

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 JANUARY 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire on Thursday, 19 January 2017.

PRESENT: Ian Roberts (Chairman)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Paul Cunningham, Adele Davies-Cooke, Andy Dunbobbin, David Healey, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie, and David Williams

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: David Hytch and Rebecca Stark

APOLOGIES: Councillors Nancy Matthews, Vicky Perfect and Nigel Steele-Mortimer. Janine Beggan and Bernard Stuart.

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, and Committee Officer

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

46. MINUTES

- (i) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 November 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Accuracy

Councillor David Williams referred to his comments around the proposed location of the new school in Pen-y-ffordd and the level of consultation with local Members. He asked that the minutes be amended to record the comments and concerns he had expressed during the meeting. He had prepared a copy of the comments made, a copy of which was circulated at the beginning of the meeting. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) responded to the comments made by Councillor Williams and it was agreed that the amendments be accepted subject to the responses provided by the Chief Officer being included.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin asked that his question around what professional qualifications Councillor Williams had be included in the proposed amendments.

Councillor Williams thanked the officers for the work they had carried out at Pen-y-ffordd. He said that he still had concerns but now was the time to move forward.

- (ii) The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 December 2016 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Matters arising

In response to a question from Mr. David Hytch around the opportunity for schools to sign up to a Service Level Agreement for catering services, the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) explained that schools would be invited to sign up to the new Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) for the delivery of catering and cleaning services. The commencement date for the new operating model was April 2017, however, a briefing session would be held for headteachers and School Governors next week to outline the process and address any queries.

RESOLVED:

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

47. 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 at the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 December 2016, it had been determined that consultation on statutory proposals for school organisation change for September 2017 be based on Option B – area school on two sites as the preferred option. Ysgol Rhos Helyg, Rhosesmor, would remain as it is, retaining its name, category, budget, governors, and staff and would remain in its community. Brynford CP and Lixwm CP would amalgamate onto one site. The amalgamated school would retain its category but would have a new name, governing body, headteacher, and budget, and would remain in one of the communities, either Brynford or Lixwm. The Chief Officer advised that if proposals for a federation between Brynford CP and Lixwm CP were to be submitted prior to consultation on statutory proposals commencing in September 2017, these would be considered by Cabinet.

Councillor Dave Mackie asked how the proposals would progress if Brynford CP and Lixwm CP did not put forward a proposal for federation. The Chief Officer commented on the Council's long standing policy that was supportive of school federation and referred to the statutory consultation process which had taken place and the options considered which included federation and amalgamation.

Councillor David Williams asked for assurance that the Community Youth football pitch in the village of Pen-y-ffordd and the school football pitch and adult changing rooms would be retained. The Senior Manager School Planning and Provision advised that there were no plans to remove the facilities from the school.

RESOLVED

That progress of the School Modernisation Programme be noted.

48. REGIONAL SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVEMENT SERVICE (GwE)

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced the report to inform the Committee of the GwE Challenge and Support Programme for schools. He provided background information and referred to the key considerations which were detailed in the report. The Chief Officer advised that the report included an updated business planning appendix which identified the key priorities for Flintshire from autumn 2016 and the outcome measures which will be used to judge its success. The annual GwE updated self-evaluation for the service will be submitted to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 8 June 2017.

The Chief Officer advised that the overarching priority of the Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) was to secure improved outcomes for learners across the region at all key stages. He explained that GwE advisors had undertaken a focused visit to all secondary schools in the Spring Term to undertake a review of the schools progress in meeting their L2+ targets, monitoring the schools own tracking procures and collating the results already secured through early entry examinations. He commented on the need to focus on how GwE worked with secondary schools and explained that GwE was in the main a primary service and spoke on the issues of balance between primary and secondary schools.

Mr. David Hytch referred to the vision of the Council, as linked to the Improvement Plan, which states that all Flintshire pupils experience learning which matches their individual needs (academic, emotional, social and cultural). He welcomed this vision but raised concerns that GwE put a great deal of emphasis on the academic aspects but it was important to understand that a school covers all of the needs outlined within the vision. He also questioned the consistency of GwE. He said that he understood that GwE were subject to resource and manpower constraints but felt that frequent change in officers created inconsistency which was not constrictive and hoped this would improve in the future.

The Chief Officer responding and acknowledges the comments made around consistency. He said that the key part of the work currently being undertaken was around developing the performance management arrangements for the region to ensure that challenge advisors have the

relevant equipment/tools to carry out their role in a consistent manner. He also acknowledged the comments around the Council's vision and said that some schools were already living up to the vision and expectations of the Council but that this had to be replicated across Flintshire.

Councillor Dave Mackie expressed concerns around the progress which had been achieved in schools since the introduction of GwE which he felt was not as good as expected. He commented on how the effectiveness of the GwE service was measured and monitored and said there was evidence of a fall in exam results in Flintshire from the data provided which concerned him given the level of funding provided to GwE from the Council.

The Chief Officer explained that the progress which had been achieved in schools had been due to a 'team effort' and referred to the contributory factors involved. He also thanked Members of the Committee who sat on the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) for their role in ensuring improvements in schools. He acknowledges that GwE had predominately focused on the primary school sector and that during the GwE Leadership Team meeting scheduled for the following week, discussions would be held around the need to ensure GwE fulfilled their role within the secondary sector moving forward. He suggested that the reviewed arrangement for the scrutiny of GwE be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Mackie raised concerns that since the introduction of GwE in 2012/13, results in Flintshire had slightly declined. Other than in Conwy County Borough Council, every other County in Wales had seen an improvement in their results. The Chief Officer commented on the need for improvements in the tracking of school results which was currently being addressed. He explained that secondary schools in Flintshire had seen an increase in results prior to other local authorities across Wales and since this period the results across Flintshire had been maintained. He agreed that a push to continue to improve results was needed. The Cabinet Member for Education explained that current projections from recent visits to all secondary schools showed a 66% target at L2+ which was just above the target.

In response to concerns raised around the retention of teaching staff, the Chief Officer explained that a report to provide information on how the Council was addressing the current skilled education workforce shortage would be submitted to the next Committee meeting scheduled for 2 February, 2017.

Councillor David Healey concurred with the views expressed by Members concerning the effectiveness of GwE and the support mechanisms it provided to schools. He suggested that school governing bodies should also be proactive in challenging GwE.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee receives the updated business plan for Flintshire as appended to the report; and

- (b) That the comments of the Committee be reported back to the GwE Leadership Team and Joint Committee through the Chief Officer and Cabinet Member.

49. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL (WALES) BILL

The Chief Officer introduced the report to update the Committee on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill. He provided background information and advised that if enacted the Bill would have a significant impact on the delivery of support for ALN. The Chief Officer said whilst many of the principles were welcomed there were key questions around implementation, development, capacity, and resourcing, that needed to be resolved. He reported on the main considerations as detailed in the report and the core aims which had been established.

Councillor Chris Bithell referred to the aim to have a single legislative system relating to the support given to children and young people aged 0 to 25 who have ALN. He commented on the additional responsibilities and resource implications for the Council at a time of financial restraint and said there had been no indication as yet of any additional funding from the WG to meet the extra demand on the service. Councillor Andy Dunbobbin reiterated the concerns expressed by Councillor Bithell concerning the resources and financial implications of supporting young people up to 25 years.

Mr. David Hytch welcomed the Bill but raised concerns around how to determine what the special need was and how to address it. He expressed the need for school governing bodies to be supported in the process.

Councillor Dave Mackie proposed that the recommendation as outlined within the report be amended to reflect the Committee's wish that sufficient resources/funding be made available to support the aims of the proposed ALN Bill. This was agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee support the need for sufficient resources/funding to be made available from the Welsh Government following the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill; and
- (b) That an update report on implementation plans arising from the legislation be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

50. 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 2 February 2017

and explained that it had been proposed that the meeting be held at Sychdyn CP, however, in order to avoid disruption to school pupils, this was no longer possible and the meeting would be held at County Hall, Mold, instead.

Councillor Marion Bateman reported that the pupils at Sychdyn CP who had relocated from Ysgol Maes Edwin, Flint had settled in and were doing very well.

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.

51. 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 3.30 pm)

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Chairman