

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 MAY 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council, held at Elfed High School, Buckley, on Thursday, 15 May 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: , Amanda Bragg, Ian Dunbar, Ron Hampson, Stella Jones, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Paul Shotton, and David Williams

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch and Reverend John Thelwell

APOLOGIES: Councillors Marion Bateman, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Ann Minshull and Nigel Steele-Mortimer. Mrs. Rebecca Stark

ALSO PRESENT: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, and Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Education, Head of Schools Improvement Service, Project Manager, Performance Team Leader, Principal Librarian, Principal Leisure Services Officer

IN ATTENDANCE:

Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

86. DECLARATIONS VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman indicated that there would be a change in the order of the agenda and the item on Apprenticeships, Training and Development Opportunities would be brought forward.

87. 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 Amanda Bragg (who was not a school governor) declared an interest as school governors.

88. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 31 March 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 April 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

89. IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2014/15

The Performance Team Leader gave a short presentation on the draft Improvement Plan 2014/15 and the “How achievement will be measured” document prior to final publication in June 2014. She provided background information and advised that for 2014/15 a review of the current priorities and sub-priorities had been undertaken. She referred to the main considerations in the report being presented by the Head of Schools Improvement Services and explained that the sub-priorities to be monitored and reviewed by the Committee as part of the quarterly Improvement Plan monitoring process were attached as Appendix A to the report. Members were asked to comment on the targets and milestones proposed for the 2014/15 Improvement Plan.

Councillor Aaron Shotton commented on the importance that Members were satisfied with the priorities and sub-priorities selected within the report so far.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the revised Plan and referred to the adoption of a smaller set of ‘in-year’ priorities. He commented on the successful Dragon’s Den event which was recently held at Coleg Cambria and the good work undertaken by the Community First Job Club programme which had been recognised nationally.

The Head of Schools Improvement Services gave an overview of the sub-priorities for consideration by the Committee and explained how the achievements would be measured.

Mr. David Hytch commented that there was no reference to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan in the Improvement Plan. He also referred to the indicators set out on page 21 of the report and expressed concerns relating to the measurement of achievement through the percentage of learners achieving 5 or more A* to C passes at GCSE or the vocational equivalent. The Head of Schools Improvement Services advised that the indicator had been provided by the Welsh Government (WG) and explained that there was national discussion to reduce the number of GCSEs which could be achieved by setting a vocational equivalent course. Mr. Hytch expressed further concerns that too much importance was being attached to data which he felt

only advantaged schools. The Head of Schools Improvement Services advised that the range of data for outcomes was vast and commented that it was not just about the recent outcomes for learning but also about bringing enjoyment, confidence, and well-being to pupils.

Councillor Dave Mackie referred to the information provided on page 27 and suggested that the headings in the table should be continued on subsequent pages for clarity. He also referred to the aspirational target for surplus places from Summer 2014 which he felt would not be achieved. The Head of Schools Improvement Services acknowledged the point made and explained that it was a WG target for all authorities. Councillor Mackie also sought clarification on the data presented in appendix C in relation to education benchmarking indicators for the financial year 2012/13. The Performance Team Leader responded to the comments made and explained that the data provided members with the benchmarking information to show the Council's performance in comparison to other local authorities across Wales.

Councillor Stella Jones expressed a number of concerns around the use of Free School Meals as a measure for determining pupil outcomes and suggested that the Committee write to the WG to ask why they use Free School Meals for measuring outcomes in schools. Councillor Nancy Matthews suggested that the Committee receive a report on the arrangement of free school meals and how this linked to family credit before deciding on whether to write to the WG. Councillor Matthews also referred to the second activity under 'Modernised and High Performing Education' which related to educational achievements of children in a position of disadvantage including Looked After Children (LAC). She suggested that the wording be amended to reflect that the activity be that the Authority was making sure there was equal opportunity to access education for all children. Councillor Chris Bithell referred to the need to improve performance which had been highlighted by the CSSIW in the educational outcomes for LAC. The Head of Schools Improvement Services agreed to revisit the wording of the indicator but explained that it would not be possible to deviate too far from the national priority due to the funding attached.

During discussion the Head of Schools Improvement Services responded to the comments and queries raised by members concerning how the Deprivation Grant was passported to schools and how schools made the best use of resources for the "greater good" whilst ensuring that the focus was on achieving best outcomes for all children.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the draft Improvement Plan 2014/15 and the "How achievement will be measured" document be noted; and
- (b) That the comments of the Committee be collated and sent to the Performance Unit

90. APPRENTICESHIPS, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Paul Corner, Project Manager, to the meeting and invited him to give an update on progress in relation to the creation of Apprenticeships and Training opportunities. He provided background information and advised that the Authority and Local Service Board (LSB) partners had set the creation of additional apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities as a priority area for development work. He gave an overview of the main progress and achievements gained for the previous six months which were detailed in the report.

Councillor Aaron Shotton commented on the ongoing work within the Council to extend its own training programme for apprenticeships. He said that it had been nationally recognised that Flintshire was one of the best performing authorities in terms of work undertaken around the Not in Education, Employment or Training Scheme (NEETS) and referred to work to attract and engage with businesses in the area and the creation of the Deeside Enterprise Zone.

The Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure asked for further information around the quality and framework of the apprenticeship programmes. The Project Manager agreed to provide the Cabinet Member and the Committee with information on the apprenticeship model and framework.

Councillor Aaron Shotton referred to the Employers Promise scheme which gave recognition to those companies which provided quality apprenticeships. Councillor Matthews queried what qualifications were gained at the end of an apprenticeship. She also referred to the shortage of labour in the Construction industry. The Project Manager responded to the comments and queries raised and advised that job outcomes were generally high for young people who had served an apprenticeship.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the next key 'milestones' as outlined in the report be noted; and .
- (b) That the Committee receive a progress report in six months time.

91. CULTURE AND LEISURE SERVICE PLAN 2014-15

The Principal Leisure Services Officer introduced the report to provide an overview of the Culture and Leisure Service Plan for 2014/15. He provided background information and advised that the Plan linked to the Community strategy and to service specific strategies such as the Libraries Strategy.

During discussion members commented on the range of services provided by the Flintshire Library Service and the need to raise further awareness amongst the general public.

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked that the Committee received updates every 6 months on the 'footfall' at libraries in Flintshire and it was agreed that this be included as an item on the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

Mr. David Hytch raised concerns around the North East Wales Schools Library Service and the Schools' Buy Back of Service and sought clarification around the consequences if there were insufficient number of schools buying back.

Mr. Hytch also referred to Leisure Services and expressed further concerns on the possible closure of income generating facilities due to insufficient repair and maintenance revenue budgets and the absence of capital finance. In his response the Principal Leisure Services Officer referred to the work being undertaken in partnership with colleagues in other service areas to encourage use of Public Open Space amenity land for recreational purposes and activities in the future.

RESOLVED:

That the Culture and Leisure Services Plan 2014/15 be noted.

92. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE LEISURE FINANCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report to seek approval for a recommendation from the Leisure Finance Task & Finish Group to be supported and recommended to Cabinet for approval.

The Facilitator referred to the meeting of the Task & Finish Group which was held on 11 April 2014 and reported that during discussion around schools where dual use leisure facilities were provided, the Group proposed that officers initiated discussions with the schools to assess whether they would consider assuming responsibility for community access of the facilities in the future.

Councillor Stella Jones proposed that the recommendation from the Task and Finish Group be agreed and this was seconded.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommend to Cabinet that officers initiate discussions with schools where dual use leisure facilities were provided to assess whether they would consider assuming responsibility for community access of the facilities in the future.

93. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. The Chairman proposed that the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 19 June 2014 be held at Trelawnyd Voluntary Aided Church in Wales Primary School. Members would be invited to arrive at the School at 1.30 pm in order to be given a tour of the building before the Committee meeting started at 2.00 p.m. It was also suggested and agreed that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 24 July 2014 be changed to a workshop to plan the forward work programme for the remaining year.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items be considered at the next meeting on 19 June 2014:

- Quarterly Performance Reporting
- Inclusion Service Review

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked that the Committee also receive an update report on School Modernisation at the next meeting on the 19 June 2014.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above the Forward Work Programme be agreed.

94. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.07pm)

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Chairman