

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 OCTOBER 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, 5 October 2017.

PRESENT: David Healey (Chairman)

Councillors: Geoff Collett, Patrick Heesom, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie, and Ian Smith

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Lynn Bartlett and David Hytch

SUBSTITUTION: Councillors Mike Allport (for Sian Braun), and Gladys Healey (for Andy Dunbobbin)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Cindy Hinds, and Carolyn Thomas

APOLOGIES: Councillor David Williams. Mrs Rebecca Stark. Interim Chief Officer (Education and Youth)

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Aaron Shotton (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Ian Roberts (Cabinet Member for Education), Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Corporate Finance Manager, Finance Manager (Education & Youth), Senior Manager School Improvement Systems, and Senior Manager, School Planning and Provision. (For minute No.19) Mr Alwyn Lloyd Jones – Assistant Director for GwE, Mr Elfyn Vaughan Jones – Regional Secondary Lead for GwE, and Mr Martyn Froggett – Secondary Core Lead for Flintshire

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ian Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – School Transport Commissioning and Operating, due to the close association of a family member.

Councillor Tudor Jones declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – School Organisation, as a local Ward Member for a school mentioned within the report.

Councillor Patrick Heesom also declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – School Organisation, as a Member who attended school governor meetings.

Mr. David Hytch declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, as Chair of Governors of the federated school mentioned in the report.

16. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 July 2017 had been circulated to Members with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. SCHOOL TRANSPORT COMMISSIONING AND OPERATIONS UPDATE

The Chief Executive referred to the supporting paper which had been distributed at the meeting to provide an update on the re-procurement of transportation routes by the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU). He advised that the purpose of the paper was to explain recent events and operational challenges during the transition to the new transportation routes and operators, to provide assurance that the services had returned to normal, and to consider how to improve arrangements for the future.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) explained that the Council had faced a unique set of circumstances due to a move to a new method of procurement, the retendering of all routes as a single exercise, and managing the transition during the schools Summer recess. He reported on the transition to new transportation routes and operators, the challenges experienced, and the key improvements for the future. In conclusion the Chief Officer gave an assurance that there had been no risk to pupils and school transport provision had been maintained throughout the transition process.

Councillor Aaron Shotton commented on the need for review and rationalisation of school transportation provision and said a number of anomalies within the existing operating arrangements had been identified. The review had resulted in a number of improvements which would minimise risk and maximise quality of service provision for the future.

RESOLVED:

That the update report be noted.

18. FINANCIAL FORECAST AND STAGE ONE OF THE BUDGET 2018/19

The Chief Executive introduced the report on the current financial forecast position for 2018/19 and on the Stage 1 Council Fund Revenue budget proposals for 2018/19. He provided background information and context and advised that the emergent options for the Education and Youth portfolio, the financial pressures, and the timeline for the budget setting process were set out within the report. The Chief Executive also referred to the Education and Youth Operating Model and Resilience Statement which

were appended to the report. He advised that the Provisional Local Government Settlement for Wales was due to be announced on 10 October.

The Corporate Finance Manager reported on the financial forecast and the national, local, inflation and workforce pressures, as detailed in the report specific to the Education and Youth portfolio. The Finance Manager reported on the current pressures in relation to Schools Budget.

In response to a comment by Councillor Patrick Heesom concerning Youth Service provision the Chief Executive gave an assurance that the provision in the base budget, as it stands, would be retained.

Lynn Bartlett expressed concerns on the impact of reducing nursery education and commented on the long term value of education in the early years.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee is satisfied with the approach being taken to Stage One of the Budget within the Education portfolio.

19. REVISED REGIONAL MODEL FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SUPPORT

The Chief Executive introduced a report to provide an overview of the new arrangements within the Regional School Improvement Service to give greater support to secondary schools, that came into effect in September 2017.

The Interim Senior Manager School Improvement Systems explained that a recent review of school performance by GwE highlighted concerns about secondary school performance across the North Wales region. The review also concluded that the original operating model of an 80/20 split of resources in favour of primary schools was no longer fit for purpose and that more resources needed to be directed towards secondary schools to secure rapid improvement. She introduced Mr Alwyn Lloyd Jones – Assistant Director for GwE, Mr Elfyn Vaughan Jones – Regional Secondary Lead for GwE, and Mr Martyn Froggett – Secondary Core Lead for Flintshire, and invited them to report on the rationale for change and provide an overview of how the revised regional model for secondary school support would be implemented.

Councillor Dave Mackie commented on secondary school performance in Flintshire and provided information on the percentage of students achieving level 2 plus from 2013 and 2016 in secondary schools as an example of his concerns. In responding to the issues raised, officers from GwE acknowledged the need for improvement and said progress was being made. GwE officers also gave an assurance that Flintshire secondary schools were performing well in comparison to other authorities.

During discussion officers responded to the further comments and concerns raised around the data provided in the report concerning the performance of schools based on free school meals benchmarks and eligibility.

Mr. David Hytch raised the issue of teacher recruitment and commented on the problem of recruitment of teachers in specialist subjects, citing Maths as an example. Councillor Ian Roberts concurred with the comments made by Mr. Hytch on the issue of the recruitment and retention of teachers in Flintshire schools and suggested that the Committee may wish to send a further letter to the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Education to outline its concerns and this was agreed by the Committee. It was also agreed that the Facilitator would circulate a copy of the previous letter which had been sent to the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Minister's response.

During discussion the further issues of support for headteachers, the health and wellbeing of school staff, work-life balance, and sustainable leadership programmes, were raised.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the changes to the regional support model for secondary school support;
- (b) That the Committee acknowledges the enhanced support for secondary schools and the changes designed to improve school performance in Flintshire; and
- (c) That the Facilitator writes to the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Education, on behalf of the Committee, outlining its concerns around teacher recruitment.

20. LEARNER OUTCOMES 2017

The Interim Senior Manager School Improvement Systems presented a report to inform the Committee of the validated learner outcomes for Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, and to share the provisional learner outcomes at Key Stage 4 and 5. She advised that the report also compared Flintshire's performance to other Councils in the North Wales region and across Wales as a whole.

The Interim Senior Manager provided background information and explained that attached to the report were individual annexes which provided detailed analysis of the performance of each key stage for 2017 including comparisons to the previous year and to the current Welsh averages. The Committee were asked to note the attainment of Flintshire children and young people for the 2016-17 in Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and the provisional data for Key Stages 4 and 5.

Councillor Ian Roberts paid tribute to the hard work of schools in achieving good and improved performance, above expected levels, in all indicators in the Foundation Phase and Key Stages 2 and 3. Flintshire's provisional performance at Key Stages 4 and 5 was also noted. He suggested that the Committee may wish to express its congratulations and thanks to schools for their hard work and achievements.

During discussion the Interim Senior Manager responded to the comments made around the difference in attainment in Welsh between boys and girls, and the change in ranking for Information Technology in 2017.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Committee notes the attainment of Flintshire children and young people for the year 2016-17 in Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, and the provisional data for Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5; and
- (b) That the Committee receive the validated attainment figures for Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 at a future meeting.

21. SCHOOL ORGANISATION

The Senior Manager, School Planning and Provision, introduced a report to provide an update on Federation and other school organisation proposals.

The Senior Manager provided background information and context and referred to the key considerations, as detailed in the report, concerning the capital improvement project at Connah's Quay High School, which also encompassed works to demolish parts of the former John Summers High School building, and the proposed scheme at Penyffordd to amalgamate the current split-site arrangement and bring all primary provision onto one site.

During discussion the Senior Manager responded to the comments and concerns raised around Federations and school organisation. He advised that an update on Federation school organisation issues, both nationally and locally, was appended to the report.

RESOLVED

That the progress of the School Modernisation Programme be noted.

22. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration.

During discussion Councillor Ian Roberts advised that the Welsh Government had halted proposed changes to the Curriculum and therefore the Curriculum Reform item scheduled for the 23 November meeting should be removed from the forward work programme for the time being.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That subject to the above the Committee approved the draft Forward Work programme; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

23. ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.47 pm)

.....
Chairman