

EDUCATION AND YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 NOVEMBER 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Room, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire at 2pm on Thursday, 1 November 2018

PRESENT: Councillor David Healey (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Geoff Collett, Paul Cunningham, Dave Hughes, Kevin Hughes, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith, and Martin White

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Lynn Bartlett and Rebecca Stark

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Gladys Healey (for Andy Dunbobbin) and Chris Dolphin (for Tudor Jones)

APOLOGIES: Councillor David Williams. Mr David Hytch

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Ian Roberts, Cabinet Member for Education; Chief Officer (Education & Youth); and Finance Manager. (For minute No.24) Mr David Edwards – Primary Core Lead for Flintshire (GwE) and Mr Martyn Froggett – Secondary Core Lead for Flintshire (GwE)

IN ATTENDANCE: Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs Rebecca Stark declared a personal interest on agenda item 5 – Learner Outcomes 2018 (Provisional).

22. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018, were submitted.

Matters arising

Referring to the concerns expressed by the Committee around recruitment and retention of teachers and the differentials between classroom teachers and those at managerial levels, the Chief Officer (Education and Youth) provided feedback on the meeting of the Secondary Headteachers Federation held on 17 October 2018. She advised that the subject areas which were most difficult to recruit to were Maths, Science and Welsh. Headteachers also reported a lack of willingness to take on leadership of pastoral systems in some schools. Headteachers advised that the offer of the additional funding through the Teaching and Learning Responsibility points was not enough to encourage people to apply for these roles, citing the additional responsibility, particularly where there was high and public accountability in core subjects, as the main reason. School Leaders also found it difficult, with reducing budgets,

not only to afford the TLR payments but also to ensure the appropriate level of non-contact time to enable middle leaders to fulfil these responsibilities.

RESOLVED:

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

23. BUDGET 2019/20 STAGE 2 PROPOSALS

The Chief Officer introduced the report on the stage 2 budget proposals for the Education & Youth Portfolio for 2019/20. She provided background information and referred to the financial forecast and stage 1 proposals and the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement which advised of a 1% reduction and said that this would impact negatively on the forecast gap for 2019/20. The Chief Officer commented on the latest budget statement which was announced by the Chancellor this week and the potential for additional funding to be made available to local authorities by the Welsh Government (WG).

The Chief Officer invited the Finance Manager to report on the risks and resilience levels of service areas within the Education portfolio. The Finance Manager commented on the detailed resilience statements which had been prepared for each service area during the Summer and said this had confirmed that there was limited scope for any further operational efficiencies with the portfolio. She explained that the Authority currently faced a 1% (£1.9m) reduction in funding allocation from the WG and as a result there was no additionality for any budget pressures, including the teachers' pay award.

The Chief Officer and Finance Manager referred to the main considerations, as detailed in the report, and reported on portfolio pressures and investments, teachers pay award, teacher pensions, and portfolio business planning efficiencies.

Following the comments from members thanking the Education & Youth Team for their hard work during the financial challenges, the Chief Officer agreed to pass the comments on following the meeting.

Councillor Kevin Hughes asked if the Authority worked collaboratively with other local authorities to achieve savings on out of county placements. The Chief Officer said that the cost of out of county placements was a national issue and explained that discussions were taking place at a regional level around the possibility of creating regional provision. She commented that the main area of challenge was around emotional and challenging behaviour and referred to the cost of staffing levels required to provide one to one support and 24 hour care. During discussion the Chief Officer said that prevention and intervention was key and referred to the work undertaken to support schools around early identification and intervention. She also referred to the role of the Pupil Referral Unit and the outreach work which was undertaken.

Councillor Ian Roberts commented on the impact of cuts in funding which meant there were less resources available to provide support to schools. He also commented on the pressure on teachers who had to deal with the challenging behaviour of some pupils on a daily basis.

Referring to the cost of out of county placements Councillor Paul Cunningham suggested that the WG be asked to put a financial cap on providers of out of county placements. The Chief Officer suggested that the Head of Inclusion Service raise this suggestion during the next regional meeting with neighbouring authority colleagues and WG representatives.

Mrs Rebecca Stark asked if there was evidence of a correlation between an increase in the number of children in referrals during the time of funding cuts to schools. In acknowledging the point the Chief Officer said that whilst there had not been a significant increase in the level of referrals this was not the only factor and commented on the challenges young people faced and the reluctance of teaching staff to take on a pastoral role engaging with organisations and families. She continued that on a national level schools were being encouraged to write to their Assembly Member and invite them to visit schools to see the impact of decisions around funding.

In response to a concern raised by Councillor Gladys Healey around addressing the challenging behaviour of some pupils in secondary schools, the Chief Officer gave reassurance that primary schools worked hard with children at a young age to modify behaviour and referred to the strategies and interventions which were used by schools to improve challenging behaviour.

Councillor Kevin Hughes referred to comments made during the recent Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and the need for a sustained, collective PR campaign to ensure members of the public understood the financial challenges facing the Council.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the portfolio efficiency options, as shown in the report; and
- (b) That Members agree to seek to raise public awareness about the implications of the current financial challenges for services.

24. LEARNER OUTCOMES 2018 (PROVISIONAL)

The Chief Officer (Education and Youth) introduced Mr David Edwards, Primary Core Lead for Flintshire, and Mr Martyn Froggett, Secondary Core Lead for Flintshire (GwE) to the meeting.

The Chief Officer presented the report to update the Committee on provision outcome achieved by learners in Flintshire for 2018 across all phases of Education. She provided background information and advised that following

Welsh Government (WG) consultation on future publication of teacher assessments, the WG no longer published comparative Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 data at school, local authority, and consortia level and therefore beyond a comparison with national averages there was no comparative or benchmarking information available. As a result of the changes announced by the WG in the reporting of data, Chief Officers for Education in North Wales had agreed that a standard scrutiny report would be produced by GwE to ensure compliance with the changes and a consistent approach across the region covering all data sets. A detailed overview of Flintshire's performance was contained in the appendix to the report.

The Chief Officer reported on the main considerations in the report and advised that overall Flintshire outcomes across all key stages remained strong and performance compared well to national and regional averages. She drew attention to the reform of GCSEs at Key Stage 4 and the impact of the introduction of the new GCSE suite of qualifications in Science, as detailed in the report. The Chief Officer explained that there had been significant change to grade boundaries since Summer 2017 and November 2017 compared to Summer 2018, particularly at C grade in English and Mathematics which had made it difficult for schools to ensure accurate projections and target setting. She explained that this issue was currently the subject of ongoing official communication between the WG and Qualification Wales.

In response to a question from Rebecca Stark, the Chief Officer agreed to circulate a copy of the response from the WJEC to the letter sent by Head Teachers, to the Committee.

Mr David Edwards referred to the changes to areas of learning in the Foundation Phase and advised that when benchmarked against the national averages schools in Flintshire were performing well. He continued that Flintshire's Key Stage 2 results remained strong and the percentage of pupils achieving the expected and higher levels was above the national average for all core subjects.

On the subject of school Leadership Mr. Edwards reported that there was continued interest in teachers who aspired to leadership and headship positions and said that the percentage of applicants from Flintshire was higher than in other regions.

Mr Martyn Froggett provided contextual information regarding KS4 and said that whilst initial information regarding results was shared there was no access so far to comparative and benchmarking data. He continued that on most performance indicators the performance of Flintshire schools was above the national average in comparison with 2017 (based on provisional data). He explained that the decrease in performance in English was currently the subject of ongoing discussions with Qualifications Wales and the WJEC following serious concerns raised by schools across the region where the performance of schools had been impacted by the timing of entry and the increase in requirements for grade boundaries in the Summer sitting. This also impacted

on performance at level 2+ where English was a key component of the measure.

In response to the concerns expressed by Rebecca Stark on the impact of the change to grade boundaries on pupils, the Chief Officer referred to the concerns which were raised by Headteachers at the recent meeting of the Secondary Headteachers Federation and said she would seek permission from the Federation to share its letter to the WJEC with the Committee.

The Chief Officer acknowledged the further comments expressed by Councillor Dave Mackie on the impact of the change to grade boundaries and his concerns that pupils had been 'let down' by the system. She advised that a response had been received from the WJEC to the immediate concerns which had been expressed by Flintshire schools and GwE and said this was currently being debated and that lobbying against the change would continue. Following a request from Rebecca Stark, the Chief Officer agreed to circulate a copy of the response from the WJEC to the Committee.

Councillor Paul Cunningham suggested that a letter be sent to the WJEC to outline the Committee's concerns. Councillor Ian Roberts proposed that representatives of the WJEC be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to enable members to express their concerns on the issue of the change to grade boundaries and the monopoly held by the WJEC. The Committee agreed that the Facilitator, on behalf of the Chairman, would write to the WJEC to invite a representative to attend a future meeting to discuss the recent English change boundaries and the monopoly of the WJEC. Following a further suggestion by Councillor Ian Roberts the Committee also agreed that if the invitation was accepted, that the Secondary Headteachers Federation also be invited to nominate a representative(s) to attend the meeting to outline their concerns to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the attainment of Flintshire children and young people for the year 2017-18 in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and the provisional data for Key Stage 4 be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee invite a representative of the WJEC and a representative of the Head Teacher Federation to attend a future meeting to discuss the recent English change boundaries and the monopoly of the WJEC.

25. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration

Following a request by Councillor Mackie, it was agreed that a report on the ADTRAC initiative involving European social funding mechanisms to meet

the needs of young people would be added to the Forward Work Programme as an item to be considered at the meeting to be held on 16th May 2019.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme as amended, be approved; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

26. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.50pm)

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Chairman