

LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 JUNE 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council, held at County Hall, Mold , on Thursday, 19 June 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Adele Davies-Cooke, Ron Hampson, Stella Jones, Colin Legg, Phil Lightfoot, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, and Paul Shotton

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Janine Beggan, David Hytch, Rita Price and Reverend John Thelwell

APOLOGIES: Councillors Amanda Bragg, Ian Dunbar, Nigel Steele-Mortimer and Carolyn Thomas. Cabinet Member for Education and Mrs. Rebecca Stark

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Vicky Perfect

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Head of Culture and Leisure, and Head of Schools Improvement Service

IN ATTENDANCE:

Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman welcomed and introduced Mrs. Janine Beggan, newly appointed Co-opted Member, to the Committee.

The Chairman asked that the Committees condolences be extended to Mrs. Rebecca Stark concerning the recent bereavement of a close family member.

Members congratulated the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) on his recent appointment. The Chairman referred to the forthcoming retirement of the Head of Culture and Leisure Services and expressed thanks to him, on behalf of the Committee, for his hard work and commitment and wished him well for the future.

1. **VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chairman indicated that there would be a change in the order of the agenda and the item on Recommendation from the Leisure Finance Task and Finish Group would be brought forward.

2. **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 Phil Lightfoot (who was not a school governor) declared an interest as school governors.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

The Chairman sought nominations for a Vice-Chairman for the Committee.

Councillor Paul Shotton nominated Mr. David Hytch as Vice-Chair of the Committee. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Marion Bateman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. David Hytch be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

4. **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 held on 19 May 2014 and reported that the Group had considered the objectives as set out within their terms of reference. During discussion the Group had commented that to maintain and improve customer numbers, leisure facilities across Flintshire must be well maintained but had raised concerns around the lack of budget for essential maintenance within the Council's Capital Programme. The Group were informed that the Council was currently conducting a review of assets across Flintshire where the needs of Leisure Centre maintenance would be considered. The Group felt it would be inappropriate to continue to review Leisure Services further at the present time as this could result in duplication of effort.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed thanks on behalf of the Task and Finish Group for the professionalism of the Officers who attended the meetings and for the information and support they had provided to Members.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recommend to Cabinet that consideration be given to capital receipts received from the sale of land at Ysgol Perth y Terfyn Infants and Ysgol y Fron Junior School being ring-fenced for maintenance works for Leisure Centres in Flintshire; and
- (b) That the Committee supports the proposal of the Task & Finish Group that it was inappropriate to continue to review Leisure Services further at the present time.

5. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the joint meeting of the Lifelong Learning and Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 May 2014 were submitted.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 May 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

6. POST 16 COMMISSIONING AND PLANNING CYCLE

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to give an update on the requirements for the commissioning and planning cycle for 2015/16, under the new national Post 16 Planning and Funding Framework. He provided background information and referred to the principles that the Plans should adhere to.

The Chief Officer advised that the Planning Framework was centred on improving the information flow between Local Authorities, Further Education Institutions and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to provide commissioners with a greater understanding of post 16 educational provision and how it was adding value across Wales. He explained that the planning cycle could be broken down into six stages and these were detailed in the appendix to the report. The Provisional Plan for 2015-16 would be submitted by 14 November 2014, DfES would analyse the plans and provide feedback to Local Authorities during December 2014 and January 2015 prior to the issuing of final funding allocations. Local Authorities would then be expected to consider the feedback from the provisional plans when developing the final plans for submission. The Chief Officer explained that the Ministerial Priorities for Local Authorities 2015-16 were issued in May 2014 and were detailed in the report. He advised that the Authority's plan must be influenced by local institutional recruitment, retention and outcome information together

with wider commissioning information such as local and regional Labour Market intelligence.

Referring to Priority 3, Learner Support and Progression, Councillor Paul Shotton sought information on how the take up of the new Welsh Baccalaureate would be encouraged and monitored. He also referred to the role of the Engagement and Progression Coordinator and suggested that the Coordinator be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to outline the role and service they provide. The Chief Officer gave an overview of the role of the Coordinator and agreed that it may be helpful if the individual attended a future meeting of the Committee to provide more detail. The Head of Schools Improvement Services advised that information was being made available from the Welsh Government in relation to the how the take up of the Welsh Baccalaureate would be encouraged and monitored for Post 16 learners. He said that where information had been provided the Curriculum Leaders Forum would continue to share such information with schools.

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to the Priority on Improving Learner Outcomes. She expressed concerns around the need to improve the position on securing higher grade outcomes at A level and referred to a possible devaluing of A level grades below A*. The Chief Officer acknowledged the point and referred to the Estyn Inspection of 14-19 year old learning where it had been recognised that not enough learners were achieving the A level grades they were capable of and that each youngster should have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Mr. David Hytch queried retention rates for Post 16 learners at Coleg Cambria and asked if this information could be provided to the Committee. The Head of Schools Improvement Services explained it was anticipated that this information would be made available in the future. With regard to the further question raised by Mr. Hytch concerning the tracking of young people who left secondary school, he advised that Careers Wales tracked the destination of all youngsters and that the data could be shared with the Committee. Work would be ongoing with all partners to improve the coordination of that information during the Summer.

Mrs. Rita Price emphasised the need for comparable data to measure performance and retention rates for Post 16 learners at secondary schools and college. The Chief Officer explained that there were currently two sets of accountability data and commented on the need for one combined database to present performance and accountability information in the future.

In response to the concerns which had been raised by Members the Chairman suggested that an invitation be extended to the Principal of Coleg Cambria to attend a future meeting of the Committee to address the issue of comparable data on Post 16 learners between secondary schools and Coleg Cambria. Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to the future management and scrutiny of the Post 16 hub and it was agreed that the Principal of Coleg Cambria would be asked to address this matter also at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a further report setting out the commissioning plans for 2015-16 be provided to the Committee in November 2014; and
- (b) That the Principal of Coleg Cambria be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to address the issue of comparable data on Post 16 learners between secondary schools and Coleg Cambria and the management and scrutiny of the Post 16 hub.

7. EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNISATION STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to update members on the draft Education Improvement and Modernisation Strategy and how it supports the Council Plan 2014-15 for “Modernised and High Performing Education”. He provided background information and advised that the priorities for planning across all phases of education in 2014-15 were as detailed in the report.

The Chairman invited members to consider the individual areas for improvement as detailed in the Education Improvement Modernisation Strategy.

Mr. David Hytch referred to the key targets and outcomes for the Authority in relation to the outcomes for Mathematics, English, and Welsh first language and queried the outcome for KS4 which appeared lower than the outcomes for KS2 and 3. In his response the Chief Officer referred to the Annual Performance Letter of the Welsh Audit Office which was presented to Cabinet on 17 June 2014. He advised that the letter confirmed that GCSE outcomes in Flintshire remained the highest in Wales and also that there was an improvement in performance of primary schools across Flintshire. The Welsh Audit Office acknowledged that despite relatively low levels of funding, education in Flintshire continued to progress.

During discussion members put forward the following questions, comments and observations on the Education Services Action Plans:

Plan 4: Improving the preparation of young people for the work place.

Councillor Paul Shotton requested more information about the financial support provided by the 14/19 Network Grant.

Plan 5: Continuing the implementation of 21st Century Schools programme

Councillor Marion Bateman referred to the risk that the real costs of the 21st Century Schools Programme may not be achievable within budget. The Chief Officer explained that full and final costings would be agreed with contractors prior to the Authority agreeing to sign-off and submit to the Welsh

Government (WG). Within the final business case efficiencies would be identified which would not be a detriment to learners in Flintshire.

During discussion the Chief Officer took the opportunity to give a verbal update on the Statutory Notices issued in relation to the Croft Nursery, Queensferry Primary School and St. Ethelwold's Primary School. He advised that a Ministerial decision had been received to support the closure of the Croft Nursery and the expansion of the age range for Queensferry Primary and St. Ethelwold's Primary schools.

The Chief Officer reported that staff at the Croft Nursery would be moving to Queensferry Primary or St. Ethelwold's Primary schools in the Autumn term to assist during the transition period. Parents and carers had been asked to express a second preference to attend either Queensferry Primary or St. Ethelwold's Primary schools and all preferences had been accommodated. Members were informed that the Croft Nursery building would be utilised for the expansion of the Flying Start Programme. The Chief Officer advised that the remaining Statutory Notices should be resolved before the Summer recess.

Plan 6: Continuing to implement the School Modernisation Strategy including review of assets and Primary and Secondary School Organisation.

The Chairman requested that in future plans an evaluation of outcomes at the 6th Form Hub be included as an action. The Chief Officer confirmed that all Post 16 provision would be subject to the annual planning and review cycle required by the WG.

Plan 8: Raising Standard through effective use of new technologies.

The Chief Officer responded to the queries raised by Councillor Nancy Matthews and advised that whilst Officers were not able to be present at every consortia meeting they continued to provide advice and support on the work in progress between consortia.

Plan 9: Ensuring best quality educational support during implementation of the national model for regional working.

Councillor Stella Jones referred to the risk that the current capacity of the Authority's Officers to support schools was limited, particularly in the Primary phase. She also expressed concern that primary schools were dissatisfied with the support provided by GwE. Officers acknowledged the comments made and explained that there was further work to be undertaken to improve the capacity of support provided by Officers across the Primary sector.

Councillor Marion Bateman expressed concerns about long term sickness absence within GwE and how this impacted on the support provided for Primary schools. The Chief Officer agreed to look into the specific matter

raised by Councillor Bateman and provide a response to her following the meeting.

In response to a suggestion made by Councillor Paul Shotton, the Chief Officer proposed that Mr. Ashleigh Jones, Principal Officer GwE, be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to address members concerns around support for Primary schools.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the Forward Work Programme of the Committee. The Facilitator informed members that the Committee workshop which had been scheduled for 24 July 2014, had been changed to a formal meeting. The Facilitator explained that she would write to the Committee to advise of the items proposed for consideration next year and invite members to add any further items they wished to be taken into account onto the forward work programme.

The Chairman suggested that the meeting of the Committee arranged for 25 September 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.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items be considered at the next meeting on 24 July 2014:

- Inclusion Service review
- Year End Service Performance Report
- Year End Improvement Plan Monitoring Report

Councillor Marion Bateman asked that the Committee also receive a report on school security as part of the regular item on Health and Safety in Schools which would be considered by the Committee at a future meeting.

Councillor Nancy Matthews suggested that it would be helpful if a literacy and numeracy test paper was circulated to the Committee for information. The Chief Officer agreed to undertake this task and suggested that a workshop he held for the Committee later in the year, and that primary headteachers be invited to attend, to consider literacy and numeracy in more detail.

RESOLVED:

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

9. 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 4.03pm)

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Chairman