

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor M.Groucutt (Chairman)
County Councillor L. Jones (Vice Chairman)

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

County Councillors V. Smith and P. Clarke attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair.

Added Members:

Members voting on educational issues only:

Dr. A. Daly (Church in Wales)

M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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| Claire Marchant | Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Housing |
| Will McLean | Chief Officer for Children and Young People |
| Paul Keeble | Traffic and Network Manager |
| Nikki Wellington | Finance Manager |
| Tyrone Stokes | Finance Manager |
| Hazel Ilett | Scrutiny Manager |
| Richard Williams | Democratic Services Officer |

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor S. Woodhouse and Mr. K. Plow

1. To note the appointment of the Select Chair

We noted the appointment of County Councillor Groucutt as Chair.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

We appointed County Councillor L. Jones as Vice-Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor L. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct as her Mother is the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health and was present at the meeting.

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any references made to secondary schools within Monmouthshire, as she is a governor of King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

4. Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

5. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting dated 16th February 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

6. Director of Social Services Annual Report 2017

Context:

To receive the Director of Social Services annual report 2017 – Improving Outcomes. Improving Lives.

Key Issues:

- The report is currently in draft format.
- To highlight the issues in terms of Children and Young People and Children's Social Services.
- The format of the report is now nationally prescribed and aligns with the Social Services and Wellbeing in Wales Act.
- The report is scheduled to be presented to Full Council before the end of July 2017 and will be presented to Cabinet at its July 2017 meeting.

Member Scrutiny:

- In response to a question raised regarding monitoring the safeguarding of children, it was noted that management of risk is the business of social services. Referrals are received and the risk is assessed at that point. For children where further investigation is required, the risk is managed in various ways. The Directorate either puts in place a care and support plan or the risk is managed through a multi-agency decision onto the child protection register.
- More children are being managed through a child protection plan.
- One of the Directorate's priorities for this year is to focus its family support services at two places. One of these is pre the edge of care, providing more intensive family support options prior to children coming into the looked after

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

system. The other aspect is to focus resources around family support, which is pre-child protection register.

- Therefore, it is better to engage with families earlier to manage risk prior to child protection registration.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the lack of data in some sections of the report, the Chief Officer informed the Committee that the report is still in draft format and the purpose of bringing the report to the Select Committee at this stage is to incorporate any comments that the Select Committee might have so that the final version reflects those comments made.
- It was noted that there is also an annual report regarding complaints in Children's Services which is brought to the Select Committee.
- With regard to the format of the report, the Act that we adhere to in Wales, which came into being from April 2017, refers to people rather than adults or children. The report is therefore people focussed, rather than just children or adults focussed.
- In terms of complaints regarding child protection issues, the Directorate is learning as a service and working with staff to support them to resolve more matters at stage 1 of the complaints procedure and to reduce the number of complaints proceeding to stage 2. However, if an allegation is made that requires investigation, this is undertaken in a multi-agency way with Gwent Police. The Directorate is effective in resolving and closing down this type of investigation quickly. Where there has been less support for families is when the Directorate has gone through a child protection process and children no longer live with their family, there is a significant grieving process that that family has to go through and there are very sparse services being provided at this stage. Therefore, this can lead to complaints being made against the Directorate around the process undertaken. More needs to be done to help the families going through this stressful time.
- A key priority for improvement for the Directorate is to recruit more foster carers within the County. Investment has been made into the in house foster carer service in order to try to improve recruitment figures for in house foster carers. However, to date, this has not worked. The Directorate is working closely with the Authority's marketing division and major campaigns are ongoing around initial recruitment. There are a number of foster carers that are coming through. One of the features of Monmouthshire is that we have foster carers but many are choosing to foster for the agencies rather than the Authority. There is a need to ascertain why this is the case, which is being looked at.
- Monmouthshire Family and Friends Carers means that when a child is placed with, for example, a relative or friend of the parents, this will often be referred to as a kinship carer.

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

- Monmouthshire County Council does not operate any residential care facilities. The Authority has one residential educational establishment which is Mounton House. This service is regulated and inspected by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW).
- Welsh Government has commissioned a significant piece of work, which the Authority is a part of, which is looking at outcomes for looked after children who came into the system in 2013/14.
- Outcomes for Key Stage 4 for looked after children is a priority for the authority. It is a relatively small cohort but it is important that these children are known and identified early. There is good work between the school and whoever is providing the care to ensure that they are supported out of school, as well as in school. It is hoped that the gaps will begin to be filled that the children have experienced. Work is continually being undertaken to ensure that provision for those children is appropriate and that the right courses are available to them. Officers will be talking with Estyn regarding supporting vulnerable groups next week.
- Under the new National Outcomes Framework, surveys are required to be undertaken every year of adults with care and support needs of carers and of children and young people who come in to contact with the Authority. The framing of the questions has been nationally prescribed so the questions don't always flow the way that the Directorate might like to ask questions in terms of people's experiences of the Directorate.
- There is a need for the Directorate to look in more detail regarding the differential between carers and those with care and support needs and how the Directorate can continue to support carers.
- The Authority has a service called Face to Face Counselling which is run by the Youth Service and provides support for children and young people across all schools within Monmouthshire at both primary and secondary sectors. This work is supported by a Welsh Government grant and by core funding from the Authority. The Authority has counsellors that go into schools and there are people who work with the children in school. Other routes are also being investigated to expedite this matter, such as a model which will shortly be implemented where the Authority will be working with Primary Mental Health which will provide a quicker referral process.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding ways to increase in house foster provision by providing council tax exemptions for foster carers, as undertaken in some local authorities in England, it was noted that council tax exemption has not been considered by the Authority but the Directorate would be willing to look at any practice from any authorities across the UK where they have managed to have success in increasing in house foster care provision.

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

- It was noted that there was a need to intervene earlier where vulnerable young people are concerned establishing preventative approaches enabling more children to remain with their families. There are a range of services currently available, i.e., Families First, the Acorn Centre, Flying Start and health visiting. At a strategic level via the Public Service Board, the Authority is working with Public Health Wales regarding the first 1000 days of children with a view to looking at the interventions required from pre-birth up to pre-school. This is critically important and necessary to refocus resources along these lines.
- In response to a question raised regarding the percentage of agency staff being used, the Chief Officer will obtain and provide the Member with the figure.
- At the beginning of 2016/17 there were 17 agency workers across Children's Services. This has been steadily reducing throughout the year. At the end of the year there were 8 agency workers within the service which is a reduction of over 50% in year.
- In Management positions from team manager upwards, the Directorate no longer has any agency workers in place.
- Over the previous 18 months, the reputation of Monmouthshire Social Services has improved considerably and recruitment over this period has been positive.
- In response to a question raised regard the Child Protection process, it was noted that the Directorate has, in the last six months, moved the Team Around the Family from Partnerships into Children's Services and the Directorate is reviewing and re-modelling that approach.
- A review of Family Support is also being implemented with the first phase being to align services into a more coherent set of services.
- Last year the performance indicator for completion of children's assessments was at 75% at the end of the last financial year. A permanent Team Manager is now in place and is monitoring this regularly. The performance indicator is now in excess of 90%.

Committee's Conclusion

- The Chair thanked the Committee for asking some searching questions and in time, the Select Committee will be looking to monitor issues for improvement that have been raised.
- On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked the Chief Officer for presenting the report and providing clear and precise answers to questions raised and asked the Chief Officer to pass on the thanks of the Committee to her staff for the work that they are undertaking.

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

7. Corporate Safeguarding Policy

Context:

To inform the Select Committee of the introduction of the new Corporate Safeguarding Policy

Key Issues:

- Safeguarding children and adults at risk has the very highest priority in the Council.
- Safeguarding, under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014, is recognised as everybody's responsibility and considerable progress has been made over the last five years to systematically embed safeguarding culture, knowledge and practice.
- All staff, paid and unpaid, and Councillors share a responsibility both corporately and individually to ensure that children and adults at risk are treated with respect and protected from harm.
- Whilst the Council does have an existing safeguarding policy in place it is heavily focussed towards educational settings and other child and family services. Safeguarding is therefore firmly embedded in some Directorates and service areas. However, there are varying levels of understanding with regard to expectations in other parts of the organisation.
- This policy will be a mechanism to evaluate understanding, systems and training throughout the Council and ensures that safeguarding is firmly placed as core to the business of the council.

Member Scrutiny:

- It was noted that all Members should be trained to at least Level 1 in safeguarding.
- The mechanisms attached to the policy will help the authority to adhere to the Corporate Safeguarding Policy. The Policy refers to the self- evaluative process which now all service areas will be required to undertake.
- In undertaking the self-evaluations, it enables individual service areas and their departmental management teams to evaluate where they are and to put in place action plans to address the areas where improvement is required. These self-evaluations are expected to be completed by 31st July 2017.
- In terms of training for Members, there is a session being held in July 2017. A register will be kept of Members who are unable to attend the session with a view to holding a further session to ensure all Members have received the training.

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

- A training plan will be established to ensure that staff may receive appropriate training, the majority of which will be held in their work settings.
- All Monmouthshire school governors are required to undertake the training which will be monitored via the individual school's self-evaluation process.
- Training will also be provided by the regional Safeguarding Boards.
- Concern was expressed that schools were not being provided with the full information relating to the Prevent Strategy and therefore potentially not being made aware of its importance. It was noted that schools have been through the training and should therefore be aware of this strategy.

Committee's Conclusion

- This is an area where the Council has acted promptly after weaknesses had been identified in previous performance.
- On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked officers for the preparation and presentation of the report.
- It was considered that the Authority could look with more confidence and secure practice throughout the County and will help to guarantee a higher level of safeguarding across the whole County and its services.

8. Update on Safeguarding arrangements - Kerbcraft Scheme

Context:

Prior to submission to Cabinet on 5th July 2017, to provide the Children and Young People Select Committee Members with an update on the action plan approved by Council on the 20th March 2017 (appendix 2 of the report titled 'Wales Audit Office report on safeguarding within the kerbcraft scheme in Monmouthshire County Council').

Key Issues:

- Following a review by Wales Audit Office (WAO) of the provision of kerbcraft training by Monmouthshire County Council staff on behalf of the Welsh Government, an action plan was reported to Council on 20th March 2017.
- Appendix 1 of the report replicates the action plan but in italics under relevant headings an update is provided.

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

- One of the actions requires the preparation and implementation of new procedures for the provision of kerbcraft training and that the future operating model be reported to Cabinet. The Children and Young People Select Committee has the opportunity to review the report before it is presented to Cabinet.
- During March and April 2017, officers reviewed previous and current working arrangements and developed a new procedure for the provision for kerbcraft training.
- The new policy and working procedures are provided in appendices 2, 3 and 4 of the report.
- A major weakness highlighted by WAO was the control and recording of volunteers that supported Monmouthshire County Council in the training of children at each school.
- Since WAO expressed concern over the management of volunteers in August 2016, none have been used and all kerbcraft training has been provided by Monmouthshire County Council kerbcraft trainers, occasionally with assistance from school support staff.
- The new procedure limits the use of volunteers to six at any one time so the checking and recording of safeguarding information relating to the volunteers becomes much more straightforward (previously records for up to 80 volunteers were required).
- This change in procedure, along with clear instructions on how the scheme is to be delivered, will offer greater confidence that safeguarding is controlled in the provision of this service.

Member Scrutiny:

- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that at the moment, the Authority might struggle if the new model was accepted. However, the Authority would be able to use the six volunteers on an area wide basis but with more resources from internal sources, this should be achievable. It is hoped that the core volunteers might be able to provide their services on more occasions, i.e. fewer volunteers but able to provide more of their time for longer.
- A significant amount of time will be saved by reducing the programme from 12 to 9 weeks. Officers have advertised through the volunteering network and a number of people have expressed an interest in becoming one of the six core volunteers.
- Monitoring of the Kerbcraft Scheme will indicate how it is progressing. The information that is currently reported back to the Welsh Government is limited. However, it is hoped that by extending the monitoring process to obtain further information and feedback from the children themselves and from the 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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

hopefully this will provide more meaningful information to be fed back to Welsh Government.

- The Welsh Government is updating its procedures with a view to making the scheme more meaningful.

Committee's Conclusion

- On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked the Traffic and Network Manager for presenting the report to the Committee.
- The Scheme is seeking to address the issues raised with the Authority by the Wales Audit Office (WAO).
- The Select Committee will receive an update report in due course.

9. Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2016/17 Outturn Statement

Context:

To receive information on the revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of period 4 which represents the financial outturn position for the 2016/17 financial year.

Recommendations proposed to Cabinet:

- That Members consider a net revenue outturn underspend of £884,000, an improvement of £805,000 on quarter 3 outturn predictions.
- Members consider a capital outturn spend of £40.03 million against a revised budget of £40.98 million, after proposed slippage of £17.5 million, resulting in a net underspend of £951,000.
- Consider and approve the £17.5 million capital slippage recommended, paying attention to those schemes described in para 3.3.6 of the report, where slippage has been requested by the service manager but is not being recommended to slip (£198,000).
- Considers the use of reserves proposed in para 3.4.1 of the report.
- Supports the apportionment of general underspend in supplementing reserve levels as described below:

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| Priority Investment Fund | £570,000 |
| Redundancy & Pension Reserve | £114,000 |
| IT Transformation Reserve | £100,000 |

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

Capital Receipts Generation Reserve £100,000

Total £884,000

- Members note that the low level of earmarked reserves will severely reduce the flexibility the Council has in meeting the challenges of scarce resources going forward.
- Members note the significant reduction in the overall school balance at the end of 2016/17 and supports the continuing work with schools to ensure that the Council's Fairer Funding scheme requirements are met and that the overall schools balance remains positive in 2017/18.

Member scrutiny:

- Chepstow Comprehensive School has made significant improvements in reducing its budget deficit.
- There has been a significant decrease in schools' budget reserves across the County in this financial year.
- It was noted that it was the responsibility of school governors to set their schools' budgets. It was recognised that there are fixed costs within schools. However, where there are areas in which schools can make savings, officers are working closely with schools to ensure that the savings are utilised.
- There are a number of projects ongoing within schools looking at ways in which the schools might be able to save money.
- Officers are working closely with the WLGA and are looking at the Business Manager model with a view to achieving some funding.
- Concern was expressed that some additional responsibilities were going into schools but the funding for these additional responsibilities was not coming forward. The Finance Manager stated that she needed to look into this matter which is occurring across the authority and not just in the Children and Young People Directorate.
- In response to a question raised regarding Phase 3 of the Additional Learning Needs Review in respect of Mounton House School, it was noted that the school had been allowed a three year recovery plan. In terms of Deri View Primary School, the Special Needs Resource base (SNRB) is still there. However, the saving required was made by reducing the numbers of staff due to the fall in pupil numbers.
- In response to a question raised regard whether schools could work more in clusters with a view to creating more inset days to save money and receive

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, 22nd June, 2017 at 10.00 am

training on the new curriculum, The Finance Manager stated that she would take this matter back to the Chief Officer for Children and Young People.

- In response to a question raised regarding successful future grant funding from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) equating to £0, the Finance Manager informed the Committee that the grant funding became available in 2016/17 and it wasn't allocated at that time when the Authority received the grants, it was to be used across the schools. For example, for the Abergavenny cluster, the Authority had received a grant which was to be divided amongst the schools. At the end of the year the money had been spent by the schools.

Committee's Conclusion

On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked the Finance Officers for presenting the report.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

10. Actions arising from the previous meeting

We received and noted the list of actions that had been completed arising from the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting held on 16th February 2017. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The Chair has met with the Chief Officer for Children and Young People and with the Chief Officer, Social Care and Health to discuss future issues for scrutiny.
- Discussion will take place at the next Select Committee meeting in July 2017 with regard to ascertaining the priorities of the Committee and formulating the forward work plan.

11. Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Work Plan

We received the Select Committee's forward work plan. In doing so, the following points were noted:

July 2017 Select Committee meeting:

- Report by the Scrutiny Manager regarding co-option onto the Select Committee.
- Work Programme discussion.

September 2017 Select Committee meeting:

- Discussion with Engage to Change (E2C – the County's youth council).

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, 22nd
June, 2017 at 10.00 am**

12. Council and Cabinet Business - Forward Plan.

We received the Council and Cabinet Business Forward Work Plan and noted its content.

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Select Committee that it was the responsibility of officers to suggest items to be put forward to Cabinet and then it is the responsibility of the Democratic Services Section to populate the work planner.

We are currently at the beginning of a new administration and it has been highlighted to officers that there is a need to populate the planner going forward.

13. Timings of future Children and Young People Select Committee meetings

We resolved to continue to meet at 10.00am, as outlined in the Council diary.

The meeting ended at 11.35 am.