

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
15 DECEMBER 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Hawarden High School, The Highway, Hawarden, CH5 3DJ on Thursday, 15 December 2016.

PRESENT: Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Paul Cunningham, Adele Davies-Cooke, Andy Dunbobbin, David Healey, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie, Vicky Perfect, and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch, Rebecca Stark and Rev. John Thelwell

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Hilary McGuill (for Nancy Matthews)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Marion Bateman and David Williams. Janine Beggan and Bernard Stuart.

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Education, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Senior Manager School Planning and Provision, and Facilities Operations Manager

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, and Committee Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting a presentation on the Schools Meals Service was given by the School Council. During discussion pupils responded to the questions raised by the Committee. It was agreed that feedback on the comments and suggestions made by the School Council would be provided to the Committee. The Chair thanked the School Council for their presentation.

The Chair also thanked Mr. Paul Ellis, Headteacher, Hawarden High School, for his welcome and hospitality and for providing the opportunity for the Committee to have a tour of the school.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dave Healey declared a declaration of interest in the following item as a School Governor of Castell Alun High School.

Item 4 – School Modernisation Update

Councillor Hilary McGuill declared a declaration of interest as a family member was employed by the school meals service.

Item 3 – School Meals Service

39. SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE

The Facilities Operations Manager introduced the report to provide an update on the School Meals Service. He advised that the report detailed the current performance and the strategic position within the service regarding the creation of a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) for the delivery of Catering and Cleaning services which forms part of the Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) programme.

The Facilities Operations Manager provided background information and reported on operational and strategic matters as detailed in the report. He advised that the commencement date for the new operating model was April 2017. During discussion he responded to the comments and questions raised by members around staff engagement and pre-ordering of meals. Members supported the initiative to enable pupils to pre-order their school meal which assisted management and reduced wastage. The Facilities Operations Manager explained that the facility to pre-order a school meal would be rolled out to all secondary schools in Flintshire during April 2017.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee support the creating of a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) for Catering and Cleaning Services and support officers and Governors to enter into discussions on the length of contract to award the new LATC to provide the sustainability required to support the growth identified in the business plan.

40. SCHOOL MODERNISATION UPDATE

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) gave a verbal update on progress of the School Modernisation Programme. He provided background information and referred to the area review of Brynford CP School, Lixwm CP School and Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor.

The Chief Officer advised that Cabinet, at a meeting held on 13 December 2016, had been requested to consider the responses from the informal consultation period for the area review and also to determine the next steps for school organisational change in the area. The Chief Officer reported that it had been agreed that Cabinet commission consultation on statutory proposals for school organisation change for September 2017 based on the option to provide an Area school on two sites. He explained that there was sufficient evidence and support for Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor, to remain as it was and that Brynford CP and Lixwm CP to amalgamate onto one site. He continued that if proposals for a federation between Brynford CP or Lixwm CP were to be submitted from both governing bodies prior to the consultation on statutory proposals commencing in September 2017, this would be considered by Cabinet at that time.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer asked that if an announcement from the Cabinet Secretary for Education was made on rural schools and federation prior to the next meeting, that this be included in the update on School Modernisation to be submitted to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 19 January 2017.

During discussion Officers responded to the questions and comments raised by members around school amalgamation and federation. The Chief Officer explained that a small fund was available from the Welsh Government (WG) to enable small schools to explore the option of federation with another school if they wished. He confirmed that the option of federation was considered only after all other options available for the school had been exhausted.

The Chief Officer explained that the Council had a long standing policy that was supportive of school federation, however, few Governing Bodies had come forward to promote this. In response to the further comments made by members around promoting support for school federation the Chief Officer referred to the work undertaken by headteachers who were champions of federation under school organisation review and the benefits of shared leadership and collaboration which became a model for federation.

Councillor Colin Legg asked if there was any possibility of the Council recouping money from the sale of Rhes-y-Cae school following its investment some years ago. The Senior Manager School Planning and Provision agreed to provide the Committee with a written response following the meeting.

RESOLVED

That progress of the School Modernisation Programme be noted.

41. QUARTER 2/MID-YEAR IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the report to present the monitoring of progress for the second quarter of the Improvement Plan 2016/17 priority 'Skills and Learning' relevant to the Committee. He explained that it was a positive report with almost all activities being assessed as making good progress and the majority of performance indicators met or exceeding target. He gave an overview of the report and referred to the two major risk areas around skills and learning as detailed in the report.

During discussion Officers responded to the questions and comments raised by members around the backlog in repair and maintenance works of school buildings. The Chief Officer also responded in detail to the concerns made by Mr. David Hytch around school leadership appointments, the difficulties experienced by secondary schools in recruiting teachers/heads of

department in specialist subjects, and the support and challenge provided to schools by GwE.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

42. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Education and Youth, introduced the report to update the Committee on the changes in the guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP). He provided background information and explained that the deadline for Flintshire's draft WESP 2017-2020 to be submitted to the Welsh Government (WG) was 20 December 2016. The draft Plan would then be submitted for a period of consultation with a prescribed list of stakeholders. Pending final approval from WG, the Plan will be operational from 1 April 2017 and published on the Authority's website by 1 June 2017.

Councillor Bithell referred to the WG draft national strategy to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050. He said that to meet this target and secure use of the language in the long term, it was acknowledged that children and young people in Wales must be given the chance to improve and extend their use of Welsh through a variety of ways. Key to this was improving learners' outcomes in Welsh and increasing the number of children accessing their education through the medium of Welsh.

Councillor Bithell advised that following a review of current strategies, including a thematic review by Estyn, Flintshire had received positive feedback regarding its effective partnership working and ambition for Welsh Medium education in the County. He reported that the WG and Estyn had issued revised guidance to local authorities for drafting new WESP plans and Estyn's recommendations were outlined in paragraph 1.03 of the report. Councillor Bithell explained that the draft Plan had been produced by the Senior Manager for School Improvement with the active participation and contribution of dedicated partners including representatives of Welsh and English medium schools and key organisations. The Plan outlined the Council's vision statement and commitment in supporting the Welsh language and Welsh medium education and contained an action plan detailing how it would achieve the key outcomes determined by the WG.

During discussion Mr. David Hytch commented that over 80% of pupils in Welsh-medium education came from English speaking homes. Referring to the key outcome on workforce planning and continuing professional development listed in section 1.08 of the report, he commented on the difficulties being experienced in recruitment at all levels in the Welsh medium sector. Mr. Hytch drew attention to the principles that all learners become proficient in Welsh and English listed in section 1.07 of the report and asked whether this was a realistic ambition.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the changes in the guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans be noted; and
- (b) That the draft statutory Welsh in Education Strategic Plan be endorsed.

43. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced the report to consider the Forward Work Programme for the Committee. She referred to the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 19 January 2017 and explained it was suggested that the 'Draft 2017/18 Revenue Budget' item be removed from the Plan following approval of Stages 1 and 2 of the Draft Revenue Budget 2017/18 at County Council. This was agreed by the Committee and it was also agreed that the Facilitator would send a copy of the County Council report on Stage 2 of the Draft Revenue Budget 2017/18 to the co-opted Members.

The Facilitator reminded members that it had been proposed that the meeting of the Committee to be held on 2 February 2017 be held at Sychdyn Primary School. It was agreed that the Facilitator would contact the School to ask if this was possible.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be approved; and
- (b) That the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair and officers, be authorised to vary the work programme between meetings, as the need arises.

44. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

(The meeting started at 2.30 pm and ended at 4.45 pm)

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Chairman