

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 Tuesday, 11th July, 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor M. Groucutt (Chairman)

County Councillors: L. Brown, M. Lane, M. Powell, J. Watkins and S. Woodhouse

County Councillors R. Harris and V. Smith observed the meeting.

Added Members:

Members voting on educational issues only:

M. Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Matthew Gatehouse	Policy and Performance Manager
Jane Rodgers	Safeguarding Service Manager
Sian Schofield	Management Information Officer
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors: D. Jones, L. Jones and T. Thomas

K. Plow (Association of School Governors)

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests made.

2. Public Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 22nd June 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

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4. Performance report 2016/17

Context:

To scrutinise the 2016/17 performance information under the remit of the Children and Young People Select Committee, this includes:

- Reporting back on how well the Authority performed against the objectives which the previous Council set for 2016/17.
- Information on how the Authority performed against a range of nationally set measures for Children's Social Services used by all councils in Wales.

Key Issues:

The Council currently has an established performance framework, this is the way in which the Authority translates its vision - *building sustainable and resilient communities* - into action and ensures that everyone is pulling in the same direction to deliver real and tangible outcomes.

Over the coming years the shape of public services in Wales is likely to change significantly influenced by two very significant pieces of Welsh legislation, The Well-being of Future Generations Act and The Social Services and Well-being Act, as well as financial pressures, demographic changes, changes in customer needs and expectations and regulatory and policy changes. Services need to continue to think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities, look to prevent problems before they arise and take a more joined-up approach.

The Council has recently completed two substantial assessments of need as a result of this legislation. This information has provided a much deeper evidence base of well-being in the County and, as required by the Future Generations Act, this has been used to produce the Council's well-being objectives and statement 2017.

The shift in focus in the well-being objectives means that activities will need to be focused on longer term challenges at a community level rather than some of the internal process issues and outputs that could sometimes be found in its predecessor, The Improvement Plan. When dealing with more complex societal challenges it will take longer for measurable change to come about and longer still to be able to evidence those changes in a meaningful way. In the short-term there will continue to be milestones that can be used to track the Authority's improvement journey. This will be supported by a range of performance reports select committee can request as part of its work programme and the structure of performance reports received by committee will be revised to reflect this emphasis.

Appendix 2 of the report sets out performance achieved in 2016/17 against the actions and performance measures approved by Council in May 2016 as part of its Improvement Plan. As well as being presented to select committees the objectives will be included alongside a further evaluation of performance in 2016/17 that will be

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reported to Council and published by October 2017. The Welsh Government has recently consulted on plans to repeal the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 which means this is likely to be the final plan and report in this format.

Appendix 3 of the report provides a report card on Children's Social Services performance in 2016/17. This presents data from the new measurement framework introduced in 2016/17 as part of the Social Services and Well-being Act and sets it within the context of the requirements of the act and contribution to the Council's objectives. The performance measures are a blend of quantitative data and qualitative data collected through questionnaires to children and parents about their experience of social services and whether this has contributed to improving their well-being. Targets for 2016/17 were set where feasible and targets for 2017/18 have been included where available and applicable, these will be better informed when comparable local authority data is available in autumn 2017.

Activity that contributes to the delivery of some objectives cross cuts select committee remits and these have also been reported to the other relevant committees.

Member Scrutiny:

- It was noted that some parents are electing to not take free school meals provision for their children but instead taking universal credit. Concern was expressed that this might affect the free school meals (FSM) figures regarding attainment. Select Committee Members were informed that the figures for attainment included those students who were eligible to receive free school meals and not just those students who were choosing to receive free school meals.
- There is a pattern emerging in that people are making choices regarding the benefits that they receive which can exclude them from receiving school meals depending on which path they take. This matter is being looked at collectively across the Gwent region to understand this issue better.
- The number of children eligible for free school meals does have an effect on the schools in terms of the pupil development grant. The lower the percentage of children in a school that is eligible for free school meals changes who the authority compares that particular school with.
- In response to a question raised regarding performance targets, it was noted that the Education Achievement Service (EAS) works closely with schools regarding target setting and it looks at attainment of the potential of individual pupils. Therefore, it is about setting targets that are realistic but also maximising the ability of those pupils.
- In response to a question raised regarding the decline in the Foundation Phase performance indicator, it was noted that there has been a slight fall back. However, the Committee was informed that the Authority is achieving at the highest level in Wales in terms of the Foundation Phase which equates to

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perhaps one or two children not achieving the expected level at the outcome 5. A single child in a class with special educational needs will have an impact on the performance indicator. Throughout the year officers have been talking to schools about the Foundation Phase regarding the level that is being achieved. The expected level +1 will indicate the improvements that schools are making at the Foundation Phase. This information will be identified in the Chief Officer's report which will be received by the Select Committee later in the year.

- In response to a question raised regarding the reduction in the numbers of teaching staff, it was noted that schools have been under financial pressure in recent years and schools have had to make some difficult decisions regarding their staffing structures. Where there are children being retained in County with additional learning needs then this will be recognised and funded accordingly. Support is not being cut back for those children that require it in main stream schools.
- It was noted that the number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) statements have declined in light of the operation of the School Action Plus Resource Assist (SAPRA). As the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal Bill progresses through the National Assembly, this will lead to an end to Statements and SAPRA and there will be Pupil Development Plans for all children with identified ALN. In terms of where the Authority is now, there is a significant increase in requests for statements and SAPRAs from schools in advance of the change in legislation.
- Future reports will provide actual figures alongside percentage values.
- Free School Meals outcomes are not where the Authority would expect them to be and schools are being challenged so that the Authority knows where the Free School Meals pupils are in their development and what they need in terms of greater support to reach the expected levels.
- In response to a question raised regarding the number of agency staff working in children's services, it was noted that it is the intention to have a permanent and stable workforce and to ensure that the right person is appointed. It was noted that a target of only having three agency staff working for the Authority was ambitious as there is a lot of competition to obtain social workers. However, progress has been made.
- In response to a question raised regarding child protection, it was noted that in comparison with other local authorities child protection figures are low within Monmouthshire and are within the Authority's target levels.

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Committee's Conclusion

- The Chair thanked officers for presenting the report to the Committee.

We resolved to receive the report and noted its content.

5. Schools Budget Forum

We resolved to appoint County Councillor M. Groucutt to represent the Children and Young People Select Committee on the Schools Budget Forum.

6. Work Programme Report

Context:

A 'planned approach' to Scrutiny Forward Work Programming is required in order to maximise the effectiveness and added value of scrutiny activity, ensuring focus upon topics of the highest priority for the Council and those which reflect the public interest.

Key Issues:

Work programme discussion meetings have taken place between the Chair of the Select Committee and the relevant chief officers for education and social services and the following topics had been highlighted which might require scrutiny:

- Children's Services Improvement Programme ~ workforce strand, Young People's Accommodation, Needs of Looked After Care Children and Care Leavers, National Fostering Framework.
- Regional Integrated Autism Service.
- Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- Budget Pressures within services.
- Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.
- Delivery of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 requirements.
- Discussion with 'Engage 2 Change' Youth Forum on their priorities.
- Additional Learning Needs Reforms.
- School Attainment.

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Member Scrutiny:

The following topics were identified by Select Committee Members for scrutiny:

- Update on the Successful Futures report.
- Update on schools' progress.
- Children's mental Health / counselling service, obesity in Children and anorexia – These are some of the topics that will be presented to the Select Committee via the Children's Wellbeing report.
- Young Carers and the Youth Council.
- Multi agency care and planning regarding the support provided to Syrian refugees, in particular the children that have moved into Monmouthshire. There is the potential to undertake some joint work with the Strong Communities Select Committee regarding this matter.

The following topics were identified by the Chief Officer for Children and Young People:

General Reporting:

- Additional Learning Needs (ALN) – Review and provision / ALN Bill / Readiness and training.
- Schools – quality indicators from new inspection framework / EIB and Intervention Monitoring.
- Performance – outcomes at end of key stages / groups / attendance / exclusion.
- Pressures.
- Self Evaluation Reports (SER) updates at agreed points.
- Inclusion updates – wellbeing / attitudes to learning / pupil voice.
- Non-maintained / Early Years – provision / outcomes / childcare offer.
- National Categorisation / Estyn outcomes / Progress towards addressing recommendations.
- Post 16 education provision / Engagement and progression.

Annual update:

- Welsh Education Achievement Plan (WESP).

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Childcare sufficiency Audit.

- Play Sufficiency Audit.

Member Seminar:

- New Estyn framework.

Additional:

- External Reference Group.

The following topics were identified by the Head of Children's Services:

- Update on the Improvement Plan for Children's Services.

Committee's Conclusion

- The Chair thanked Select Committee Members and officers for submitting the topics for consideration by the Select Committee.

We resolved to adopt the process outlined in the report to develop the Select Committee work programme, taking into account:

- The responsibility to scrutinise performance and key risks in order to provide effective challenge to the Council's Executive;
- The duty to scrutinise wider public services provided to Monmouthshire residents as a result of powers afforded to them through the Local Government Measure;
- Capacity / resources when prioritising topics for scrutiny and agreeing their inclusion into the work programme.

7. 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 22nd June 2017.

8. Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Work Programme

We received and noted the Select Committee's forward work plan.

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9. Council and Cabinet Business - Forward Plan

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

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee will be held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Usk, on Thursday 14th September 2017 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 11.50 am.