

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 DECEMBER 2021

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 2 December 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor David Healey (Chair)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom
Joe Johnson, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie and Martin White

CO-OPTED MEMBER:

Lynn Bartlett

SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Sean Bibby (for Councillor Ian Smith)

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Gladys Healey and Mrs Wendy White

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
Chief Officer (Education & Youth); Senior Manager for School Improvement (for
agenda items 5 and 6) and Peter Hawley (CQ High School) (for agenda item for 5)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services
Officer

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

31. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2021 were received.

Matters arising:

On page 9 the Chair referred to a recent joint statement released by the Association of Directors of Education and the Directors of Social Services in Wales on elective home education. He said that this was a robust statement urging Welsh Government (WG) to take action on the registration of home educated children. This has been pressed by the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the Chair said the Committee looked forward to this progressing.

Mrs. Lynne Bartlett referred to the first sentence in the sixth paragraph on page 10 of the minutes and asked if the word classroom could be changed to school. This was agreed.

Subject to the amendment listed above, the minutes were moved as a correct record by Councillor Janet Axworthy and seconded by Councillor Martin White.

RESOLVED:

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

32. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the report confirming the amendments made to the Forward Work Programme since the last meeting. As there were a number items listed for the February meeting, the School Modernisation update had been moved to the June meeting. The Facilitator added that further changes to the Forward Work Programme may be required due to the Local Government Elections in May. She would be liaising with the Chair and Chief Officer on this and would report back to the Committee.

Referring to the Action Tracking Report the Facilitator confirmed that the Workshop on the “#Be Kind Pledge and Social Media” was in the process of being organised and once confirmed the date would be circulated to all Members. The Facilitator confirmed that the majority of the actions outlined were completed, with letters being sent to Mr. Jeremy Miles AM, the Minister for Education, on Elective Home Education and the School Enrichment Programmes and a copy of these would be circulated to Members for information.

In relation to the one outstanding action, the Facilitator confirmed that the Senior Manager for School Improvement had provided Councillor Dave Mackie with the requested information, therefore this action was now completed.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Councillor David Mackie and Councillor Janet Axworthy.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (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; and
- (c) That the progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

33. SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN IN EDUCATION UPDATE

Prior to the introduction of the report, the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) welcomed Mr. Peter Hawley from Connah’s Quay High School to the meeting who had been invited to provide information on his role in supporting Service children at the School.

The Senior Manager for School Improvement introduced a report to provide the Committee with an overview of how the Education and Youth Portfolio was supporting schools who had pupils who identified as Service children. The report also outlined how funding for Council had been allocated across Flintshire Schools and work carried out alongside Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru to collect data on the number and location of Service children in Wales.

The Senior Manager explained that since the commencement of the programme in 2014 the SSCE Cymru had worked as part of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to support and provide a resource base for all Local Authorities and independent schools in Wales. Talking to Service children to gain an understanding of their experiences had enabled better support to be provided to help them and the Senior Manager confirmed that that she sat on the Flintshire Armed Forces Forum and outlined areas where Flintshire was represented which enabled the best support and guidance to be provided to schools moving forward.

Councillor Dave Mackie thanked the Senior Manager for the report. He referred to the SSCE Cymru website and asked if Flintshire was involved with the Armed Forces Friendly Schools programme. In response, the Senior Manager explained that there were many organisations and committed professionals trying to move this forward and that being recognised for best practice was something Schools were aiming for. She suggested that a further report to outline the priority actions of Schools following an audit be presented to the Committee in the spring 2022.

Councillor Tudor Jones commented on the way funding was allocated and disbursed to individual Schools and suggested that additional funding would be required in the case of a major conflict. The Senior Manager agreed to feedback this suggestion to SSCE Cymru following the meeting.

The Chairman invited Mr. Peter Hawley to address the Committee. Mr. Hawley provided an overview of his military service as a Sergeant Major with the Yorkshire Regiment retiring after 25 years in 2012. He had toured all over the world with Iraq and Afghanistan his most recent tours. He explained that during his time in the military he had 60 men under his command and he had worked to ensure that their lives ran as smoothly as possible as many had young families at home whilst they were away in combat. He spoke about the impact on his own family whilst he was in the military and the impact on his children whilst being taught about wars in School. Mr. Hawley also spoke of his time at Connah's Quay High School explaining that he had worked as a technician within the Engineering Department. He explained that during his time supporting Service children, he had spoken often with the children and had encouraged their parents to contact him. He had organised breakfast clubs where soldiers had been invited to speak to the children about their similar experiences. He also commented on his volunteering work within the community for homeless Soldiers and raising money for the charity Minds at War.

The Chief Officer thanked Mr. Hawley for his attendance and presentation and said that you could not fail to be moved by his experiences, especially the impacts his military service had had on his family. She said that this demonstrated why the

work in Schools was important to ensure the necessary skills were available to support Service children. She was grateful to Mr. Hawley for the support he was providing to the children at Connah's Quay.

The Leader of the Council said that it was a great pleasure to welcome Mr. Hawley to the meeting and commented that he had met Mr. Hawley during a visit to the School Holiday Enrichment Programme at Connah's Quay High School. He commented on the important work being carried out by Mr. Hawley and thanked him for his courtesy and time during the visit to the School.

A number of Members echoed the comments made by the Chief Officer and Leader of the Council and thanked Mr. Hawley for the support he was providing. The Chairman welcomed the opportunity to consider the topic, which had not been presented to the Committee previously and praised the Education and Youth Portfolio officers for presenting the report and raising the profile of support for Service children.

The Leader of the Council suggested, if permitted, that the Committee visit the School Holiday Enrichment Programme as he had learnt a great deal about the support provided to Service children whilst visiting the Programme. The Facilitator suggested that this be added to the Forward Work Programme with a note to say that, if allowed, next year that some Members of the Committee attend the School Holiday Enrichment Programme.

It was suggested that the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, write to Mr. Peter Hawley and Connah's Quay High School to thank him for his presentation and for the work being undertaken to support Service children In Education and also that the Chairman of the Council also be asked to write to Mr. Peter Hawley and Connah's Quay High School to thank him for his presentation. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Peter Hawley for his attendance.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, including the additional recommendation to write to Mr. Peter Hawley, were moved and seconded by Councillor Janet Axworthy and Councillor Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee note and commend the progress of the work of the Education and Youth Portfolio in supporting schools to meet the needs of Service children in Education;
- (b) That the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, write to Mr. Peter Hawley and Connah's Quay High School to thank him for his presentation and for the work being undertaken to support Service children In Education; and
- (c) That the Chairman of the Council be asked to write to Mr. Peter Hawley and Connah's Quay High School to thank him for his presentation and for the work

being undertaken to support Service children In Education, on behalf of the Council.

34. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC 10 YEAR PLAN 2022 – 2032

Prior to the introduction of the report, Councillor Tudor Jones commented on the Council's commitment to increase the number of fluent Welsh speakers within its schools and extending those Welsh language skills into the wider community. He suggested that the word 'fluent' be removed as he felt that by removing the need for fluent Welsh speakers this would ensure greater participation. He felt that conversational level would be sufficient. Councillor Jones also thanked all Members and officers who had conversed with him in Welsh, regardless of their ability and also thanked the Leader of the Council who he said had been a beacon for Welsh learners in Flintshire.

In response, the Senior Manager for School Improvement thanked Councillor Jones for his suggestion and agreed to feedback this suggestion as part of the consultation process. Both the Leader of the Council and Chief Officer (Education & Youth) spoke in support of the suggestion made by Councillor Jones. The Facilitator said that the suggestion made by Councillor Jones would be picked up as an action from the meeting.

The Senior Manager presented the report which provided the Committee with an overview of the draft plan for the next Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) which would run from September 2022 until 2032. The first ten year plan would commence on 1 September 2022 and expire on 31 August 2032 and the Plan would have to include a target outlining the expected increase in the number of Year 1 learners taught through the medium of Welsh in the local authority area during the lifespan of the Plan. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (Wales) Regulations 2019 were amended, therefore, the current Flintshire WESP cycle was extended by one year and would conclude by September 2022.

The Senior Manager provided information on the well-established and effective Welsh Strategic Forum, which met termly with work programmes developed. The remit of the Forum was outlined within the report.

Councillor Martin White thanked the Senior Manager for the report. He referred to a recent visit to Connah's Quay High School where during a tour of the classroom, all introductions were firstly made in Welsh. He welcomed this and said it had been pleasing to hear an increase in Welsh being spoken across the School.

The Chief Officer thanked the Senior Manager for her hard work as the Strategic lead for the Flintshire Welsh in Education Strategy. She outlined the work of Ms. Sian Hilton, a former Head Teacher in Denbighshire in galvanising the Forum to ensure all the documentation was in place to create a pathway for the plan and said that it would not have been possible to meet the deadline for consultation set by WG without the hard work of Ms. Hilton and the Senior Manager. The Senior Manager thanked the Chief Officer for her comments and said that there had been a team effort within the Forum. She thanked Councillor White for his comments and

advised the Committee that this was replicated in Schools across Flintshire, with a dedicated team of Welsh Advisory Teachers supporting Schools.

The Leader of the Council thanked all who had contributed to the WESP and outlined the importance of the Council in increasing the number of Welsh speakers across Flintshire. He explained that his interest in the Welsh language had stemmed from his first visit to the Urdd Eisteddfod as a child and said that all children across Flintshire should be encouraged to attend future Eisteddfodau in the area.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Tudor Jones and Councillor Martin White.

RESOLVED:

That the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the draft consultation for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032

35. FLINTSHIRE SUMMER OF FUN AND SUMMER PLAYSCHEMES

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) presented the report which provided details of how both the Summer Playschemes and Summer of Fun were delivered in Flintshire. This year was the 26th year that the Council had delivered the Flintshire Summer Playscheme programme and the Chief Officer thanked Mrs. Janet Roberts (Play Development Officer) and team of play workers who had ensured that the programmes were well supported again in 2021.

The Chief Officer explained that in June 2021 the Welsh Government (WG) launched its 'Summer of Fun' programme which had been jointly developed with the Children's Commissioner for Wales (CCfW) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). WG had made £5m available across Wales with Flintshire receiving an allocation of £218,000 to deliver a 'Summer of Fun' for children and young people to help to alleviate some of the negative impacts of the necessary restrictions of COVID-19. WG had stipulated who should be targeted by this programme and she provided information on the list of activities provided which included activities for older teenage children. The commitment from the team had been excellent and officers were in the process of providing feedback to WG who would be preparing an evaluation report. Due to the success of the Summer of Fun programme WG had continued to fund this and were now planning the Winter of Well-being Programme to run from November to March with a particular focus on the on the February half term.

The Chief Officer reported that the Play Development Officer was currently collating feedback from parents and children on the Programme and suggested that once feedback had been received, that this be circulated to the Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Officer for the report and commended the work carried out to provide the opportunity to children and welcomed the commitment given to provide a Winter of Well-being Programme. The Leader of the Council echoed the comments made by the Chairman and also thanked the Town

and Community Councils for their continued contribution to ensure the Programmes continued to be provided.

Councillor Tudor Jones queried the number of welsh first language sites as the number of sites differed within the report. The Chief Officer agreed to check this and report back to Councillor Jones following the meeting.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Councillor David Mackie and Councillor Joe Johnson.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee is reassured that children and young people in Flintshire had the opportunity to access and benefit from a range of valuable activities over the summer holidays through the Flintshire Playschemes and Summer of Fun Programme; and
- (b) That the Committee commend the significant effort by Council Officers and Officers in key partner organisations in delivering the successful programmes quickly and safely, particularly within challenging timescales.

36. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.39 pm)

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Chairman