

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Thursday 12th June 2014 at 4:00p.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Jones

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, P.S. Farley, L. Guppy, D.W.H. Jones, M. Powell and A. E. Webb.

ADDED / CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Mr. K. Plow (Monmouthshire Association of School Governors)
Revd. Dr. S. James (Church In Wales)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillor E.J. Hacket - Pain
County Councillor R.G. Harris

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. S. McGuinness	Chief Officer Children & Young People
Mrs T. Norris	Improvement Officer
Ms T. Jelfs	Head of Children's Services
Ms J. Rodgers	Safeguarding Service Manager
Ms D. Mountfield	Head of Achievement & Learning Infrastructure
Ms. S. Randall-Smith	Head of Achievement & Attainment
N. Wellington	Finance Manager
Mr M. Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Mr W. Mclean	Head of Policy & Engagement
Ms. H. Illett	Scrutiny Manager
Mrs. E. Tapper	Democratic Services Officer

1 NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

We noted the appointment of County Councillor P. Jones as Chairman of Children and Young People Select Committee. County Councillor Jones expressed thanks to the outgoing Chairman, County Councillor R.P. Jordan and welcomed the opportunity to Chair the Committee.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

We resolved to appoint County Councillor P.S. Farley as Vice Chairman of Children and Young People Select Committee

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P. R. Clarke, A. C. Watts, G.C. Burrows, Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health, and Mr G. Murphy representing the NAHT.

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4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

County Councillor P. Jones declared a personal, non – prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members Code of Conduct, Local Government Act 2000 within the capacity of Governor at Raglan School. Minute items 9i and 9ii: Draft Revenue Budget Outturn Statement 2013 – 14 and Capital Programme Outturn Statement 2013 - 14

County Councillor P. Farley declared a persona, non – prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members Code of Conduct, Local Government Act 2000 within the capacity of LEA Governor at Chepstow Comprehensive School Minute items 9i and 9ii: Draft Revenue Budget Outturn Statement 2013 – 14 and Capital Programme Outturn Statement 2013 - 14

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

We confirmed the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held on 1st May 2014 as an accurate record and they were signed by the Chairman.

6. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present

7i. SCRUTINY OF THE AUTHORITY'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ESTYN'S MONITORING VISIT OF 5TH & 6TH FEBRUARY 2014

We received a letter from Mr Clive Phillips, Assistant Director, Estyn, of March 2014 for scrutiny.

The letter recorded the outcomes of the first Estyn monitoring visit of 5th and 6th February 2014 during which the Authority's progress was reviewed against recommendation 1: safeguarding and corporate planning and performance.

Estyn concluded that the Authority had made some good initial progress in addressing shortcomings at service and practitioner level regarding safeguarding however the most challenging and significant shortcomings identified in the strategic management of safeguarding had not been addressed sufficiently.

Estyn also identified that the Authority did not have effective management information systems and processes to enable it to receive appropriate and evaluative management information about safeguarding.

The inspectors noted that whilst the Authority recorded and reported information on safeguarding, the data was activity based rather than analysed and evaluated against the Authority's objectives. Consequently, the Authority could not accurately assess whether its safeguarding practices properly secured the wellbeing of all children and young people. Information from the internal improvement board, the Ministerial Recovery Board and elected members was not analysed and evaluated well enough, preventing rigorous and in – depth scrutiny of performance and early identification of risks.

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The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People stated that since the initial monitoring visit much consideration had been afforded to how child protection and safeguarding data was being held and how this data could be understood and interpreted to provide a broader and meaningful view of safeguarding.

We welcomed assurance that the Leader of the Council had acknowledged that the Authority requires a strategic reporting framework going forward which would verify whether external agencies were operating effectively.

We noted that child neglect figures for Monmouthshire were low in comparison to cases of emotional abuse. Going forward the Authority would evaluate the data more critically to assess whether this demonstrated that it was effective at identifying emotional abuse but less effective at identifying neglect. An individual critique of neglect cases would be undertaken from a multi - agency perspective to provide a meaningful evaluation of data. In response, the Authority would formulate actions in to manage any risks identified.

We welcomed notice that the Council had appropriately prioritised safeguarding in its recovery planning and had undertaken a wide range of activities to improve safeguarding, including the establishment of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit. Estyn welcomed the cross cutting links between social services and education services created by the Unit and the improved access to safeguarding support and guidance.

The Authority had also implemented a corporate Monmouthshire Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy but this would require regular review to ensure that it remained fit for purpose.

The Committee welcomed notice that Estyn would review how well the Authority had improved the collection, analysis and evaluation of safeguarding management information in future monitoring visits.

The Committee resolved to scrutinise the outcome of future Estyn visits.

7ii. SCRUTINY OF THE AUTHORITY'S STRATEGIC REPORT FOR SAFEGUARDING APRIL 2014 AND ITS RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ESTYN

We received the Authority's Strategic Report for Safeguarding of April 2014 and its response to recommendations from Estyn for scrutiny from the Safeguarding Service Manager.

In November 2012 Estyn concluded that:

The Authority did not have an appropriate safeguarding policy

The Authority's process to check schools' monitoring of update checks lacked rigour.

No formal mechanism existed to ensure that partners who worked with young people had appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures.

Safeguarding training was not always commensurate with the level of staff receiving training.

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The Authority assessed itself in response to Estyn's recommendations using the following criteria:

- What is our final destination? Where do we want to be and by when?
- What have we done so far to get there/is this where we expected to be?
- What difference have our actions made so far? (Impact – evaluative judgement)
- How do we know? (Data and information – Evidence)
- What difference should our activities make in the long term?
- What next/future actions – consequence of evaluation?

Response

The Authority implemented a corporate Monmouthshire Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for all settings and services operating within Monmouthshire and or providing services to Monmouthshire children.

We noted that all schools, early year settings, leisure centres, community and youth services within Monmouthshire had adopted the policy.

The Authority had developed and implemented a safeguarding audit for completion by all services to verify compliance with the policy's requirements. This would ensure that children and young people using services were safeguarded and protected from abuse.

The Authority had developed and implemented a process to carry out pre – employments checks. A proposal to undertake 3 yearly re - checks on relevant posts was currently out for consultation with the Senior Leadership Team. This would be a significant decision and would require due attention to ensure that volunteers and staff do not pose a risk to children.

The Authority had significantly increased opportunities in child protection and safeguarding training and learning for workers in Monmouthshire at levels 1, 2 and 3. The Committee sought data regarding the number of Monmouthshire staff that had undertaken training, prior to and post Estyn inspection.

A review of the processes for the management of professional allegations was undertaken and the system for tracking cases through to conclusion was strengthened.

Interagency audits and individual case reviews would be undertaken in partnership with the SEWSCB.

The Authority's internal communications had been strengthened across the Authority to enable a shared analysis of performance information relating to child protection and to develop further questions regarding the overall effectiveness of child protection systems across agencies and departments.

Members sought assurance that as the Authority is a boarder county, any safeguarding cases which occur in Wye Dean School for example would not be lost within Authority. We were advised that the initial enquiry process was not border specific and was covered under the all Wales Protocol, given that a risk to the safety of a child remains a risk wherever it occurs.

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The Authority has listened to what children and young people felt about their perceptions of safety and well – being via questionnaire. The sample of 1500 children included those categorised as “looked after.”

The Committee welcomed this and queried how many forms were completed, what action would be taken to address concerns/issues raised and what specific measurable performance indicators could be teased from the information.

The Committee expressed caution that whilst the Authority had responded positively to Estyn’s recommendations, the generic wording was not helpful as Members wanted to see firm evidence.

We received assurance from the Safeguarding Service Manager that outcomes had been identified from the work completed and the Internal Monitoring Board felt that the Authority was moving in the right direction to meet Estyn’s recommendations.

The Authority was committed to adopting a more critical analytical approach to performance information from which conclusions could be made regarding what constitutes a good outcome for a child entering the system.

The Committee welcomed the report. We resolved to receive data and evidence to support the Authority’s response to ensure that it was satisfied that Estyn’s concerns were being addressed and that all children in Monmouthshire were protected from harm and abuse.

iii. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S DIRECTORATE SELF – EVALUATION DOCUMENT

We received the Children and Young People’s Directorate Self – Evaluation Document, June 2014, for scrutiny from the Chief Officer Children and Young People.

The document was prepared in response to Estyn recommendations 4 and 5 in terms of evaluating performance, service planning, performance management and collating and using data to drive improvement.

We heard that the self - evaluation had been informed by the safeguarding self - evaluation and feedback from the Internal Monitoring Board and Ministerial Recovery Board.

We received assurance from the Chief Officer that the Authority had made significant progress against the issues raised in the initial Estyn inspection of November 2012 and subsequent judgements in February 2013.

The Committee requested evidence of the progress being made. The Improvement Officer stated that the service planning process including quarterly updates and staff appraisals, the performance monitoring and challenge sessions held within the Children and Young People services on a weekly basis and the Head of Service challenge sessions forecast for the two heads of Children and Young People services (Head of Service Challenges are being piloted presently across the authority) and even further possibilities of performance clinics as would provide the evidence requested by the Committee.

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The Children and Young People directorate had followed the newly developed corporate self – evaluation framework which had been tested and was being piloted for roll out across the Authority. The Improvement Officer advised the Committee that good practice from Denbighshire County Council was being utilised to inform the corporate self – evaluation framework. In addition, a whole authority self evaluation would be carried out on corporate performance in September this year which would possibly provide further evidence on Children and Young People performance with the help of external peers.

Following intensive internal scrutiny, reviews of case studies and self – evaluation we received assurance from the Chief Officer that the Authority had made significant progress against the issues raised in the initial Estyn inspection of November 2012 and subsequent judgements of February 2013. To date the following work had been undertaken:

- Learner outcomes are the focus of planning arrangements and individual appraisals. Service plans have constructively aligned their operations to corporate policies where possible.
- Individual staff contributions to team objectives on learner outcomes are recognised and monitored.
- The Authority is aware of the schools leading and delivering education well and effectively supporting children and young people and of those who require support from the Authority to enable them to raise standards.
- Select Committee Members receive timely information that allows them to effectively scrutinise the performance of a range of settings in Monmouthshire.
- The Authority works effectively with other services across the authority and external partners in supporting children and young people.
- The Authority understands how its available capacity and resources deliver what it aims to achieve. The Authority is better placed to assess opportunities for securing support from elsewhere to ensure effective provision for learners.
- The Authority knows how well learners in its schools are performing and provides evidence to make informed decisions to raise standards further.
- We are aware of the Authority's specific concerns.

We received assurance that the Authority had recognised that it not only must be explicit about its activities but also about the intended outcomes and progress against them. The Authority must continue to challenge itself and establish an evaluation of the messages to provide a summary of the activity within the Children and Young People Directorate.

The Committee welcomed the self – evaluation and in so doing the following issues were raised:

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- Improving ALN provision

Members queried what difference teachers and pupils would notice in terms of ALN provision and planning given the introduction of the Education Behaviour Programme. We heard that if inclusion was undertaken properly pupils should not notice any difference. Awareness of improved provision would be heightened amongst practitioners and there was a move to cater for ALN within the community. More staff were in receipt of CPD training meaning that pupils with additional learning needs were identified earlier.

The Authority also recognised that more able pupils required further enrichment

- Support for schools

Members queried why the number of primary and secondary schools requiring critical or intensive local authority support had increased between April 2012 and April 2014. The Head of Achievement and Learning stated that this served as evidence of the impact of the EAS. We heard that by September 2016 it was anticipated that no Monmouthshire schools would require critical support. Some concern was expressed that the EAS may act as a barrier in terms of the timeliness of interventions should a school require support.

The Chief Officer Children and Young People stated that this was a minimal risk stating that the Authority had a good working relationship with EAS and the South East Wales Consortium, of which it was part, was considered to be a leading light in the Consortia approach in the National School Improvement Model.

We resolved to note the report and accepted the self – evaluation as part of an evolving process.

8. TO SCRUTINISE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE 2013 – 14

We received a report of the work undertaken on behalf of the Authority by the EAS in 2013 – 14 for scrutiny.

The EAS were asked to consider what role they perform in providing support and raising standards in Monmouthshire Schools. In response, EAS provided the following overview:

10 system leaders currently work within Monmouthshire, all of whom share the same core function to challenge, support and work with schools to secure improved pupil outcomes.

We noted that the Authority meets with the Principal System Leader on a fortnightly basis to provide direct challenge and to ensure that the EAS is adhering to Monmouthshire's Business Plan which clearly reflects the Authority's priorities.

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In the autumn term of 2013 EAS focused on assessing standards, target setting and reporting back to head teachers and governing bodies.

We noted that the target setting procedures referred to by EAS should be completed by October 2014 for all Monmouthshire schools.

We noted that the target setting process was vigorous with the System Leaders strongly challenging schools on their minimum and aspirational targets and drilling down to individual pupil targets.

In the spring term of 2014, the focus was on book scrutiny to assess both provision and standards. We noted that in the summer term System Leaders would be required to ascertain the effectiveness of school improvement planning through examination of school self - evaluation and school development planning and discussion with the Head teacher. Judgements would also be required on the new National Model Framework – capacity to improve.

We noted that reports EAS Spring visits of 8 Monmouthshire schools were not uploaded on time.

Schools were categorised according to the EAS intervention framework. Strong leadership and high quality of teaching would drive improvement and would ultimately determine the category into which the school was placed. In terms of schools categorised as red or purple and in greatest need would be issued with formal intervention plans. Such plans are drawn up with the school and signed off by local authority officers, the head teacher and Chair of Governors. We noted that EAS intervention reports do not follow the same format as school intervention plans, making comparisons more complex.

System Leaders also challenge head teachers regarding participation in training events, conferences and seminars to ascertain any link between participation and involvement.

Schools should be self - sustaining and higher and middle management leadership training was being encouraged.

The Committee noted that Monmouth schools participation had been limited but welcomed notice that mandatory governor training provided by the Authority was over - subscribed.

The Committee acknowledged that the EAS had made an impact within Monmouthshire's schools but recognised that as the local authority commissions the services of the EAS, the Authority should be the driver. We received assurance that the Chief Officer Children and Young People meets regularly with Mr S. Davies EAS Lead, and provides him with a comprehensive list of challenge.

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Members queried how they could obtain assurance that the EAS was performing as required by the Authority. The Chief Officer Children and Young People stated that the Authority compares school outcomes against real outcomes, holds intelligence meetings and intervention planning meetings, and via scrutiny of outturn reports.

The Committee required assurance that the EAS was achieving value for money and as an Authority in special measures that we were receiving additional support. The Chief Officer stated that the Authority has identified areas in which EAS could improve its service and wished to challenge the EAS appropriately.

The Committee resolved to invite the EAS to attend its next meeting. The Chairman agreed to meet with the Scrutiny Manager in advance to prepare some questions to provide appropriate challenge. The EAS would receive advance notice of the questions to enable them to prepare an informed response.

9i.DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN STATEMENT 2013 – 14

We received the draft revenue budget outturn statement 2013 – 14 from the Assistant Head of Finance regarding Children and Young People related services.

In so doing we noted the following:

The 2013 – 14 net expenditure budget relating to Children and Young People Select was £59 623 000 against an annual net expenditure of £59 809 000. The Assistant Head of Finance identified the Children and Young People Select budget portfolio as being particularly volatile given that it was difficult to quantify demand upon regulatory services within Children 's Services, Social Care and Health and demand led ALN transport costs.

The impact of legislative changes, such as the increase in the cost of a C2 Application hearing from £80 to £150, was difficult to anticipate and hence the budget was difficult to manage.

Children's Services exhibited an adverse position of £1 014 000, an increase of £23 000 against month 9. This was attributable to costs incurred in retaining specialist support to undertake a review of Children's Services provision.

We welcomed notice that the net year – end position for school budgets was generally a positive one, with a reduced reliance on reserve funding totalling £251 000.

There were two notable variances against budget; an under spend against a budgeted use of reserves by Deri View of £175 0000 and an unbudgeted draw upon reserves of £196 000 incurred at Chepstow Comprehensive, which only had a £2000 surplus reserve at the start of the year.

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The Committee expressed concern regarding the financial position at Chepstow Comprehensive. The Finance Manager, Children and Young People, agreed to share a statement explaining how the deficit had occurred. In 2012, Estyn identified that standards within English and Maths required improvement and from a catchment pool of 180 pupil intake, only 118 pupils entered Chepstow School. Chepstow Comprehensive invested in staff training and restructured the existing staff in an attempt to respond to Estyn's recommendations. In 2012 – 13 the pupil intake at Chepstow Comprehensive had increased, 171 from a catchment of 173. The Authority provided assurance that it would continue to monitor the situation.

SEN transport provided by the Authority totalled £53 000 resulting in an over spend of £18 000, £2000 less than anticipated at month 9. We noted that a review of SEN transport would be undertaken as part of a wider review of transport.

There was an under spend of £264 000 attributed to ALN. The budget for ALN was reduced by £150 000 during the budget setting process. Savings in placement costs and efficiencies were achieved. £92 000 of savings were achieved through reduced pupil placement costs at non – maintained schools.

An over spend of £456 000 relating to school improvement was reported. £422 000 of this sum related to redundancy costs for which there is no budget provision and a payment to Torfaen applicable to teachers who retired previously.

Expenditure of £86 000 relating to the schools data hall had been finalised since month 9 and was included in the budget going forward.

We resolved to note the content of the report.

ii. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/14 OUTTURN STATEMENT

We received the capital programme outturn statement for 2013 – 14 from the Assistant Head of Finance for schemes relating to the Children and Young People Select Committee.

In so doing we noted the following:

An adjusted revised budget of £8,144,000, of which £ 4 862 000, equivalent to 59.7% was spent by year end. Actual expenditure was £3,226,000 (59% of revised budget) at month 10, compared to £4,622,000 (71%) at month 10 of 2012/13

A forecast net under spend of £153,000 resulting from an under spend of £22,000 on School development schemes, an under spend of £23,000 on property maintenance schemes and an under spend of £108,000 resulting from net surplus finance brought forward from 2012/13, which has remained unallocated.

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A summary of the £2,840,000 provisional slippage forecast into 2014/15 at the end of month 10 principally relates to School Development Schemes, notably Thornwell Primary School (£575,000), 21st Century schools feasibility (£1,542,000) and Asset management schemes (£481,000).

The approval by the Welsh Government and Council of the full business case for the Future Schools programme and formal allocation of grant funding was forecast for November 2014.

The Green Lane School scheme under spend has previously been used to bear the salary costs relating to the 21st Century Schools project team. Instead, the project team costs have been reallocated to the 21st Century Schools Budget and a virement of £247,000 proposed to add the under spend on completed Green Lane scheme to 21st Century Schools Budget.

Capital Receipts

The forecast total Capital receipts balance at 31st March 2014 has increased by £2,542,000 compared to the Medium Term Financial Plan (£1,594,000 at month 8) primarily due to an increase in forecast receipts of £26,000, forecast slippage of capital expenditure of £3,028,000, budgeted set aside of £1,000,000 not going ahead, a forecast under spend of £203,000 in the capital programme which was financed via capital receipts, offset by a lower receipts balance brought forward (£1,184,000) and an increase in expenditure budgets (£530,000).

Based on 2012/13 outturn, the capital receipts forecast and the capital budgets in place for 2013/17 there will be a balance of available receipts at the end of the Medium Term Financial Plan window of £32,165,000 (£32,557,000 at month 8).

In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the forecast slippage of £57,000 in respect of Park Street School Health and Safety Works, the Finance Manager would forward further information to the Member regarding this matter.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

10. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014 -15

We reviewed the Children and Young People Select Committee Work Programme 2014 – 15 and in so doing we resolved:

- To invite the Education Achievement Service to attend the next meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee on 17th July 2014.
We noted that Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 examination data would not be available for this meeting.

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- To hold a special meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee post 17th July 2014 to scrutinise the annual CSSIW Fostering Inspection Report alongside the Regional Foster Care Marketing report.

11. CABINET FORWARD WORK PLANNER

We received the Cabinet Forward Work Planner for information. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People informed the Committee that the School Catchment Area Review would be removed from the Cabinet Forward Planner for September 2014. A Member panel would be established to formulate proposals in readiness for pre decision scrutiny by Select prior to future inclusion in the Cabinet Forward Work Planner.

12. TIMINGS OF FUTURE MEETINGS

We discussed the timings of future meetings of the Committee following discussions held at Council on 15th May 2014. We resolved that the schedule of meetings for 2014 – 15 should remain unchanged.

13. NEXT MEETING

The next ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee would be held on Thursday 17th July 2014 at 10:00 am in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Usk.

The meeting ended at 6.30pm.