

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
9 JULY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 9 July 2015

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, David Healey, Nancy Matthews, Vicky Perfect, Nigel Steele-Mortimer, and Carolyn Thomas

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor Colin Legg, Dave Mackie, and Rebecca Stark

CONTRIBUTORS:

Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), and Business Support Manager

IN ATTENDANCE:

The Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Marion Bateman declared a personal in the following item as she was a member of the Pupil Referral Unit.

Agenda item 5 – Year End Chief Officer Performance Report .

8. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 April 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.
- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 May 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.
- (iii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 June 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Councillor Chris Bithell said he had submitted his apologies to the meeting and asked that the minutes be amended to record this.

RESOLVED:

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

9. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to provide an update on the Education and Youth Improvement and Modernisation Strategy and how it supports the Council Improvement Plan 2015-16. He provided background information and referred to the key consideration concerning the development of regional working and the continued growth that is anticipated as the recommendations within the National Model for School Improvement Services are implemented.

The Chairman invited Members to raise questions.

Councillor Nancy Matthews sought an assurance that resources made available through the School Modernisation Strategy were focussed on teachers and teaching assistants rather than on administration and leadership costs. The Chief Officer provided this assurance.

Mr. David Hytch referred to the Education & Youth Improvement and Modernisation Strategy 2015-16 which was appended to the report and asked a number of questions around the key targets and outcomes for the Authority. He also raised questions in relation to young people and NEET and said he was pleased to note the small number of NEETS in Flintshire. He referred to the development and implementation of the regional Early Identification Tool Kit to identify learners at risk of disengagement and in terms of early identification asked how early that was meant to be and what tools were needed for primary and secondary schools. The Chief Officer responded to the questions and commented on the work undertaken in relation to NEETS in Wales and referred to implementation and monitoring of the TRAC plan in line with the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Families First emerging project for NEET early identification/prevention.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas asked for an update on the development of the information technology programme in schools. In his response the Chief Officer referred to the need for learners to be skilled and confident in using information technology and also programmes in schools. He commented on the Service Level Agreement which had been agreed with the Heads Federation and the positioning of ICT technologists in schools in the next year to provide a local base and access to schools. He also referred to the sharing of skills and learning by school practitioners across the whole schools network.

In response to the further questions raised by Councillor Thomas concerning the repair and maintenance of school buildings, the Chief Officer commented that there was still a large backlog and that too many schools were not "fit" for 21 Century learning. Councillor Nancy Matthews asked for a definition of 'fit for 21st Century education'. The Chief Officer agreed to provide the Committee with a description of a school building which would be fit for 21st century education.

Mrs. Rita Price raised a number of questions around the development and implementation of a plan for the next phase of Schools Modernisation, including continuing to implement the 21st Century school (Band A) programme. She commented on the need to develop all schools equitably and expressed concerns around the reference to evaluation of Post 16 provision in appendix 1, plan 4. The Chairman asked that the Committee be kept up to date with developments at the Post 16 Hub in Connah's Quay.

In response to the questions raised concerning the new Hub at Connah's Quay, the Chief Officer said he was confident that there were sufficient youngsters for the 6th Form centre to be fully occupied.

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked whether exam results obtained through courses at the Hub would be comparable to exam results at school Sixth forms and commented on the current difficulties in obtaining comparable results from Coleg Cambria.

In response to a question from Councillor Vicky Perfect concerning learners becoming disengaged from education or training, the Chief Officer advised that support would be provided through the identification of appropriate cultures and mentors. He said many schools were involved in specific courses to maintain engagement and interest for learners and cited Youth Armed Forces related training as an example.

Councillor Peter Curtis asked that the Committee hold a future meeting at the new school in Holywell, once it had been opened. It was agreed that this be added to the list of possible venues.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas raised the subject of Post 16 transportation to and from schools. In response to a suggestion put forward by Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer that a working group be set up to consider school transportation the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator advised that an all Member workshop was being held on 22 July 2015, to populate the Forward Work Programmes for Overview & Scrutiny Committees and suggested that the item be put forward to the workshop. Following further discussion it was agreed by members that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to consider setting up a Task and Finish Group on school transportation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Education and Youth Improvement and Modernisation Strategy 2015-16 be noted; and
- (b) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to consider setting up a Task and Finish Group on school transportation.

10. YEAR END CHIEF OFFICER PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the 2014/15 Year End Service Performance Report produced at Chief Officer level for Education and Youth. He advised that a copy of the detailed Year End Chief Officer (Education & Youth) performance report was attached at Appendix 1 for consideration. The report included the key information in terms of areas of positive performance and any areas of concern.

Councillor Chris Bithell highlighted that the Authority still needed to take further key decisions in relation to school organisation to deliver efficient use of resources to benefit learners.

Councillor David Healey referred to previous comments around the growing concerns on school readiness following approval by Cabinet of the updated School Modernisation Strategy and asked if a copy of the report and minutes, from the relevant Cabinet meeting could be provided to him. The Chief Officer said that the team would be happy to discuss these issues with him if he wanted to get in contact following the meeting.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas raised concerns around pupils with behavioural problems affecting other pupils in schools. The Chief Officer responded to the comments and referred to the use of early intervention strategies and pupil referral provision. He explained that whilst the quality of pupil provision was currently adequate the Authority aspired to give better in terms of the improved involvement and quality of teaching and learning taking place within the Pupil Referral Unit. He commented that there were too many young people out of mainstream schools in Key Stage 4 and said discussions were taking place with Secondary headteachers around an alternative course of provision to keep young people engaged and within mainstream school at KS4. Councillor Peter Curtis expressed concerns that additional pressures and responsibilities were being placed on schools

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked what measures were taken if there was no improvement in a school where performance was causing concern. The Chief Officer advised that there was a range of escalating statutory powers that could be applied, however, intervention between the school and the Authority usually resulted in a rapid improvement in standards.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

11. YEAR END IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORTS

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the 2014/15 Year End Improvement Plan Monitoring Report relevant to the Committee. He advised that the Report gives an explanation of the progress being made towards delivery of the impacts set out in the Improvement Plan. For the

Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee the following Improvement Plan sub-priority reports were appended to the report:

- Modernised and High Performing Education
- Apprenticeships and Training

Referring to the GwE/Regional forums attended by the Lead Member, Director, Headteacher and Governor representatives, Mr. David Hytch said that he was no longer a member of this Forum and commented on the lack of Governor representation at primary school level.

The Committee asked that its thanks be expressed to Kevin Grandfield, Secondary Phase Officer, for his support over the years and said that he had been an excellent officer who had always been willing to attend meetings to provide advice and assistance. The Chief Officer said that he would pass on the Committee's thanks and best wishes to Kevin Grandfield.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the reports be noted; and
- (b) That feedback be provided to the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee who are responsible for the overview and monitoring of improvement targets.

12. EDUCATION FOR ALL TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report on the setting up of an Education for All Task & Finish Group to help develop and evaluate policy options and proposed programmes. She provided background information and advised that a draft project plan appended to the report had been prepared as a starting point for the scrutiny exercise requested by the Committee at its meeting on 26 March 2015. She explained that the draft project plan would need to be discussed and amended at the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

The Committee were asked to consider establishing an Education for All Task & Finish Group and to nominate Members to the Group. Members agreed to set up an Education for All Task & Finish Group to develop and evaluate policy options and proposed programmes and Councillors Paul Cunningham, Dave Mackie, and Mr. David Hytch put their names forward to be members of the Group. It was agreed that the Facilitator would contact those Members who were not present to ask if they would like to volunteer to sit on the Task & Finish Group.

The Facilitator advised that the first meeting of the Task & Finish Group would be held during September 2015, and that the terms of reference for the Group would then be submitted to a following meeting of the Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee agree to establish an Education for All Task & Finish Group to develop and evaluate policy options and proposed programmes;
- (b) That Councillors: Paul Cunningham, Dave Mackie and Mr. David Hytch be nominated to sit on the Education for All Task & Finish Group; and
- (c) That the Facilitator contact the Committee Members, not present, to ask if they would like to volunteer to sit on the Education for All Task & Finish Group

13. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the forward work programme of the Committee. She reminded members that an all Member Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programme workshop would be held on 22 July 2015 to consider the impact of budget cuts and to populate the Forward Work Programmes for Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

The Facilitator advised that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 17 September 2015 and advised that an item on Service Level Agreements had been listed so far for consideration.

Councillor Nancy Matthews requested that the Committee receive a report on licenced school deficits at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

14. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 3.37pm)

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Chairman