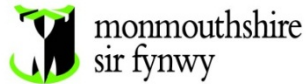


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County Hall
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Wednesday, 13 February 2019

Notice of Reports Received following Publication of Agenda.

Children and Young People Select Committee

Thursday, 21st February, 2019 at 10.00 am,
Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA

Attached are reports that the committee will consider as part of the original agenda but were submitted to democratic services following publication of the agenda.

Item No	Item	Pages
9.	Confirmation of Minutes	1 - 22

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 9

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor M.Groucutt (Chairman)

County Councillors: L.Brown, D. Jones, M.Lane, M. Powell, T.Thomas, J.Watkins and S. Woodhouse

Also County Councillors: P. Murphy, R. John, A. Easson, R. Harris and R. Roden

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Mike Fowler	Parent Governor Representative
Leanne Wakerley	Chair, Monmouthshire Association of School Governors
Peter Strong	NEU
Fay Middleton	NASUWT

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor L.Jones

1. Declarations of Interest

Item 6: Revenue Budget Proposals - County Councillor A. Easson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as a Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin.

The Chair welcomed Cabinet Members County Councillor P. Murphy (Resources) and County Councillor R. John (Children and Young People) to the meeting.

2. Public Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. Discussion on reconfiguration of SENCOM with Head of Sensory and Communication Support Services, Roger Thurlbeck

Select Committee Members were advised by the Chair that the Head of Sensory and Communication Support Services was unwell and consequently unable to attend the meeting today as planned. The Chair asked that an invitation is extended to Mr. Thurlbeck to attend the next meeting on 21st February 2019.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

The Chief Officer, Children and Young People provided a brief presentation and Members noted that the service supports 367pupils (mainly hearing impairment). Numbers of visually impaired has remained stable and need for communications support has declined.

Monmouthshire contributes 13.1% to the SENCOM budget (just under £300,000 next year).

Regarding risk factors that are key for Monmouthshire pupils, it is likely that there will be consequences for service users relating to change in staffing and reliance on expertise. Another risk is that the service itself will be losing expertise. It is calculated that there will be a loss of resilience to flex response across the four authorities. There is also likely to be an impact on staff in terms of staff morale and wellbeing.

Member scrutiny:

The Chair invited questions as follows:

- It was queried what the mechanism is to stop further withdrawal, to stop other partners leaving and also how the new provision fits with the more demanding requirements of the ALN Bill. The Chief Officer, Children and Young People explained that the four remaining partners are completely committed, and it is likely that they will consider strengthening collaborative governance in due course. Regarding the ALN Bill, the Association of Directors of Education Wales group will be meeting to consider a response to the proposed legislation and code of practice. It is thought there will be more regional based working especially looking at higher tier intervention.
- A Member received confirmation that the staffing table in the material provided refers to Gwent. It was confirmed that staff work across the region.
- It was queried if there are talks with Newport City Council in respect of possibly reversing the decision. It was confirmed that the remaining partners are always working together. Torfaen is leading and responsible for staff terms and conditions. Collaboration is welcomed and the four remaining partners would have to consider this together.

Committee Conclusion:

It was agreed to invite the Head of Sensory and Communication Support Services to the next meeting. The Chief Officer, Children and Young People was thanked for stepping in at short notice to enable discussion.

4. Capital Strategy Assessment and Capital Budget Proposals 2019/20

Purpose:

1. Chartered institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) produced a revised regulatory Code in December 2017, which included a need for local authorities to produce a Capital Strategy. The requirements were staggered with an aim for reporting compliance during 2018/19 with a full Capital Strategy implemented for 2019/20. This report concentrates on the former in evaluating the governance, planning and priority setting involved in presenting 2019-20 capital budget proposals and the 3 years thereafter making up the collective capital medium term financial plan.
2. CIPFA report that a Capital Strategy should be tailored to individual circumstances and consequentially don't volunteer a prescriptive format. The overall intent is that any

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

Capital Strategy should allow Members to understand how stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability will be secured. The overall purpose of a capital strategy being to provide opportunity for engagement with Full Council to ensure overall strategy, governance procedures and risk appetite are fully understood by all elected members

3. The code, in describing the Capital Strategy, reports it can be delegated to Cabinet (or similar body) with Full Council being responsible. MCC's approach is to report budget setting process through Cabinet, with consideration and approval of the future capital programmes resting with full Council. The Council's Constitution is consistent with compliance requirements. It is anticipated that the actual resulting capital strategy will be reconciled and consistent with a wider financial strategy and both available for consideration during Spring cycle of meetings.

Key Issues:

Children and Young People Select Committee to consider and provide feedback upon the budget assumptions, pressures and savings proforma affecting this Select portfolio area.

1. That Cabinet considers the capital strategy requirements and assesses the preparedness of current practices to satisfy capital strategy compliance obligations for onward endorsement to Council as part of capital strategy report in January 2019.

2. That Cabinet considers the annual core capital programme identified in Appendix 2 for 2019-20, together with the additions proposed in paras 6.14 to 6.18, and issues its draft capital budget proposals for 2019/20 to 2022/23 for consultation purposes.

3. That Cabinet reaffirms the principle that during the financial year, any new schemes volunteered can only be added to the programme if the business case demonstrates that they are self-financing or if the scheme is deemed a higher priority than current schemes in the programme and therefore displaces it.

4. When considering the relative merits of projects and potential displacement, that Cabinet consider the indicative priority matrix supplied in para 4.15, either endorsing or amending it for onward consideration by full Council.

5. That Cabinet considers the extent of proposed sale of assets captured in exempt Appendix 5, in order to support the capital programme, and that once agreed, no further options are considered for these assets.

6. That Cabinet note the potential forecast of capital receipt levels, prior to the consideration of using £75,000 of receipts balance to afford condition survey work to update historic condition survey information and a ceiling of capital receipts funding of £300k to assist with the business case affordability of

Severn View Residential Home replacement. Any excess of capital receipts generated thereafter is proposed to be applied by Treasury colleagues in a fashion that will mitigate minimum revenue provision costs and interest payments, to assist with revenue budget management. This is a change in capital receipt strategy to that applied in earmarking receipt generation to afford Members tranche A Future Schools aspirations. This will mean that any further school redevelopment will need to derive a greater extent of revenue headroom to afford the prudential borrowing financing of such developments.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

Capital Strategy Summary Considerations

7. The Capital Strategy sets out the council's approach to capital investment over a longer timeframe than is traditional in the 4 year medium term financial plan and will provide a framework through which our resources, and those matched with key partners, are allocated to help meet strategic priorities.

It is about planning, prioritisation, management and funding and is more informed by the council's consideration of:

- Corporate Plan
- Asset Management Plan
- Commercial Investments Strategy
- Treasury Management

Member Scrutiny:

The Assistant Head of Finance/ Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report and invited questions and comments from the Select Committee as follows:

- In response to a query on pressures, it was answered that the figures are in respect of liability related to assets held. The capital programme of £40million annually was highlighted; the 2 largest items being school replacement. Other infrastructure items (e.g. highways maintenance, Disabled Facility Grant) have been kept at historic levels. The list is useful in the event that money becomes available. It is proposed that any extra money is used for the £80million highways maintenance scheme. The sewerage treatment work is also highlighted as a priority. Priorities for schools are the Band B 3-19 replacement of King Henry VIII Comprehensive School. The Cabinet Member for Resources referred to the development of a new Local Development Plan (LDP) that will include consideration of sufficient primary and secondary school places. The Cabinet Member noted that Welsh Government will now contribute 65%.
- A Member commented that there is a low amount earmarked for property maintenance and expressed concern that problems could be stored up for the future and that there would be a noticeable contrast between schools with outstanding maintenance issues and the new schools.
- Regarding 21st C Schools, an update was provided by the Chief Officer, Children and Young People that the new team should be in place before half term, the first 21st C Schools Board has met and will have overview of all schools estates to meet the needs of future learners in the longer term.

5. Revenue Budget Proposals 2019/20

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair, on behalf of the committee was pleased to receive the report and noted that no objections were raised. The Assistant Head of Finance/ Deputy Section 151 Officer was thanked for the report.

Purpose:

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

1. The backing main report is being shared with all Select Committee members so that they can understand the holistic budget position being considered by Cabinet. The holistic nature of that report recognises that savings proposals should not be viewed in isolation, and may be necessary to allow other service priorities to be maintained.
2. Subsequent to the consultation process and feedback from individual Select Committees and other representative groups on particular proposals, the resulting report will be provided to full Council in their consideration of settling a balanced budget for 2019/20.
3. This abridged report seeks to ensure that all proposals have a designated scrutiny oversight, and the tables below highlight those illustratively earmarked to the Scrutiny role of Children and Young People Select Committee for specific feedback.

Key Issues:

1. It is recommended that Select Committee consider specifically the table of pressure and savings, with a view to providing pertinent feedback on the adoption or otherwise of such by full Council in its subsequent consideration.

Member Scrutiny:

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the Revenue Budget proposals. Following on from this, questions and comments were invited

- In response to a question, the Chief Officer acknowledged that the increase in teachers' pensions employer contributions from 16% to 23% (potentially £112,000 additional per month) represent a significant pressure. There is frequent contact with Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association to seek an update. Schools are reassured that they will receive the funding but the risk is being held centrally. Welsh Government has confirmed it will fund the teachers' pay award for this and next year.
- The possibility of appealing against rates increases at the new schools was raised. It was explained that the increases are due to the valuation of the two new schools. The authority appeals valuations and was successful last year in saving £100,000. The Member suggested that schools should have discounted business rates. It was confirmed that there is a national policy and no local discretion.
- The Chair expressed concern about a potential reduction of the Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) service budget in favour of delegating funding to schools and training being provided on general literacy provision. Under the Equality Act 2010, Dyslexia is listed as a disability and invited comment. The Chief Officer explained that the proposal is to reshape as an advisory service with two members of staff to work with schools to support the pupils. This is similar to the model provided by other authorities. Schools will be consulted on whether the costs will remain in the Individual Schools Budget.
- A Member commented on the specialist intervention provided that has aided pupil progression and expressed concern about adding to the significant demands on class teachers. The Member questioned how pupils will continue to receive the same support and how this will be monitored. The Chief Officer confirmed that support for teachers will be unchanged as per the Welsh Government model. Children with statements will continue to receive the same support. The priority is to ensure that support for teachers continues. Declaring an interest as a School Governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin and as a Member of Monmouthshire Association of School Governors, County Councillor A. Easson commented that the proposal is for a reduction of days and it will be difficult to

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

deliver the service. The Chief Officer and Cabinet Member were asked to note this point.

- A Member drew attention to school transport from Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw and Ysgol Gwent Is Coed and sought reassurance that the budget pressure wouldn't adversely impact on provision of transport to either school. The Chief Officer confirmed there is no charge for transport to Welsh medium schools. There will be more pupils to be transported to Ysgol Gwent Is Coed in future and in time a larger bus may be required.
- The Chair raised the increased cost of foster carers to bring the authority into line with other areas, also the provision of therapeutic fostering support for more difficult young people and the continuation of use of agencies. It was questioned if these items added together, will cause a pressure on the budget. A written response will be provided to the Select Committee. Reassurance was provided that whilst it has been difficult to attract sufficient foster carers, the increase to a Gwent-wide rate will allow access to a larger pool of foster carers, better service for users, better terms for foster carers and less use of fostering agencies. The ability to care for children in their own community was welcomed.
- The Chief Officer, Children and Young People referred to Project 5 developed on a regional basis, and now known as MyST (My Support Team) which provides intensive fostering support for young people in settings outside the county. This will be grant funded for two years.
- A Member asked about the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Review including Mounton House Special School, and queried the budget proposal. The Chief Officer explained that the funding is based on the number of pupils on roll and the value of the Age Weighted Pupil Unit. The school has been funded as if school is full and this year it is proposed to fund on pupil numbers closer to those in school to a value of £275,000. This is under consultation.
- Assurances were provided that there is sufficient staff to supervise at Mounton House Special School. It was confirmed that the ALN Review will return to the Children and Young People Select Committee before being considered by Cabinet.

Committee Conclusion:

It was agreed to approve the report recommendations with the amendment:

In the absence of the Senior Officer from Social Care, that questions about additional possible budget pressures around the costs of fostering are sent to the Chair as a written answer for the Chair to circulate to members of the committee and also to add that individual points that have been raised are specifically addressed when this issue goes forward to the all member seminar and finally to Cabinet.

6. Month 7 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report

Purpose:

The purpose of the report is twofold,

- to provide all Members with holistic information on the revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority at the end of reporting period 2 which represents

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

the financial outturn position for the 2018/19 financial year based on October inclusive activities.

- to be considered by Select Committees as part of their responsibility to:
 - assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place,
 - monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework,
 - challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspends, and
 - monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.

Recommendations Proposed To Cabinet

1. That Members consider a net revenue forecast of £316,000 surplus, and approves the local education authority costs of compromise agreements being borne by the corporate redundancy budget rather than Children and Young People Directorate.
2. That they also recognise circa £1.3m extra capital resourcing provided recently and note that the revenue forecast is predicated on capitalising £444k expenditure accordingly, a decision that still needs to be considered by full Council in February 2019.
3. That Members note the 86% delivery of the budget setting savings agreed by full Council previously and a need for remedial action/savings in respect of £727k savings reported as delayed or unachievable by service managers.
4. That Members consider the capital outturn spend of £40.8m, introducing a £1m anticipated overspend and the presumption made around financing.
5. That members note the anticipated use of reserve funding predicted at outturn and the low level of earmarked reserves, which will notably reduce the flexibility the Council has in re-engineering services and facilitating change to mitigate the challenges of scarce resources going forward.
6. Members note the extent of movements in individual budgeted draws on school balances, and reported recovery plan intentions as a consequence of their approving changes to Fairer Funding guidelines since month 2

Member scrutiny:

The Assistant Head of Finance/ Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report and drew the Select Committee's attention to the colour coded sections that highlight the Committee's portfolio. The Finance Manager, Children and Young People provided commentary on the Month 7 Budget position. Questions were invited from Select Committee Members as follows:

The Chair reminded the Select Committee Members that it was important to compare the effectiveness of services last year with this year, and look for new pressures and to consider if there are enough funds.

- A Member asked when the ALN Review will be completed and also enquired if there was a shortfall in funding from outside authorities using Mounton House services. The Chief Officer clarified that the ALN Review will be brought back to this Committee in February. Regarding recruitment, it is a matter of striking a balance on the amount that we charge. There are reducing pupil numbers in terms of income received from other authorities. There is some ability to flex

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

costs but teacher ratios and property costs have to be adhered to. As pupil numbers decrease the cost per pupil to other authorities rises. We need to be mindful of excessive costs that could discourage buy in from other authorities. The position is regularly reviewed.

- A question was asked why the budgets of the four comprehensive schools move frequently between surplus and deficit. It was responded that circumstances such as staffing changes can impact unexpectedly. Specifically, it was confirmed that the costs at Chepstow School are well controlled and the reduction in surplus was due to unplanned circumstances. The authority is aware of the position and the costs; help is being provided to prepare for future pressures.
- The Chair asked if there have been any unexpected pressures in year. It was responded that generally, Children's' Services, school balances, the unknown quantity of the Alternate Delivery Model, the change in Management Support for SRS and the Council's staffing remain pressures and make forecasting difficult.

In Children and Young People Directorate, the Chief Officer explained that balancing investment in schools and services, standards and outcomes are the priority. Unknown pressures related to the building projects, staffing and supply costs remain.

- The Chair referred to capitalising expenditure due to be considered by full Council in January 2019. The report will be considered by Full Council in February 2019.

Committee Conclusions:

The Committee accepted the report recommendation as presented and thanked the officers for their participation.

7. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 29th November 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record subject to the addition of Mike Fowler to the list of those present.

8. Actions arising from the minutes

The action list from the last meeting was noted.

The Chair reported that he had written the letters requested at the last meeting to Kirsty Williams AM, Cabinet Secretary for Education, in relation to best practice for refugee children. She responded that she is aware of the good practice and thanked the Select Committee for drawing this to her attention:

With regard to the request for additional time in external exams for refugee children, it was suggested that the WJEC should be contacted. This has been done.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 24th January, 2019 at 10.00 am

Regarding the Partnership agreement between the local authority and its governing bodies, a meeting has been arranged with representatives of the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors to resolve some aspects. It is hope to report back developments in February 2019.

9. Children and Young People Select Forward Work Plan

The following additions were suggested:

- Chief Officer's Annual Report before April
- Review of admissions and catchment – feedback from Members welcomed
- A special meeting was proposed on School Transport and Family Support Services for mid-January 2019 but has not taken place.
- New Curriculum: Suggest EAS present information in April 2019
- Options for Mounton House Special School– moved to February 2019
- Nursery provision (30 hours offer) for March/April invite Newport who administer process
- Play Sufficiency Assessment: Feedback in February or March
- Young People's Mental Health Support in Schools: Chair to liaise with Chief Officer
- Report on standards in schools: February 2019

10. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

The Council and Cabinet Work Planner was noted.

11. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting as 21st February 2019 at 10.00am

The meeting ended at 12.10 pm

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held
at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd
January, 2019 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: County Councillor M. Groucutt (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Jones, M. Powell and T. Thomas

County Councillor R. Harris, P. Jones and V. Smith attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair.

Mr. P. Strong NEU

Ms. L. Wakerley (Monmouthshire Association of School Governors)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Julie Boothroyd	Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Cath Saunders	Children and Young People Directorate
Jane Rodgers	Head of Children's Services
Richard Jones	Performance Manager
Sian Schofield	Management Information Officer
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

INVITED GUEST:

Ms. S. Radford - Service Manager South East Wales Adoption Service)

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors L. Brown, and S. Woodhouse

Mr. M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

1. Declarations of Interest.

County Councillor M. Groucutt declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 5 – Partnership Agreements with schools, as he is a school governor at Llantilio Pertholey Primary School and King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 5 – Partnership Agreements with schools, as she is a school governor at King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

County Councillor T. Thomas declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 5 – Partnership Agreements with schools, as he is a school governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

County Councillor D. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 3 – Performance report on Children's Services and agenda item 6 – School Attainment, as he is a governor at Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni and Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School.

County Councillor R. Harris declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 4 – South East Wales Adoption Service and agenda item 5 – Partnership Agreements with Schools, as he is a County Council member of the Fostering Panel and a governor at Deri View and Llantilio Pertholey Primary Schools.

County Councillor P. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 4 – South East Wales Adoption Service, as she is a member of the Gwent Adoption Panel.

Ms. L. Wakerley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 5 – Partnership Agreements with Schools, as she is the Chair of Governors at Trellech Primary School.

Mr. P. Strong declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 6 – School Attainment, as he is employed at Caldicot School as an Exams Invigilator.

2. Performance Report - Scrutiny of the six month performance reports on Children's Services.

Context:

To scrutinise quarter 2 2018/19, performance of Children's Social Services.

Key Issues:

The report card explains Children's Social Services key process and performance during the first half of 2018/19 alongside benchmarking of performance in 2017/18. This comprises of data from the measurement framework introduced in 2016/17 as part of the Social Services and Well-being Act and further information that is used to evaluate performance.

The performance measures are a blend of quantitative and qualitative data which includes asking children and parents about their experience of social services and whether this has contributed to improving their well-being. The qualitative measures within the framework are derived from questionnaires to children and parents that social services are supporting. During September, questionnaires are posted to recipients and further responses are being encouraged to provide a higher return rate.

Welsh Government has not published local authority level performance data for 2017/18. Wales level means and quartile data for 2017/18 has been published and is

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

included in this report. Qualitative benchmarking data for 2017/18 has not been published.

There are ongoing discussions and workshops on revising the standards and measures as part of the Social Services and Well-being Act performance framework in the future.

Member Scrutiny:

- With regard to Children on the Child Protection Register, there are variances in numbers of children coming onto the register. The Authority is undertaking some focussed work for families early on with a view to obtaining early identification of any potential risks. There has been an increased number of contacts. There are fewer children coming into the system but these children tend to have more complex needs and often have vulnerable issues that need to be addressed. The correct support is then identified and provided to these children.
- Children coming onto the Child Protection Register or who require Looked After services, generally, there tends to be more complexity with the family dynamic of these children. It can take some time for these children to recover from the trauma that they have experienced. Specialised services and finely tuning the services required helps the children in their recovery but recovery can take some time.
- There are some Looked After Children in the system that have parents who were also Looked after Children or had been in receipt of services provided by Children's Social Services. When assessments are undertaken of Looked After Children, this is one of the issues that is also investigated.
- Monmouthshire's Looked After child rate remains low across Wales and the Authority is in keeping with other comparable local authorities. The general trend across Wales is increasing in rate. Greater Gwent is a region within Wales where the rate has outstripped other regions.
- In terms of Monmouthshire's Child Protection rates, there has been a significant increase in the rate. However, this can be a temporary situation and such 'spikes' can occur at various stages with an overall upward trend. Large sibling groups can affect the data from month to month.
- Monmouthshire's Looked After Children numbers remain below the Wales average. However, Child Protection numbers have increased above the Wales average.
- In response to a question raised regarding whether the Directorate has adequate resources to deal with the increases identified in the report, it was noted that there are enough resources to respond to the requirements coming through. However, this can have an implication with a view to resources having to be stretched at times. Statutory responsibilities are met and the Directorate responds to where the highest need is required.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

- On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair congratulated staff within Children's Services for improving the number of assessments completed on time up to 90%.
- The process that underpins the work undertaken by Children's Services with children and families is multi-agency focussed. Children's Services is one of the key partners around two regional boards that look at wider inter agency work, e.g., The Children and Families Partnership Board and the South East Wales Children Board.
- With regard to kinship foster carers, if there is a kinship arrangement in place, the kinship carer will go through the same assessment and panel process as a generic foster carer.

Committee's Conclusion:

- The Select Committee noted the report and thanked officers for sharing the complexities of looking after children within the County.
- Reassurance was noted that adequate resources are in place within the Children's Services Department.

3. South East Wales Adoption Service - Report on performance 2017/18 and briefing on regional financial policy.

Context:

To scrutinise the performance of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and the National Adoption Service (NAS) for 2017/18. The report is required in line with the Regulations as set out in The Local Authority Adoption Service (Wales) Regulations 2007 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (Joint Adoption Arrangements) (Wales) Directions 2005.

Key Issues:

The National Adoption Service (NAS) was launched in November 2014 with a remit of expectations to:

- Eradicate drift for children in care.
- Eliminate waiting lists for training and assessment of adopters.
- Improve the matching process for children.
- Allay adoption breakdowns by improving adoption support.
- Streamline the process to ensure better linking for children.
- Provide a wide choice of placements through increased use of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAA).
- Ensuring consistent delivery across Wales.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

The key aims of the National Adoption Service are essentially that children are found adoptive homes that meet their needs and the adoption process is completed in a timely manner to avoid drift for children. The emphasis on collaboration is working well and the five regions in Wales are becoming a constructive network to improve performance and promote best practice. Performance has improved across all the regions and although not always consistent due to extenuating circumstances, regionalisation is improving outcomes for children.

The South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) is one of the larger regions and has a high level of demand for services. Overall, the Looked After Children population for the region rose by 19% in recent years, with significant increases in Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent a contributory factor. The ethos of SEWAS reflects that of the National Service, in that the overarching goal is to improve outcomes for children. There have been improvements in some of the performance measures, but clearly more work to do.

Member Scrutiny:

- Many children referred to the SEWAS in recent years have complex needs, often with a history of trauma. Preparation work has to be undertaken and support provided before these children can be placed with their adopted parents.
- The assessment process is very stringent. The assessing social worker will outline the criteria with prospective adopters to ascertain which child would be suited to their family life.
- Matching meetings are held which also follow a very stringent process to ensure that the most suitable adopter is identified for the child. The child's social worker is invited to these meetings to provide input.
- The regional service being provided is working very well and has been a considerable benefit to Monmouthshire in driving up standards and practice and in understanding the needs of adopted children and parents.
- The final decision regarding placement of a child will come to Monmouthshire County Council.
- The Adoption Panel comprises of a variety of people with the relevant experience within this field. The process is very detailed and robust covering every aspect with a view to ensuring the correct match is made for the child.

Committee's Conclusion:

- The Select Committee noted the report.
- Select Committee had been made aware of the complexities involved within this service and congratulated the Service for the positive work being undertaken.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

- Good collaboration existed between the local Authority and the South East Wales Adoption Service.

4. Partnership Agreements with Schools - Scrutiny of the partnership agreement required under the Education Act between the Local Authority and the governing body of schools which agrees their respective functions.

Context:

To scrutinise the development of the Statutory Partnership Agreement and influence the way in which the Council works with schools and governing bodies.

Key Issues:

The Partnership Agreement includes those statutory functions that must be included, which are:

- How the local Authority will promote high standards and support schools, in particular, those giving cause for concern, in special measures or requiring significant improvement and the factors the local Authority will take into account in identifying schools giving cause for concern.
- The support the local Authority will provide for governing bodies where the authority has exercised its powers of intervention or suspended the right to a delegated budget, and in instances where an inspection of a school causes concern or the local Authority appoints additional governors.
- Responsibility of the local Authority to provide governors with support.
- The reports which the governing body provides to the local Authority on discharge of its functions.
- The responsibility of the school and local Authority for Health and Safety matters and their duties to employees and other persons in respect of these matters.
- The responsibility of the school and local Authority for the control of school premises and their maintenance and repairs and how the governing body may exercise its powers to provide community facilities.
- The local Authority duties regarding the defrayment of expenses and maintaining schools.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

In addition, for schools providing primary education the Agreement must include:

- The exercise by the local Authority and governing body of functions that will promote high standards and secure effective transition of pupils from Key Stages 2 to 3.
- Local Authority target setting in relation to education plans and governing body target setting in relation to pupil performance and absence.

For schools providing secondary education the Agreement must include:

- The exercise by the local Authority and governing body of functions that will promote high standards and secure effective transition of pupils from Key Stages 2 and 3 and from key Stages 3 to 4.
- Local Authority target setting in relation to education plans and governing body target setting in relation to absence.

Head teachers and the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors have been consulted on the Partnership Agreement and views and comments will be included in the final document that will be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

Options Appraisal:

Option 1: Do Nothing:

This option had been discounted, as it is a legislative requirement to have a partnership Agreement in place.

Option 2: Local Authority drafts Partnership Agreement for Governing Bodies to agree.

This is the preferred option, as it is a legal requirement to have a Partnership Agreement in place as defined by the Education Act 2002.

However, if the local Authority fails to reach an agreement with a school governing body, the local Authority may draw up a statement establishing how it and the governing body are to discharge their respective functions in relation to the school.

Member Scrutiny:

- The Maintained Schools Partnership Agreement was a positive document which was needed as it establishes the expectations of schools and the local Authority. However, there were some concerns raised by the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors regarding the responsibility outlined in the document for governing bodies and the lack of acknowledgement of the professional staff within schools in some areas.
- The relationship between school governors and head teachers / senior leadership teams is important. It was considered that the document required

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

some further work to incorporate the views expressed by the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors.

- Concern was expressed that some prospective school governors might consider the document to be overwhelming in its current form with regard to the responsibility requirements outlined and therefore, might decide not to pursue taking up the role of a school governor.
- In response to a question raised regarding suspension of staff when child protection / safeguarding issues are raised, it was noted that in these circumstances, all head teachers will contact the Local Authority Lead for Safeguarding and Education to discuss the incident / referral / allegation that has been made. It is important that the Authority takes care of any allegation made of a professional nature. This would then escalate up into a process set down by the All Wales Child Protection schedules. Therefore, the Authority has to work via this process.
- In response to questions raised in respect of the Partnership Agreement, it was noted that:
 - The responsibilities in consultation with Senior Leadership Team was included in the document. This was also on the recommendation of some head teachers. Head teachers are clear on what they have to report to the governing bodies.
 - The document outlines the responsibilities for governing bodies and the local Authority.
- The Partnership Agreement is drawn up on the basis of Welsh Government guidance and is being used by local Authorities across the Education Achievement Service (EAS) region. However, there is a need to explore accountability.
- It is the governing body who runs a school and the head teacher is employed to do this.
- This document is a significant re-fresh of the original Partnership Agreement.
- Work is required with a view to ensuring that governing bodies understand the depths of their responsibility as school governors.
- Monmouthshire's Partnership Agreement is in accordance with other nearby local authorities' Partnership Agreements.
- The Partnership Agreement also needs to be proof read before being finalised.
- It was noted that there is one trade union representative seat on the Schools Budget Forum. The Chief Officer for Children and Young People stated that he

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

would check to see whether a trade union representative is regularly attending this meeting. Also, whether the procedure for election and re-election is being undertaken.

Committee's Conclusion:

- The Partnership Agreement required further work in light of the views expressed.
- Governing bodies have statutory duties to uphold.
- Statute is clear that governing bodies need to establish positive relationships with their respective local authorities.
- It was proposed that a meeting be established between Officers and Monmouthshire Association of School Governors, which will be chaired by County Councillor M. Groucutt with a view to reviewing the Partnership Agreement.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

In favour of the proposal	- 4
Against the proposal	- 0
Abstentions	- 0

The proposition was carried.

We resolved that a meeting be established between Officers and Monmouthshire Association of School Governors, which will be chaired by County Councillor M. Groucutt with a view to reviewing the Partnership Agreement.

5. School Attainment - To receive the final school results at key stage 4 (include Fisher Family Trust data which maps progress from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4).

Context:

To scrutinise pupil performance at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

Key Issues:

The Select Committee received a presentation and report in respect of pupil performance within Monmouthshire at Key Stages 4 and 5.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd January, 2019 at 2.00 pm

Member Scrutiny:

- Btec qualifications will still be counted but only 40% of a pupil's overall qualifications that needs to be achieved to get to the thresholds can be a Btec qualification.
- Moving to a two year linear examination process is more onerous on students who are having to perform in an examination environment at the end of the two year study period. Previously, classroom based assessments with coursework made it easier for schools to support FSM children with their studies.
- With regard to the trajectory of Monmouthshire's FSM cohort from foundation phase through to Key Stage 4, the gap between FSM children and non-FSM children is around 10% at Foundation Phase and is 47.9% at Key Stage 4. Therefore, something significant happens during this period which needs to be addressed, not only in school but via a multi-agency approach outside of school.
- The Authority is working closely with schools to ensure that they are providing all learners with the opportunity to follow a curriculum that meets their needs.
- With regard to the Level 2 inclusive, in the previous four years Monmouthshire has been the highest performing Authority for three of those four years.
- With regard to students residing in Monmouthshire but receive their education via Welsh medium or faith schools out of County, the outcomes of these children are not captured as this information is compiled at a school level within that local authority.
- In response to a question raised regarding issues around the language of teaching and the effect that this might have on some children, in particular FSM children, it was noted that, on occasions, there can be a middle class bias in terms of the teaching in secondary schools. The emergence of the new Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Framework helps to structure and provide professional development in a more systematic way.

Committee's Conclusion:

- The data shows that Monmouthshire's secondary schools are addressing the needs of a wide ranging group of young people.
- However, there are issues that require further attention and it was being demonstrated that the Authority is in the process of addressing issues that require further attention.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held
at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd
January, 2019 at 2.00 pm**

- The Authority is ensuring that its schools hold themselves to account and is working with schools.

We resolved that the School Attainment report be presented to Cabinet and that the Authority does not overlook the areas of weakness outlined in the report.

The meeting ended at 4.12 pm.

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