as an example of what had been carried out.

The Youth Forum Worker explained as well as the term time provision such as youth clubs etc. and the work carried out by NEETS, the older groups were targeted in areas such as Wepre Park for example. She highlighted the Summer and half term programmes and outlined how the detached teams reached out to the young people who were not engaging in the more formal services. The Youth Forum Worker then referred to the Youth Council with efforts made to ensure it was as diverse as possible with young people representatives from colleges, in work and other settings and the homeless projects. There were a lot of projects targeting young people to ensure their representation was high with many young people engaging well.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) explained that this was a draft report and included feedback on the consultation and the strategic direction of travel moving forward. Amendments could be made prior to the report going to Cabinet

Mrs Lynne Bartlett referred to the list of youth clubs which were re-opening but noticed that one or two were missing. She asked if assessments of those communities, especially the one community which had high levels of anti-social behaviour, were carried out and then highlighted and prioritised. Regarding the pop-up service, she asked if this targeted those areas where there were high levels of anti-social behaviour and whether there were opportunities to engage with the voluntary sector to ensure those communities were able to open youth clubs. Mrs Bartlett was pleased to see the growth of Forest Schools.

In response, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) advised that there had been significant reductions in resources over several years and the Youth Services had to be smarter in the way it managed this. In some communities it had been possible to sustain that permanent provision but unfortunately in other communities it had not been possible for various reasons. Following discussions with young people other services such as digital and online services had been provided with pop ups and outreach part of that multifaceted package which was continually being extended within a finite budget. The Youth Services and Youth Justice teams were continually engaging with young people where there were aspects of anti-social behaviour.

The Senior Youth & Community Worker reported that some buildings used for youth clubs had been transferred under the Community Asset Transfer programme but that the youth clubs were retained wherever possible. He outlined the training timeframe for youth workers in charge and assistant youth workers and the qualifications that were required with recruitment of part time members of staff the biggest problem for the service. There was a small budget to employ some part time youth workers and recruitment drives had taken place with limited success. Referring to Forest Schools he confirmed that this was one of the major growth areas originally commencing with one day a week but progressing to four full days a week and he provided information on their locations. This had expanded quickly because it was outdoors and Covid safe.

The Youth Forum Worker reported that voluntary sector partnerships were invaluable especially with the hard-to-reach age groups. They were in the community with the specialist expertise and already had existing relationships with young people and their families. She provided information on the Youth Support Grants, the URDD and the collaborations around staffing. She referred to NEWCIS and the Young Carers and the "What just happened" project which highlighted the impacts on young people during Covid. This was invaluable and only came about because of the partnership working with the voluntary sector.

The Chair asked if there had been a change of direction following the consultation with young people as the last time Integrated Youth Provision came to committee on the 5 November 2020. The report itemised proposals for the way forward with a projected saving of £98.6k per annum on staff and premises and asked if the council was still making a significant saving on youth club provision.

The Senior Youth & Community Worker referred to the £98.6 k projection which had been skewed by Covid and said that £96k of that figure was in relation to buildings not staff members. In 2015 several buildings were transferred via community asset transfer but there were still a few which remained, and he provided an update on recent transfers. Youth clubs would still be held in these sites with regular Covid risks assessments carried out.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved Councillor Janet Axworthy, and seconded by Councillor Martin White.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee positively acknowledge the vital work of the Integrated Youth Provision during the COVID-19 pandemic in supporting Flintshire's children and young people.
- (b) That the Committee endorse the 'Multiplying Impact – Flintshire Integrated Youth Provision Delivery Plan 2021-2024'; and
- (c) That the Chairman write to Mrs. Ann Roberts, Senior Manager - Integrated Youth Provision, on behalf of the Committee, wishing her well in her retirement and thanking her for her passion and commitment to the Youth Service over the years.

42. SCHOOL MODERNISATION UPDATE

In presenting the report the Senior Manager (School Planning & Provision) firstly referred to the Lixwm and Ysgol yr Esgob in Caerwys schools formally becoming federated on the 7th of June. He referred to the Childcare Programme, the operational management of which had been moved from Social Services to the Education portfolio and outlined how the programme was funded and put out to tender to get the best value for money and grant funding from Welsh Government (WG).

The Senior Manager (School Planning & Provision) reported on the new Mynydd Isa Campus confirming that planning permission had been granted in January. A design and build contract had been selected through Welsh Education Partnership Company (WEPCO) which had been established by WG to deliver the MIM projects in Wales. The business case would be submitted to WG by March and if it received ministerial approval then a paper would be presented to Cabinet in June for approval to enter the construction phase. The projected completion date was scheduled for July 2024 and occupation on site in September 2024.

Councillor Tudor Jones thanked the Senior Manager for a thorough report. Referring to the federation of Lixwm and Ysgol yr Esgob Schools he felt the benefits for the pupils and staff were tremendous. The two schools shared staff and workload and they felt it improved the quality of what they delivered, together with the wraparound care service, which was great for the area. He congratulated everyone who had supported this. Referring to the investment into Welsh language schools, Councillor Jones said this proved that the council was

taking steps to deliver both languages across the county. He applauded the Senior Manager, and everyone involved.

Councillor Ian Smith referred to the excellent 21st Century Schools projects which had benefited the whole of Flintshire. He asked if this was similar to the PFI scheme and were the costs known for MIM compared to borrowing for over 25 years in the normal way. In response the Senior Manager (School Planning & Provision) explained that there were costs involved when the business case was submitted, and that this had been included in the Council's financial planning and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Councillor Sean Bibby welcomed the investment at Ysgol Croes Atti, Glannau Dyfrdwy saying that 10 pupils were able to attend Ysgol Maes Garmon in September. He paid tribute to the Head, Teachers, Governors, and pupils for this fantastic achievement having a Welsh medium school in the heart of Deeside. He asked if there were any proposals for this in the Buckley and Mynydd Isa areas to hopefully emulate the success of Shotton in that part of the County also. The Leader hoped that a Welsh medium school in the Buckley and Mynydd Isa area could be established where there was demand.

The Senior Manager (School Planning & Provision) referred to the federation comments made by Councillor Tudor Jones and said that this was open to any governing body to promote and would be supported by the Council. He felt that Lixwm and Ysgol Yr Esgob could be championing this because of the benefits involved for teachers, learners, and the community.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Sean Bibby, and seconded by Councillor Ian Smith.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the progress of the School Modernisation Programme and appreciate the work carried out.

43. COUNCIL PLAN 2022/23

In presenting the draft Council Plan for 2022/23 the Strategic Performance Advisor confirmed the Plan continued to include the themed areas as the Council recovered from the pandemic. He highlighted the changes at 1.02 and the six themes and priorities which remained the same at 1.03 of the report. He confirmed that he would be collating the comments which would be shared with Members prior to being presented to Cabinet and Council in July 2022.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) referred to the new sub-priority on Well-Being which had been included in the Council Plan following discussions at Recovery Committee. She referred Members to page 119 which outlined how this was being supported and the WG National Framework for schools to embed a whole school approach to Emotional Health and Well-being, which was being led regional by a Flintshire officer, Laura England. This would ensure schools were well equipped, trained and supported to review everything they did through the lens of emotional health and well-being. The Chief Officer also reported on the collaborated working with the Youth Services in Flintshire and Wrexham to

support young people who attempt suicide and were admitted to hospital. The work carried out by the Inclusion and Youth Justices Services to gain an understanding of the trauma experienced by young people through a variety of reasons was also outlined. The aim was to encourage them back into education and the world around them.

The Chair referred to page 113 which was the new element of Climate Change adaptation and was pleased that the issue of adverse weather events such as flooding, high winds and long hot summers was being addressed. He said that Flintshire was named as one of the authorities not having a Climate Change Plan which was erroneous and maybe could be rectified in the Council Plan.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed that the Council had a Climate Change Strategy, and a Programme Manager was leading a cross portfolio group where all portfolios had representation and had contributed to a very detailed Climate Change Strategy. Referring to the Council Plan she confirmed the different colours in sections identified other portfolios who were able to contribute to those themes. She provided information on the themes for the Education portfolio especially through healthy schools, eco schools and COT26 which included representations from Flintshire's young people. She then provided information on the measures taken in school buildings and that the Mynydd Isa school would be the first carbon neutral project.

Councillor Sean Bibby confirmed that a very detailed Climate Change Strategy was being presented to the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that children had been very interested and concerned about climate change and the environment prior to it being highlighted as the biggest issue of our generation. Referring to the charging points he explained these would need to be installed in all schools, buildings, leisure centres, community centres and council car parks. The demand for the authority, Wales and the whole of the Country was extensive. The Education portfolio had a receptive and dedicated audience in young people across the County.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Tudor Jones, and seconded by Mrs. Lynn Bartlett.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the content of the themes for the Council Plan 2022-23 as presented within the report and appendix.

44. MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR RECOVERY, PORTFOLIO AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) introduced the report which provided an overview of the levels of progress in the achievement of activities, performance levels and current risk levels as identified in the Council Plan.

In response to a question from Councillor Dave Mackie on the free food initiative, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) confirmed that this was an

anomaly in the report and that the two items were separate. She explained that the free primary school breakfast was targeted at pupils who were eligible for free school meals, and it was hoped that 100% of schools would be delivering that offer. Due to the pandemic and arrangements for the delivery of meals during Covid, it had been challenging with secure measures in place and dining rooms not operating in the same way. Regarding the free fruit, this was provided by NEWydd through the Poverty Strategy to schools and it was agreed to reword the text for that objective.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Paul Cunningham, and seconded by Councillor Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

45. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.30 pm)

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Chairman