

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 JULY 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 7 July 2016.

PRESENT: Ian Roberts (Chairman)

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

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Janine Beggan, David Hytch, and Rebecca Stark

APOLOGIES: Councillors Colin Legg and Phil Lightfoot

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Corporate Finance Manager, Finance Manager, and Senior Manager School Improvement. (For minute no.11) Ashley Jones, Chief Officer, Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE).

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, and Committee Officer

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 June 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer referred to page 5 and said that 'Ysgol Trelawnyd' should be amended to read 'Ysgol Trelogan'.

Mr. David Hytch referred to page 9, first paragraph, second line and said that the word 'to' should be amended to read 'the'.

RESOLVED:

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

11. REGIONAL SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT SERVICE (GwE)

The Chair introduced and welcomed Ashley Jones, Chief Officer, Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE), to the meeting and invited him to give a presentation on the Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales. The main points of the presentation were:

- 2015-16 Developments
- the vision
- delivering the vision
- challenge and support programme
- development programmes

Mr. Jones advised that the overall priority of the GwE service was to secure improved outcomes for learners across the region from Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

The Chair thanked Mr. Jones for his presentation and invited the Committee to raise questions.

Councillor David Healey commented on the need to improve the achievement of children who received free school meals. The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) responded to the concerns raised and referred to the commitment to making a difference in terms of the anti poverty strategy and individual learners on Free School Meals. He commented on the research which had been undertaken and the progress made by schools through the sharing of good practice and the ongoing work with individual learners and learners from low income families. Ashley Jones also commented on the targeting of resources and specific interventions being put in place by schools to narrow the 'gap' in performance between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. He said that he would make a paper that was presented to GwE on good areas of practice, available to Members of the Committee.

Councillor Nancy Matthews expressed concern that children who received free school meals were not made to feel different to those that did not. The Chief Officer said that no individual child should be identified for a specific characteristic and that whenever a child needed support it was provided at that point in time. He suggested that the Committee receive a report on 'Child Centred Planning' and also that the school leaders piloting the scheme be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to share the planning, pioneering, and good practice in education.

In response to the further question which had been raised by Councillor Matthews on school improvement and how intervention by GwE was measured. The Chief Officer referred to the data included on learner outcomes and self evaluation within the annual work programme which had previously been presented to the Committee. Referring to the Authority's Improvement Plan which contained some activities from GwE the Chief

Officer said that additional detail could be included in the Plan in terms of performance indicators for the successful performance of school and the education system. The Chief Officer also suggested that information/analysis on Value for Money in relation to services provided by GwE be included in the next update report.

Councillor David Mackie referred to the Development Programmes, detailed within the presentation, and asked whether information on the take-up of training by Headteachers and teachers could be provided. The Chief Officer agreed to provide this information which could also include feedback from those who had completed the development programmes.

Mrs. Rebecca Stark expressed some concerns around how grant funding was spent. In responding Mr. Jones referred to the monitoring of the PDG grant and explained that the resources made available from the Grant were directed back to the pupils who had generated the grant. The Senior Manager School Improvement explained how the PDG grant was maximised in the early years settings and commented on the impact of a poorer start from birth.

RESOLVED

- (a) That Flintshire's priorities and objectives within the GwE Business Plan be noted;
- (b) That the Committee receives an update on the work to improve Level 2+ outcomes for learners at Key Stage 4 (5 GCSE's A* - C including English/Welsh and Mathematics) in the summer of 2016; and
- (c) That the Committee receives an update on the successful development and delivery of GwE's two integrated core programmes:-
 - the Challenge and Support Programme
 - the Development Programme

12. EDUCATION & YOUTH PORTFOLIO BUDGET 2017/18

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the report to provide an update on the budget pressures and proposed efficiencies for the Education & Youth Portfolio for 2017/18. He provided background information and context and commented on a forecast overall 'gap' between the Authority's anticipated income and predicted cost pressures of £14.4M. This presented a working 'gap' of £8.1M between the forecast 'gap' and the combined total of working corporate and service portfolio efficiency proposals of £6.3M.

The Chief Officer gave a presentation to summarise the progress made by the Education & Youth Portfolio in delivering efficiencies to date, the proposed efficiencies for 2017/18, and the potential cost pressures. The main points of the presentation were:

- Local context – schools
- Local context – portfolio
- Education & Youth Portfolio – efficiencies
- Cost pressures

In line with the information included within the presentation slides, the Chief Officer said that the full resilience statement would be presented at the meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 8 September, 2016.

The Chief Officer also gave a commitment to bring a report on the Alternative Delivery Model for the School Music Service to the Committee during Autumn.

The Chair raised concerns around the location of the GwE development programmes and the associated costs for staff to travel to attend the training. The Chief Officer explained that programmes were delivered in each hub and many meetings were held in the GwE office in Colwyn Bay. He agreed to provide further information on the delivery programme and the location of training programmes.

During discussion the Corporate Finance Manager provided clarification on the queries raised by Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer around the £14.4M gap anticipated between the Authority's income and cost pressures, and the Service portfolio Business Plan projections. In response to the further concerns raised by Councillor Steele-Mortimer around 'small schools' the Corporate Finance Manager gave an assurance that the savings outlined within the presentation did not include further proposals to close schools in Flintshire.

Mr. David Hytch expressed concerns that the Education and Youth Service may have reached a "financial tipping point". The Chief Officer said that the impact of austerity had been felt in all public services but he remained positive that learners would continue to be able to achieve. The Finance Manager commented that primary school balances had increased in comparison to previous years, however, this was not the case in secondary schools and some secondary schools faced a deficit balance.

In response to questions from Mrs. Rebecca Stark on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator agreed to provide the co-opted members of the Committee with a copy of the MTFS report and the minutes from the meeting of the County Council held on 24 September 2015.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin proposed an amendment to the recommendation in the report. He proposed that the Committee supported the proposed efficiencies for 2017/18 in order to mitigate the central Government Austerity Programme. This was seconded by Councillor Carolyn Thomas who proposed a further amendment that the Committee supports further lobbying of the Welsh Government, as it was concerned that the

service was at a financial tipping point. Members were asked to vote on the proposed amendment put forward by Councillor Dunbobbin and when put to the vote this was carried.

Councillors Marion Bateman, Nancy Matthews and David Mackie abstained from the vote because they only agreed with the second recommendation concerning lobbying of the Welsh Government.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee supports the proposed efficiencies for 2017/18, in order to mitigate the central Government Austerity Programme; and
- (b) That the Committee supports further lobbying of Welsh Government, as it is concerned that the Service is at a financial tipping point.

13. 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 following a suggestion from Councillor Nancy Matthews, an item on School Modernisation had been included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 8 September 2016. She also drew attention to the venue for the meeting to be held on 13 October 2016 which was Ysgol y Felin, Holywell, and said a tour of the facility would commence at 1.00 pm.

The Facilitator referred to the items to be scheduled onto the Forward Work Programme and advised that the Audit Committee had recommended that the conclusions of the review of the ETeach System be reported to the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee. She suggested that a workshop be arranged for the Committee in due course on data and self evaluation.

During the course of the meeting it had been agreed that the following items would be added to the forward work programme:-

- 'Child Centred Planning' – and to invite school leaders piloting this scheme to the meeting;
- Resilience Statement
- Alternative Delivery Model for the School Music Service
- GwE Challenge and Support Programme
- GwE Development Programme

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked for information on what measures were taken if schools were not able to set a balanced budget. Councillor Dave Mackie suggested that the school funding formula be reviewed to look at the budget that schools receive in comparison to what they spend. The Finance Manager agreed that this would be a helpful process. The Chair

asked what would happen if a licenced deficit exceeded the highest surplus held at another school. The Chief Officer agreed to provide information on this query and the other matters raised by Members within the school balances report to be submitted to the Committee in November. He also agreed to include information in the report on the work of the School Budget Forum around school budgets.

Councillor Nancy Matthews asked if the Committee could receive an update report on the School Meal Service. It was agreed that the Facilitator would liaise with officers to identify meeting dates for the suggested additional items and send a revised forward work programme to the Committee to ask Members if they had any further items they wished to add.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the amendments to Forward Work Programme be approved;
- (b) That a copy of the Forward Work Programme be shared with Members of the Committee, once meeting dates had been identified for the suggested additional items; and
- (c) That the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and officers, be authorised to vary the work programme between meetings, as the need arises.

14. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public in attendance

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.32 pm)

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Chairman