

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held in the  
Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February  
2015 at 2.30p.m.**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor P. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: P.R. Clarke, P.S. Farley, L. Guppy, R.G. Harris,  
D.W.H. Jones and M. Powell

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

County Councillor E.J. Hackett Pain - Cabinet Member for Education  
and Learning.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms. S. McGuinness	-	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Ms. T. Jelfs	-	Head of Children's Services
Ms. S. Randall-Smith	-	Head of Achievement and Attainment, Education
Mr. R. Austin	-	Principal Officer for Inclusion
Mr. M. Howcroft	-	Assistant Head of Finance
Mrs. N. Wellington	-	Finance Manager
Mr. W. McLean	-	Head of Policy and Performance
Ms. C. Robins	-	Programme Manager
Ms. H. Ilett	-	Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams	-	Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.- Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D. Blakebrough and A.E. Webb and from Mr. G. Murphy and Mr. K. Plow.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.- Declarations of Interest are identified under the relevant minute.

**MINUTES**

3.- The minutes of the following meetings were confirmed and signed by the Chairman:

- Special Meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014.
- Ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

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**PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

4.- A member of the public requested an update regarding the future of the Special Learning Needs Unit at Deri View Primary School, Abergavenny and whether the unit would be closed in July 2015.

County Councillor R.G. Harris declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest regarding this matter as he is a governor of Deri View Primary School.

County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest regarding this matter as she is a governor of Deri View Primary School.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Learning stated that the Head Teacher of Deri View Primary School had sent a letter to all parents with children at the school who use the Special Learning Unit explaining that the school was part of an overall consultation process which started on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015 regarding Additional Learning Provision across the County and that Deri View Primary School was a part of this consultation process. The Cabinet Member read out the letter to the Select Committee and to the member of the public.

The Cabinet Member stressed that no decision had been taken regarding the future of the Special Learning Needs Unit. A six week consultation period was underway and representations could be made during this period.

The member of the public was informed that she could present her views on this matter via the consultation process, school governors or via her local Member.

**SELF EVALUATION UPDATE**

5.- We scrutinised the Children and Young People Self Evaluation report in which Select Committee Members were provided with information summarising the current position of the Children and Young People Directorate in relation to Recommendation 6 in the Estyn Inspection Report Monmouthshire County Council November 2012 and in Annex B in the Post Inspection Action Plan.

In presenting the report, the following points were provided by Officers:

- The report covers improvements that have been made in terms of performance management generally, including the Check In Check Out process for officers (CICO), also performance management specific to Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Inclusion, the Youth Service and information around the political process that has driven improvements in this area and in all areas.
- An addendum to the document was presented to the Select Committee around the area of political process which acknowledged the work undertaken in improving the political management system.

In doing so it was noted that:

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- Chief Officer and Cabinet Member meetings were held and recorded.
- The Internal Monitoring Board (IMB) had been established at the same time the Ministerial Recovery Board (MRB) was put in place. The IMB comprised of representatives from all of the political groups and received all of the papers that went to the MRB. In turn, the minutes of the IMB meetings were presented to Full Council.
- The Chair of the MRB has been to a full Member seminar to provide an update on where the MRB sees the Council's position and he will return again to provide a further update.
- There was considerable data regarding school performance that was available on the HUB.
- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People brings her Chief Officer report to Full Council which was key to identifying how the Directorate manages and achieves its goals.
- The Children and Young People Select Committee has undertaken considerable work with regard to policy development leading to a marked step up in political involvement in how the Education service was being held to account.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- The Chair of the Children and Young People Select Committee was not on the list of consultees with regard to this report. It was considered that the Chair should be consulted on all reports presented to the Children and Young People Select Committee.
- Reference to Recommendation 1 of the Estyn Inspection in the introduction to the report needed to be expanded upon to outline examples of what has been done. The Chief Officer for Children and Young People agreed to amend the document accordingly.
- The Children and Young People Directorate was the first directorate to implement the new staff appraisal system, Check In, Check Out (CICO). Select Committee Members considered that this system might be beneficial to Members in their development and further information on the subject would help Select Committee Members in understanding the system better when scrutinising performance management in future. The Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that the results of the next Estyn visit will provide an indicator as to whether CICO was working within the Directorate and she would also take back the request for Member training in CICO.
- In response to a question raised by a Select Committee Member regarding training provided for teachers and teaching assistants for

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ASD friendly schools and that only 17 schools had received training, the Head of Achievement and Attainment for Education stated that schools were invited to attend the training and where possible staff would work with them to meet that request. The aim was to get all schools trained but were providing a programme to address schools in particular need at that time. Therefore, the training will continue.

- The 17 schools referred to a total for the year. This would be clarified in the next draft of the report.
- Page 15 of the report – Monmouthshire LAC Attendance 2010/11 – 2013 / 2014 – The actual numbers would be added alongside the percentages.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE), it was noted that pupil behaviour was improving. FTE's had fallen dramatically in recent years, which was due to the proactive nature of the schools and the Pupil Referral Unit.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY NOVEMBER 2014**

6.- We scrutinised the Children and Young People Performance Summary for November 2014.

Select Committee Members were informed of the judgements made of Monmouthshire Schools for the academic year 2013- 2014 by Estyn inspection teams and a summary was received regarding Monmouthshire schools' inspection judgements since the introduction of the new Common Inspection Framework in September 2010.

In scrutinising the report, the Select Committee considered that some of the data differed to that outlined in a report to be received later in the meeting. It was noted that this report referred to historical data and did not contain data that had recently become available which had indicated that the position was now much more positive. It was therefore agreed that future performance summary reports would contain an introduction explaining this position.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- Schools that have gone into follow up or into a category have been removed from local authority or Estyn monitoring.
- Figures were better than Wales as a whole. Monmouthshire was comparably doing quite well and improving with schools being removed from a category.

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- Similarly, Monmouthshire schools that were amber and red have specific support and intervention plans in place.
- The report did not include the schools that were inspected in 2014 and this report was a snapshot in time which did not take into account the schools that had now been removed from monitoring.
- It was considered that the explanation received in respect of the report indicated that Monmouthshire's schools were achieving much better than indicated in the report and it would have been helpful if this information had been added to the report to provide a clearer picture of the state of Monmouthshire's Schools. However, it was noted that Monmouthshire still had a way to go in order for Monmouthshire's profile to meet the Welsh profile, but progress was being made.
- Paragraph 5.9 of the report – amend the sub heading as follows:  
  
'Follow up Activity for Estyn as a Whole'

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

**REVENUE MONITORING 2014/15 MONTH 9 OUTTURN FORECAST STATEMENT**

7.- County Councillor P. Farley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under the Members' Code of Conduct, as he is a governor of Chepstow Comprehensive School.

We scrutinised the report in which Select Committee Members were provided with information on the forecast revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of month 9 for the 2014/15 financial year.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a Select Committee Member's question in which the Assistant Head of Finance was invited to express his opinion on the future of Monmouthshire's schools budgets for next year in light of the information provided, the Assistant Head of Finance stated that there would likely be an increasing challenge ahead for Head Teachers and that they would most likely be required to work more collectively going forward.
- It was noted that Chepstow Comprehensive School was in significant deficit last year which had worsened. The Assistant Head of Finance stated that he had spoken with the Head Teacher and governors of the school and since December 2014, they had put together five proposals for recovery with only two of them being viable to allow the deficit to be paid off in the time allowed. Due to the size of the deficit the school was purporting to recover the debt over a period of time that was longer than usual. The School and governors were looking at a redundancy

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prospect and were engaging with staff. It was noted that the largest part of the school's costs were staffing related and it was not easy to reduce staffing costs in a timely fashion.

- The Head of Children's Services stated that two vacant posts within the directorate had now been filled reducing the number of agency staff being used by the Directorate. However, there were four agency staff being used due to an increase in demand on the Directorate's resources. Therefore, there might be a need to create a temporary contract for a period of 18 months as this would be more cost effective than using agency staff.

We resolved to:

- (i) receive the report and note its content;
- (ii) note the position concerning third quarter revenue monitoring (£144,000 deficit) and to note the action Chief Officers were taking to address the overspends in their service areas;
- (iii) note that a caveated use of reserves was being sought in relation to redundancy costs incurred by services this year totalling £545,000, whilst services will continue to find compensatory savings additional to the mandates to mitigate the net cost pressure by the end of the financial year.

## **WORK PROGRAMME**

8.- We received the Children and Young People Select Committee Work Programme. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- Representatives from Coleg Gwent to be invited to a future Children and Young People Select Committee Meeting regarding Post 16 Transport costs contributions.
- It was likely that a special meeting of the Select Committee would be required to scrutinise Home to School Transport. A date for this meeting would be arranged in due course following discussions with the Passenger Transport Manager.
- Receive an update on the Adoption Process Pan Gwent at a future Select Committee meeting.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the Select Committee reviewing and scrutinising schools' policies, the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning stated that changes to schools' policies were presented to the County Council's Joint Advisory Group (JAG) in which trade unions were able to submit their views before being presented to Cabinet for approval. It was considered that

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the Select Committee might have a role to play in this process before Cabinet receives the amended policy.

We resolved to receive the work programme and noted its content.

**CABINET FORWARD WORK PLANNER**

9.- We received the Cabinet Forward Work Planner and noted its content.

**NEXT MEETING**

10.- The next ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee will be held at County Hall, Rhadyr, Usk on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at 10.00am.

**The meeting ended at 4.12pm.**

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