

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014 at 10.30a.m.**

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

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

County Councillors E.J. Hacket Pain, R.G. Harris, J.L. Prosser and V.E. Smith attended the meeting by invitation of the Chairman.

**ADDED / CO-OPTED MEMBERS:**

Mr. K. Plow (Monmouthshire Association of School Governors)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr. S. Davies - Managing Director, Education Achievement Service for South East Wales  
Mr. R. Alcott - Monmouthshire Recovery Board  
Mr. A. Williams  
Ms. K. Rollings

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr. P. Matthews - Chief Executive  
Ms. S. McGuinness - Chief Officer, Children and Young People  
Mr. W. McLean - Head of Policy and Partnerships  
Mrs. D. Mountfield - Head of Service: Achievement & Learning Infrastructure  
Ms. S. Randall-Smith - Children and Young People Directorate  
Mrs. T. Norris - Policy and Performance Officer  
Mr. M. Lloyd - Children and Young People Directorate  
Ms. H. Illett - Scrutiny Manager  
Mr. R. Williams - Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.- Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor A.C. Watts, Revd. Dr. S. James and Mr. S Burch - Chief Officer for Social Care and Health.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

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**PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

3.- There were no items raised by members of the public present.

**EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE**

4.- County Councillor P.S. Farley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in this item under the Members' Code of Conduct, as he is a governor of Chepstow Comprehensive and the Dell Primary Schools.

County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in this item under the Members' Code of Conduct, as she is a governor of King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

We met the Managing Director of the Education Achievement Service (EAS) for South East Wales. In order to ascertain a more detailed overview of the Education Achievement Service, a question and answer session ensued, as follows:

**Given that Monmouthshire is in Special Measures, what has the EAS done over and above core business to help the Council move out of Special Measures?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- The first issue that the EAS focussed on was the quality of self-evaluation within schools and given the nature of the Authority's position in terms of the capacity of staff available, the EAS needed to ensure that the staff were delivering a quality service.
- Another critical area being focussed on was interventions in schools that had been identified by Estyn as under achieving and having intervention plans in those schools, agreed with the Authority, and supporting the delivery of intervention plans and monitoring the impact.
- The Key area of under performance in the primary and secondary schools was English and maths so that the targeted interventions in these schools were to raise standards.
- The services that related to governor training and the foundation phase have been strengthened. One of the challenges identified by the Estyn inspection was the input of high quality staff whose sole function was to deliver that service.
- It was critical that Monmouthshire, along with the two other authorities in South East Wales that were in Special Measures, had that targeted support. The EAS had to demonstrate that it had raised standards in Monmouthshire at a level that was ahead of other authorities that were not in Special Measures.

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- The focus has been on targeting not just the expected levels of pupil performance but it was important for Monmouthshire to focus on the expected level plus 1.
- The EAS recognised via the Estyn inspection that there was a need to focus on the more able pupils capable of achieving at a higher level.
- An additional focus of the EAS has been leadership of head teachers. Opportunities were being provided for head teachers to work with other schools outside of Monmouthshire, as well as within Monmouthshire, but also have additional accredited courses through Masters Degrees. The EAS has been able to meet the needs of a number of Monmouthshire's primary and secondary schools.

**How do you balance our needs with those of the other two Local Authorities in Special Measures?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- Given the nature of the funding, the EAS had to demonstrate that all five authorities were receiving the service in relation to the resources they were putting in.
- The additionality has come from the support at senior management level within the organisation.
- The other additionality across the three local authorities in Special Measures was the nature of the relationship with head teachers and head teacher groups. The Managing Director meets regularly with individual and groups of head teachers in Monmouthshire, as he does with the other local authorities.
- Regular dialogue with Estyn was held to show that the EAS was making a difference.
- The level of monitoring was more critical in the three authorities in Special Measures.
- The EAS has tailored its service to meet the requirements of Monmouthshire and the potential for children in Monmouthshire to achieve at the higher level were far greater.

**How have you identified Monmouthshire's local needs within your business plan?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- The similarities between the three local authorities in Special Measures were that each authority did not know its schools well.

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- The differences between the three local authorities in Special Measures were that Monmouthshire was not seen to be as significantly under achieving across the board.
- Every school was scrutinised looking at the measures for the potential for children to achieve.
- The head teacher groups within Monmouthshire and the support that they had did not result in them having significant professional development as a group across Monmouthshire.
- Professional development with colleagues outside of Monmouthshire was required. Due to Monmouthshire being a relatively small authority, there was a need to expose the four head teachers to professional development opportunities working with highly effective schools outside of Monmouthshire.
- The EAS recognised the nature of small schools and the need to work with small school clusters.
- In response to a Member's question regarding how Monmouthshire's strategies linked with the strategies of the EAS, Select Committee Members were informed that EAS targets were driven via a 'bottom up' strategy. The EAS has looked at schools and individual pupils and gone through the process of challenging and supporting schools in having ambitious challenges to challenging targets.
- The EAS has worked with the Authority regarding its target setting process. Targets have to be submitted to Welsh Government by early December each year and the Welsh Government may challenge the targets. The Authority makes the decision on target setting but targets need to be linked to other targets set by the authority.
- The focus was on outcomes and progress towards these outcomes.
- The EAS reports to the Monmouthshire Recovery Board. It also reports to the Authority on progress towards outcomes.
- At individual schools level, the EAS engages with head teachers throughout the year to monitor progress around numeracy and literacy, as well as Welsh education.
- The EAS works closely with the Authority regarding its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme and Additional Learning Needs (ALN).
- The EAS works closely with local authority officers regarding governor training and Foundation Phase training.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, the Managing Director stated that the Authority's outcomes were not identical to that of the EAS,

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neither were they fundamentally different. However, we were inter-dependent on achieving our goals and outcomes and on how we were judged by Welsh Government and the Inspectorate.

- The EAS Business Plan was available to view which would demonstrate key expectations relating to Monmouthshire and how the EAS intends to deliver them.
- Over the last two years, considerable improvements have been raised regarding pupil tracking. The EAS now requires from schools information on target setting which has to be built up from the individual child. Schools were required to evidence such target setting before mapping future expectations of the individual child.
- Training and Development has been challenging but governors were now in a stronger position to be able to ask constructive questions regarding whether the needs of the children were being met and tracked. Systems Leaders were skilled at identifying the evidenced based data through appropriate challenge.
- A Select Committee Member stated that the Authority has information to indicate that the EAS was not enforcing schools to complete termly tracking but was advising on it as good practice, with schools being asked to submit targets for the coming year. The managing Director responded by stating that this has not been put into print historically but has been good practice and been one of the challenges as the service has grown. However, it wasn't defined strongly enough but has now been corrected. A new strategy has now been established and formerly agreed and it has strengthened what was good practice undertaken by the majority of the schools and the majority of EAS staff.
- Initial results have indicated further progress for higher achieving pupils, as expected, at the Foundation Phase and Key Stages 2 and 3. Schools with intervention plans were receiving a far higher challenge, as well as support.

**In your view, are all the Systems Leaders and System Leader Partners providing the expected support across all Monmouthshire Schools? For instance, in ensuring:**

- **Consistency in System Leader challenge and support, in giving judgements, in applying consistency in reporting and adhering to timescales for informing Monmouthshire County Council on progress and impact made?**
- **What systems do you have in place to ensure all System Leaders are of at least a minimum standard and how would you demonstrate that these are working?**
- **Through the report submitted to the Internal Monitoring Board (of which the Chair is a Member), there was clearly an issue in the monitoring of**

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**targets at mid-point – notably no change at all, but also the late timing of the report itself (term 3). Why is this?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- System Leaders were now called Challenge Advisors.
- There was a national standard to be met. Historically, there has been variations and the EAS was engaged in formal procedures which included capability procedures to deal with some of those issues.
- Some people have left the organisation.
- Some people have come through those processes through support and were delivering at a level which was now acceptable.
- Annual appraisals were held.
- Systems were in place to monitor written reports.
- The Service has been re-structured with Monmouthshire now having a named full time Principal Systems Leader (Principal Challenge Advisor).
- From September 2014, there will be fewer challenge Advisors.
- In addition, the EAS has a two day programme with the Welsh Government on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014.
- By April 2015, everyone will have been 'kite marked' to fulfil the requirements of Welsh Government.
- Every Challenge Advisor will be a good advisor.
- In terms of the smaller number of staff working in Monmouthshire, the new Principal Challenge Advisor will have seven or eight people working across the schools.
- The EAS now has up to 24 head teachers from the primary and secondary sector, many of which were from Monmouthshire, fulfilling the Challenge Advisor Partner role. The head teachers agreed that it was a positive experience for them as they were seeing other schools.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding 'kite marking' of partners, the Managing Director stated that they were kite marked. This was a mechanism for a school to becoming a school of excellence.
- Head teachers were assessed against standards in relation to their written work. The EAS receives structured feedback from schools which was anonymous.

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- These standards were published and were available to view.

**The post Inspection Action Plan 2012, as agreed between the authority and the EAS, indicates that Monmouthshire will be ranked 1/3 or above for all indicators by the end of July 2014. Given our provisional results, early indication suggests this will not be the case.**

**Can you explain why and what the EAS will do to rectify this?**

**Also, how confident are you that by 2015, 50% of schools will be in quartile 1 or 2?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- The EAS has set ambitious targets but has not met them. The EAS reflection on this was that it measures progress against these targets and then adjusts accordingly.
- The latest set of public information was coming out in terms of Key Stage assessments.
- The GCSE data, published in the Autumn 2014, will show good levels of progress within Monmouthshire, particularly at the highest levels.
- Initial data regarding levels of achievement in the Foundation Phase and Primary Phase have improved by a small margin as far as the expected level was concerned. 90% of Key Stage 2 children have met the expected level.
- At Foundation Phase and Primary Phase, the results for expected level + 1 have gone up significantly for the region.
- In Key Stage 3, the level of improvement at the expected level, Level 5, has risen above the regional level of improvement and significantly above the regional level of improvement for Level 6, which was the expected level +1. Therefore, good progress has been made. It was anticipated that these will be the best set of results that Monmouthshire has had, but there was still a need to focus on higher levels of performance.
- Though the EAS has not met its targets, the Managing Director believes that the EAS will be better in 2015, in particular, in the area of secondary education. The secondary sector within Monmouthshire has been a particular challenge in which the EAS has had to deal with specific issues in some schools over the previous two years.
- The Management information System was not at the expected level at this stage. The EAS was refining target settings and the data management system and was committed to this system and were investigating ways to accelerate the process.

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- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding progress made in respect of Key Stages 3 and 4, the Managing Director stated that in Key Stage 3, the end of year nine teachers' assessments that had been undertaken, initial data indicated that for the expected level, the level of improvement from Monmouthshire's students was 3.2%. For South East Wales, as a region, the improvement was 2.6%. The most significant improvement occurred at the higher level, the expected level +1. In Monmouthshire, in English, the expected level +1 has risen from 48.9% to 55.4%, well above the level of improvement in the region. In Maths, the expected level +1 has risen from 54.5% to 64.4%.
- Schools with an intervention plan have had the greatest levels of improvement.
- The EAS has given specific support to English Departments in two secondary schools and the level of improvement in one of the schools was 25%, with the other school improving by 8.2%. In Maths, one of the schools had improved by 16.3%, with the other school improving by 19.9%. These results bode well for the 2016 GCSE examinations.
- The Managing Director believes that improvements at Key Stage 4 regarding pupils achieving 5 A-C GCSE grades in English and maths will be between 5% and 10%. Discussions will be held with Estyn and with the Authority in the Autumn 2014. It was anticipated that the discussions will recognise that progress has been made. However, the EAS continues to aim to improve its service delivery.
- Regarding Key Stage 3 results using last year's data, almost all of the schools regarding either English or maths made it into the upper quartile (the top 25% of schools compared to them). However, with the expected level, Level 5, that wasn't the case. Therefore, further work was required at this level and the EAS was working with schools regarding this matter.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the need to undertake further work in respect of Additional Learning Needs and at Key Stage 4, the Managing Director agreed, but also stated that more work was required across the board.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the gap in progress of pupils receiving free school meals, the Managing Director stated that the EAS had not yet been able to obtain that level of analysis. However, this data will be made available to the Select Committee when available. The Overriding priority of the EAS's Business Plan was to address the issues around children facing poverty. Each school was required to demonstrate their action plan to close the gap. The EAS analyses the schools' plans and has given additional support. The EAS will obtain details of how the gap has closed when it obtains the Foundation Phase, Primary Stage, Key Stage 3 and GCSE results in September 2014.



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**In September 2014 all schools will be categorised by the Welsh Government in 4 categories instead of 5.**

- **What evidence do you have to support where Monmouthshire's schools will sit in these categories?**
- **How will you ensure that no schools will be in the bottom category and that 2/3 of schools will be above the medium?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- The move to four categories instead of five has been introduced to maintain consistency and to use consistent criteria. This year the Primary and secondary sectors will be piloted so will not be in the public domain. The EAS was encouraged by this approach. The EAS has requested that the expected level +1 be included and was encouraged that this had been undertaken.
- The EAS has undertaken an analysis using the previous data. There were two areas of categorisation. One on performance over a three year period. The other criteria was the schools' capacity to improve via its leadership, teaching and learning. It was the Challenge Advisors' who had made that judgement. During this term, every school in Monmouthshire has had a visit and discussion between the head teacher and Challenge Advisor has identified each school's categorisation for capacity to improve.
- It was the EAS's ambition that no school will be in the bottom two bands.
- On the whole, the categorisation of schools met the EAS's current categorisation.
- The Primary Sector will go live in 2015.
- The Model enables the EAS to have conversations with some schools at the beginning of September 2014 with EAS categorisation coming in early 2015.
- In response to a question raised by the Chief Officer for Children and Young People, the Managing Director agreed that the category was determined by criteria only and was actually restrictive.
- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People asked whether Challenge Advisors were making judgements but hadn't yet confirmed the accuracy of the quality of teaching and learning as judged by the head teachers in their own schools. The Managing Director responded by saying that the only way to be 100% confident of the teachers' judgement would be to sit in and observe all of the teaching that takes place in schools. In reality, this would cause significant challenges and was not being pursued by any authority across Wales or England. There were other sources on the effectiveness of teaching and learning such as quality of bookmarking, the systems the head teachers have in place and the evidence that they have collected from their

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observations. However, getting this information to a precise level was still a challenge but the Managing Director was confident that Challenge Advisors could make a judgement and provide feedback and categorise the criteria.

- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People asked what assurances the EAS was providing to ensure that there were robust and rigorous measures in place now to address the significant discrepancies between Challenge Advisors and to ensure that a consistency in approach was being implemented. The Managing Director stated that the Challenge Advisors were involved in training today and tomorrow. The additional national training on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 will further strengthen the robust measures required. People will be monitored and feedback will be obtained. There was an opportunity for Monmouthshire and the EAS to discuss any perceived variations in the quality. The Managing Director considered that the gap in quality was closing.
- The EAS has published a manual entitled 'Excellence in Teaching' which defines what leadership in schools should be and this manual was located in all schools.

**You have been given a committee budget of £551,000 from the Council to spend during 2014-2015 on school improvement.**

- **What impact have you made through this spending?**
  - **Number of days?**
  - **Correlation of time to inspect outcomes.**
  - **Satisfaction from head teachers.**
  - **Critically at Key Stage 4 Level 2, there was a 1% increase in your first year, are you predicting more now?**
- **What evidence can you provide to demonstrate that this is the maximum impact we can expect from this spending?**
- **How do you determine how the budget is divided across Monmouthshire's schools? What is your strategy?**
- **Please can you explain the £69,000 under spend during 2013-2014?**
- **Please can you explain your plans for spending the £60,000?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- Last year was the EAS's first full year running in terms of its accounts
- Financial resources had been kept back to cover redundancy payments and to establish the Management Information System. These were the two largest areas of underspend.

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- The £69,000 underspend will be used to support school to school work.
- The EAS has saved £400,000 by reducing staff across the region since it was established in 2012. Good schools were being supported, freeing them up to provide support to other schools requiring support.
- Monmouthshire was currently in special measures and therefore may require additional resources. This was a similar case in other parts of the region. Therefore, more investment might be required in various parts of the region from time to time.
- The EAS Business Plan has been costed and has been scrutinised by a number of committees. The budget for 2014/15 will be spent in full by the end of the financial year.
- The SIMS system will be fully functional within the next financial year.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding potentially subsidising schools in other authorities, the Managing Director stated that Monmouthshire was currently a key benefactor in receiving support from other schools in the region. Research has shown that to achieve an effective schools system, the use of collaboration was beneficial to all involved.
- The EAS was pump priming the support and development in schools via a pilot scheme allowing schools to work more closely. Some of the initial underspend has been used to establish the pilot scheme.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding how Monmouthshire's allocation to the EAS was spent, the Managing Director stated that he would provide a breakdown of how the EAS was spending Monmouthshire's allocation.
- The EAS has established across South East Wales seven excellence chains in which it allows a school in Monmouthshire to work with an identified school in the region based on the fact that they all have something to offer collaboratively. Currently, there were only four of the 37 schools operating in this way.
- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People asked whether the Welsh Government cuts to the School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) would have a negative impact on collaborative working. The Managing Director stated that the potential cuts that were being suggested have the potential to have a significant impact on two areas. One being the small amount of money that was retained to pay for some teachers of literacy and numeracy in the EAS, as these were grant funded posts, so the capacity of the EAS to train and develop teachers across those groups would be affected. It also has the potential for significant impact on schools, as schools would have committed money to these posts. Authorities were looking at ways to self-manage at a

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local level to address these reductions. Therefore, the best way forward would likely be to seek responsibility for ourselves.

- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People asked whether Monmouthshire was a net contributor to the EAS or a benefactor of the service. The Managing Director stated that he did not have details regarding this matter. However, In terms of value for money and what Monmouthshire paid for and gained prior to the establishment of the EAS, in respect of the model working across the region, in 2011/12, Monmouthshire was spending £657,000 on the roles and functions within school improvement. When the EAS took on the service, Monmouthshire's contribution in 2012/13 was £534,484. In the national model, which was established in April, Monmouthshire's contribution was £481,642.
- The EAS was looking to refine the evidence with regard to providing value for money. The EAS's Business Manager was looking into the information on course attendance and visits, so that this information may be given to Monmouthshire with a view to the Authority being able to gain confidence in what was being provided for Monmouthshire via the EAS.
- The Managing Director considered that Monmouthshire now had a better School Improvement Service since the Estyn inspection.
- The EAS will continue to commit to reducing the number of posts within the service. The Managing Director stated that school to school work and using resources to enable that work was the most effective way of delivering the service.
- In response to a question raised by a Select Committee Member regarding how the budget was divided across Monmouthshire's schools, the Managing Director stated that the input of resources depended on the category of school.
- For schools that were struggling and needed intervention plans, there were additional resources available.
- Schools have their own training and development grants.
- There was access to seminars and leadership programmes provided by the EAS to authorities within the region, free of charge.
- The EAS did not have a standardised formula for establishing the amount of funding to be spent on individual schools.
- There were three sources of income within the EAS, namely, the Core budget, some retained School Effectiveness Grant (SEG), which has been reduced in the previous two years, and the Trading Service, which allows all schools to buy into for a particular aspect of work. If the SEG were to be reduced, this

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might lead to redundancies within the EAS with potentially significant redundancy costs that the EAS would have to fund.

**In what ways can you assure schools' outcomes for learners and Monmouthshire County Council's outcomes will be better supported through any changes you make to the service after September 2014?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- Any changes to the EAS have to be a part of the Business Plan which would be seen by the Welsh Government. Before the Business Plan goes through Welsh Government, it has to go through a series of panels and groups which includes the five Directors of Education, the Joint Executive Group (JEG), which has an elected Member sitting on it from each of the five authorities with the Directors of Education, the EAS Board and then through challenge via Welsh Government. Therefore, all EAS action plans have to be based on an audit on what was / was not working. If the EAS wanted to make any changes to the Plan, it would have to go through all of these consultative groups. The cycle of review for EAS works was undertaken via a financial year basis. A detailed review of the impact of the plan will take place in January / February 2015.
- In response to a question raised by a Select Committee Member regarding how the EAS could demonstrate that it was its influence that had made a difference and not just the schools themselves, the Managing Director stated that there were two schools that had made significant improvements and the work of the EAS could be evidenced via a set of actions undertaken and programmes established. However, it would be difficult to measure the percentage of the EAS's influence in the schools' improvement. It's partly down to the Authority, the EAS and the schools with regard to the schools' improvement.
- The EAS has engaged with governor representatives to seek feedback as part of the restructuring of governor services. The Managing Director will also be attending the Governors' Conference in October 2014. Part of this day will be to obtain feedback.
- Direct feedback from schools was received and was published outlining what the EAS was proposing to do in response to the feedback. Feedback was also received from local authorities.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding feedback and how well the EAS was undertaking this, on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, the Managing Director responded as follows:
  - Schools would likely see the EAS as a 7.
  - People's confidence in the EAS – 8.
  - EAS self-assessment for its work with Monmouthshire – 6.5 to 7.

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- In response to a question raised by the Chief Officer for Children and Young People, the Managing Director stated that EAS staff that were made redundant and have received a redundancy settlement will not be re-employed by the EAS.

**How can you demonstrate that your core business of school improvement is not adversely compromised by the additional activity the EAS are undertaking to generate income?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- Any activity that has to be covered by purchase of service has to be cleared to establish a need for this service. Any traded service will not be about the retention of staff. There has to be a defined need and demand for the service.
- The EAS has to be a part of the School Improvement Strategy, but this was not part of the EAS's core service. It can't be covered by the amount of resource that was in the retained group.
- Schools need to sign up to the service being provided by the EAS.
- In January and February 2015 all those in charge of services have to meet with head teachers to explain what services they were proposing. Then they would propose any changes, but particularly any offer around the traded part of the schools that schools would buy. If the Managing Director was not confident that there would be a demand for that, he would make the appropriate staffing decisions, and would not carry on providing the service if the three criteria could not be fulfilled.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding governors' training, the Managing Director stated that governors' training was central to the School Improvement Strategy. Governor development was a critical part of the leadership development programme. With regard to the mandatory training not being undertaken within 12 months, the Managing Director would investigate this matter and report back to the Select Committee.

**When the current commission with the EAS concludes, how can you convince us that we should renew the commission with you?**

The Managing Director responded, as follows:

- The EAS wants to be judged on outcome and whether it has made a difference in sufficient time.

The Chairman extended an invitation to the Managing Director, which was accepted, to attend the Children and Young People Select Committee on a regular basis, at least once a term. An invitation was also extended to the Managing Director to attend the next ordinary meeting to provide feedback on the following issues:

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- The extent to which the new SIMS was up and running and whether there was consistency in its application.
- The picture post-restructure – whether Monmouthshire has secured a greater consistency in System Leaders and Challenge Advisors.
- Key Stage 4 – whether the improvement in attainment is delivered – i.e. whether the EAS's optimism has become reality.
- A specific breakdown on how the £69,000 is to be spent.
- A specific breakdown of the financial picture (down to unit cost) to clearly show how Monmouthshire's money is being spent.
- Evidence to clearly show satisfaction levels through self-assessment.
- Evidence to confirm that training for governors has been provided.

On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chairman thanked the Managing Director for his attendance and providing the Committee with answers to the questions put to him.

**END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR 2013/14 ON THE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME AGREEMENT**

5.- We scrutinised a report by the Policy and Performance Officer regarding the end of year performance against the Council's strategic objectives which were under the remit of the Children and Young People Select Committee:

- Improvement Objective 1 set in the council's Improvement Plan 2013-16  
**We will provide an improved education provision for Monmouthshire**
- Outcome Agreement theme 1 set in Monmouthshire's Outcome Agreement with the Welsh Government for 2013-16  
**Improving school attainment**
- Outcome Agreement theme 5 set in Monmouthshire's Outcome Agreement with the Welsh Government for 2013-16  
**Improving early years' experiences**

Select Committee Members were informed:

- Improvement Objective 1 has been scored cautiously as Level 3 Adequate - strengths just outweigh weaknesses.
- Outcome Agreement theme 1 has been scored as partially successful.
- Outcome Agreement theme 5 has been scored as fully successful.

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The scores achieved across all of the five themes in the Outcome Agreement was “Fully Successful” based on scoring 8 points out of a possible 10. This indicated that the Council was likely to receive 100% of the funding.

Officers would be meeting with the Welsh Government in September 2014 regarding evaluation of this performance which will provide a clearer indication of whether the Authority has reached that potential. Across the three years of the agreement, the potential funding that could come to Monmouthshire for the whole of those three years’ performance if the authority were to gain a success across each year, would equate to almost £3,000,000. The way the funding was allocated internally in Monmouthshire meant that the money has already been set into the budget, so if the anticipated performance was not achieved, then the money would be removed from the budget.

Having received the report, the following points were noted:

- In response to a Select Committee Member’s question regarding attendance levels of pupils receiving free school meals, it was noted that attendance levels across Monmouthshire’s schools were amongst the best in Wales and similarly, the attendance for free school meals pupils was very high also. There was only a small percentage difference between pupils and free school meals pupils of between 1% and 3%. Therefore, whilst it wasn’t good enough, there were procedures that have been established to support schools to minimise this gap even further.
- The Chief Officer for Children and Young People informed the Select Committee that from the recent Estyn Monitoring visit, it has been noted that Monmouthshire’s self-evaluation processes have improved and Monmouthshire’s planning processes were better still. The Authority was on an upward trajectory regarding the quality of self-evaluation. However, there was further work to be done and preparation was being undertaken for the next monitoring visit, which could be held in the Autumn of 2014 or early Spring 2015.
- In response to a Select Committee Member’s question regarding fining parents who take their children out of school, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that fines were being considered across the region, as well as the Country.
- It was noted that the EAS was not enforcing schools to complete termly tracking but were advising on it as good practice, with schools being asked to submit new targets only for the coming year. Therefore, officers were working with head teachers to secure their termly monitoring. It was important that school management systems were aligned.
- The Authority will meet Welsh Government officers on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014 to discuss our assessment of this first year performance of the



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Outcome Agreement. In the meeting we expect the Welsh Government Officers to indicate their own assessment so that we will know how much of the first year grant we are likely to receive. Also, this meeting will give the Authority an opportunity to discuss any factors that are likely to influence changes to the Agreement going forward such as targets.

- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding fixed term exclusions, the Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that Monmouthshire was much better at understanding what inclusion meant and endeavoured to keep these young people within school. Exclusion should be the last option considered. The Authority works closely with schools to ensure there were mechanisms in place to ensure that these young people remained in school.
- The percentage of Looked After Children with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) within 20 School Days deteriorated from 81.8% in 2012 to 67.5% in 2013. The Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that there were more Looked After Children within the system but timely information was also required from other local authorities. When children and young people transfer to Monmouthshire there needs to be more rigorous protocols of transfer. Officers have worked on this extensively and to ensure that Looked After Children were not missed. Robust protocols to address this were being implemented from the beginning of the new academic year in September 2014.

The Chairman thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for presenting the report.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

**NEXT MEETING**

6.- The next ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee will be held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at 2.00pm at County Hall, Usk.

**The meeting ended at 1.16pm.**

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