

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 MARCH 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Tuesday, 15 March 2016.

PRESENT: Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Andy Dunbobbin, David Healey, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie, Nancy Matthews, Vicky Perfect and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Janine Beggan, David Hytch, Rebecca Stark, Bernard Stuart, and Rev. John Thelwell

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ray Hughes and Carolyn Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), and Senior Manager School Improvement

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, and Committee Officer

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

62. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 December 2015 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters arising

Mrs. Rebecca Stark referred to page 6 of the agenda and said that the school music transport had not been considered by the school transport Task & Finish Group. She asked if this was because the final budget reduction in this service had been reduced. The Chief Officer agreed to pick this up after the meeting and provide an explanation to the Committee.

- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 January 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Page 9: Councillor Paul Cunningham advised that he was a School Governor at Ysgol Gwynedd but was not the Chair of the Governing Body and asked that the minutes be amended to correct this.

- (iii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 January 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to page 18 of the agenda and said that the word 'depravation' should be amended to 'deprivation'. It was agreed that the minutes be amended to reflect this.

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to page 22 of the minutes and said that the reference to 'Mold Alyn School' should read 'The Alun School Mold'. It was agreed that the minutes be amended to correct this.

- (iv) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 January 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Mrs. Janine Beggan said that she had declared a personal interest as family members accessed the school music service. It was agreed that the minutes be amended to reflect this.

- (v) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 February 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

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

63. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced a report to inform the Committee of the requirements on local authorities to produce a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) to demonstrate how they will meet the Welsh Government's outcomes and targets outlined in the Welsh Medium Education Strategy (WMES).

The Chief Officer advised that the report provided specific details about Flintshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, how the Council meets its obligations in promoting Welsh-medium education, assesses the demand for Welsh-medium education, increases the number of pupils accessing their education through the medium of Welsh and improves standards of pupil attainment in both Welsh first and second language. The Chief Officer provided background information and referred to the value and quality of the effective multi-agency partnership working within the Welsh in Education Strategic Forum which creates and monitors the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. The Chief Officer invited the Senior Manager School Improvement to

report on the key successes and challenges in meeting the targets in the Plan for 2015/16 as detailed in the report. She commented on the effective and proactive work of the Welsh in Education Strategic Forum in delivering and monitoring the WESP.

Councillor Chris Bithell commented that the Authority had actively promoted the Welsh language with its partner agencies, however, it was a matter of parental choice as to whether or not parents decided to take up the offer of Welsh education in Flintshire for their children.

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked for information on whether the Welsh primary schools in Flintshire had been categorised as red, amber or green. The Senior Manager School Improvement said she could provide this information following the meeting, but that it was available on the My Local School Wales website. In response to a further concern expressed by Councillor Matthews the Senior Manager School Improvement explained that whilst recruitment into Welsh medium schools was a challenge, headteachers had not expressed any concerns that they had been unable to fill vacancies.

David Hytch commented on the positive benefits of a Welsh medium education and said the performance of pupils in English at Welsh medium schools was amongst the highest in Wales. The Senior Manager School Improvement referred to the Opinion Research Services (ORS) survey undertaken in 2013 where the data confirmed demand in Shotton/Deeside for more local provision of Welsh Medium education. She advised that it was planned to repeat the ORS survey in 2016 to reassess demand to inform future planning for Welsh medium places. The Chief Officer referred to the work undertaken with early years groups to create funding type arrangements around Welsh medium schools to encourage families across the threshold to become involved in activities and part of the Welsh communities. Mrs. Rebecca Stark commented on the need to provide support for parents to enable them to engage with and assist their children through Welsh medium education. The Senior Manager School Improvement explained that schools provided additional support for parents which was promoted within their local communities. During discussion Officers and members also commented on the range of support and courses which were available to adults throughout the County and through Coleg Cambria and Bangor University.

Following a question from Councillor Andy Dunbobbin on data from Ysgol Croes Atti Glannau Dyfrdwy, Claire Homard agreed to check if information on the increase in pupil numbers was included in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

During discussion Officers responded to the questions raised by Councillor Nigel Steele Mortimer around the opportunity to create a hybrid model of schools in the future. The Senior Manager School Improvement said she anticipated that there would be an opportunity in the future to explore a more dual categorisation of schools. Councillor Chris Bithell also commented on the possibility of schools considering forming dual federations with English or Welsh schools in the area.

Councillor Colin Legg expressed his congratulation and thanks to the Chief Officer and his team on progressing Welsh Medium Education in Flintshire. In response to a query raised by Councillor Legg the Chief Officer advised that all documents relating to the Welsh Medium Education Strategic Plan were available in English and Welsh.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee supports the effective, multi-agency, partnership working within the Welsh in Education Strategic Forum which creates and monitors the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan; and
- (b) That the Local Authority be encouraged to offer the same courses made available to officers, to Members of the Council wishing to learn Welsh.

64. SELF-EVALUATION OF EDUCATION SERVICES

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the report and advised that the Council undertakes an annual self-evaluation against the framework for local authority education services established by Estyn. A draft copy of the current self-evaluation 2015/16 was appended to the report which outlined the views and finding of officers and partners regarding the education services operating within Flintshire.

The Chief Officer provided background information and an explanation of the self-evaluation process. He advised that the self-evaluation document outlined the perceived strengths, key issues and challenges and that the resource implications of these would be identified through the development planning process which builds on the self-evaluation. The Chief Officer reported on current performance and the positive improvement in outcomes and areas of risk to be addressed.

Councillor David Healey expressed congratulations to the Chief Officer and his team on the achievements gained. He commented on the positive work undertaken to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and to prevent exclusions and promote good attendance.

Mr. David Hytch raised a concern around the range of languages being offered in schools and the Post 16 Education Centre. Following the further concerns raised by Members the Chair suggested that Mr. Alex Thomas, recently appointed Headteacher at the Post 16 Education Centre, be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be noted; and

- (b) That Mr. Alex Thomas, Headteacher of the Post 16 Education Centre be invited to the next meeting of the Committee on 28 April, 2016 to provide a presentation on the courses available at the Centre.

65. EARLY ENTITLEMENT – CHANGES TO DELIVERY OF TEACHER SUPPORT TO APPROVED SETTINGS

The Senior Manager School Improvement explained that the report had been provided in response to an earlier request by the Committee for a detailed update about the change to the model of service delivery which was run as a pilot during 2014/15. She reported that the change had proven to be successful so has been expanded to include more settings for 2015/16. She advised that it was the view of the service manager that this mixed model of delivery was the way forward to ensure the quality of the service and achieve financial efficiency.

The Senior Manager School Improvement gave an overview of the early entitlement delivery model as detailed in the report and responded to the questions raised by Members around engagement with play group settings. The Senior Manager School Improvement commented that the quality of work and contribution provided through non maintained settings such as play groups was recognised, highly valued, and built on effectively.

RESOLVED

That the Committee support the new mixed model of delivery i.e. a small central core team of expert Early Entitlement teachers and appropriately identified Foundation Phase teachers in schools.

66. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the report to consider the Forward Work Programme for the Committee. She advised that next meeting of the Committee to be held on 24 March 2016, would be a joint meeting with the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Facilitator advised that following a suggestion from the Chair during the meeting Mr. Alex Thomas, Headteacher of the Post 16 Education Centre, would be invited to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 28 April, 2016 to provide a presentation on the courses available at the Centre. She explained that a report detailing the recommendations of the School Transport Task & Finish Group would also be provided to the meeting for consideration prior to being submitted to Cabinet.

Councillor Dave Mackie suggested that the Committee consider a report on the shortage of skilled Welsh medium teachers and in response the Chairman suggested that the following item be included on the Forward Work Programme-

- Skilled Education Workforce Shortage

Councillor Nancy Matthews referred to previous comments made by Mrs. Rebecca Stark regarding the shortage of language skills and suggested that Ian Budd liaise with Mrs. Stark on the concerns from the Deeside Enterprise Zone. Mrs. Rebecca Stark also suggested that this be included within the Skills Shortage report due to be considered by the Committee on 9 June 2016.

The Committee also agreed to invite Huw Foster-Evans to the meeting on 9 June to discuss the update on progress with the development of GwE.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme, as amended at the meeting, be approved.

67. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no members of the public and one member of the press in attendance

(The meeting started at 10.30 am and ended at 12.25 pm)

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Chairman