

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Joint Select Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 23rd March, 2017 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Jones (Chair)
County Councillor P. Farley (Vice Chair)

County Councillors: R. Edwards,
M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative), L. Guppy, R. Harris,
D Hudson, K Plow (Association of School Governors), M. Powell,
A. Wintle and P. Clarke

ALSO PRESENT:
D Hudson – Co-Opted Member

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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| Hazel Ilett | Scrutiny Manager |
| Wendy Barnard | Democratic Services Officer |
| Kim Sparrey | Joint Planning and Commissioning Assistant |

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors R. Chapman, M. Hickman, D Hill, D. Jones, P. Watts, S. White
and D. Blakebrough Hill

1. Election of Chair

County Councillor P. Jones was elected Chair.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

County Councillor P. Farley was elected as Vice Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made by Members.

4. Monmouthshire Young Carers' Strategy 2017-2020

Key Issues:

What is the Monmouthshire Young Carers Strategy?

1. The strategy will bring a voice to and visibility of young carers in Monmouthshire. This strategy is the tool by which we can ensure the young carer's voice is heard to instigate change, action and improvement for their lives of young carers. This is the first strategy young carers have had in Monmouthshire.

Outcomes for Carers

2. The Strategy focuses on achieving improved outcomes for young carers, and to minimize the reliance placed upon young carers in providing inappropriate and

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disproportionate, health, wellbeing and social care for the person they are caring for. By minimising the level of care that young carers undertake they will have the ability to develop as a child and young person in their own right, so that when they reach adulthood they can feel confident that the choices they make will not have a negative impact on the cared for. The outcomes identified are to provide preventative mechanisms so the cared for needs do not engulf that of the young person.

Outcomes for Service Provision

3. The strategy will shape a cohesive and collaborative partnership that ensures the earliest identification and support of young carers in Monmouthshire over the next 3 years. The strategy has clearly defined 8 themes, identified and agreed by young carers, which offer young carer focussed outcomes.

4. This document will be used in partnership with young carers, service providers (both statutory and third sector) and commissioners as a tool to identify where ownership is placed in providing long term sustainable plans to meet the needs of young carers, and for the provision of care planning. The strategy will be used as a monitoring tool for current and future service provision.

Member Scrutiny:

A Group of Young Carers were welcomed to the meeting by the Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Joint Children and Young People's and Adults Select Committee and introductions were made.

The Committee was informed that a letter had been received expressing concern that funding was only confirmed until September 2017. An update was provided by the Chief Officer, Directorate for Children and Young People who confirmed that the Young Carers Project has been funded to date to the fullest extent recognising its work and outcomes. It was explained that this year, Welsh Government (WG) is changing the conditions of Communities First and Families First funding and consequently, the authority must ensure it is meeting expectations of how money is spent. In view of this, it has been decided to conduct a review of all projects.

The Chief Officer acknowledged the points made in the letter and understood the challenges of maintaining a project when funding isn't guaranteed. It was anticipated that the outcome of a proportional and pragmatic review will hopefully secure funding into the medium term thus providing better certainty for the future. It was confirmed that the authority is keen to work with the Young Carer's Project and also that the review does not interrupt its work.

In response to concerns that Monmouthshire's approach is different to other authorities, it was confirmed that this was due to the scale and size of the county and that, regrettably, the Council is not in a position to underwrite grant funding.

It was pointed out that Monmouthshire is the first county in Wales to establish a Young Carer's Strategy but also receives the least amount of money from WG. It was clarified that the funding is used for a range of services including Team around the Family, Young Carers and Face to Face Counselling. A priority is to ensure that the projects deliver the best outcomes for families overall and it was assured that the review will be completed as early as possible.

In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that communication to all young carers regarding the review will be via the Young Carer's Project and young carers will be involved and be able to submit evidence.

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Following presentation of the Young Carer's Strategy, Members were invited to make observations:

A Member questioned how to reach young carers that have not yet been identified and suggested that this should be predominantly through schools. It was added that the profile of the role should be raised e.g. by being a regular agenda item on school governors' agenda and including a question on admission forms. In response it was confirmed that Young Carers have identified that their biggest form of support is through schools as they offer the best chance of identification. It was explained that the Young Carer's Project has a policy that will integrate into school processes. It was also reported that Estyn is considering adding Young Carers to the school inspection framework. It was explained that the Young Carer's Trust will introduce a Young Carers in Schools Award which should appear on governors' agenda to raise awareness of the Award Framework. This will be introduced from April onwards if the funding is available.

A member asked how children who are caring for a family member out of county are identified. It was noted that this is based on where the person cared for lives. The general principle is that the school will offer baseline support for Young Carers. The strategy will establish a means of capturing Young Carer data from schools.

A Member questioned if health professionals could assist more with the identification of young carers to offer support and it was responded that Young Carers are often not recognised as such and that the strategy will encourage conversations e.g. GPs. There is a simple GP registration scheme to alert them that there is a young person in a caring role. It was also responded that Social Work Teams would be a good starting point.

A Member questioned if there is anyone specific who deals with bereavement and its effects. It was explained that schools have adopted bereavement policies to offer pathways for support and the opportunity for face to face counselling.

A Member asked, if the strategy was approved as presented and was being evaluated in the future, what would be different. It was explained that improved work in schools would be expected (as that is where there is the biggest opportunity to provide positive support). It was expected that the strategy would be implemented from primary school with the aim to provide the earliest intervention of the correct support for both the Young Carer and their family and to avoid crises where possible to better allow them to be a confident and happy. It was added that, projecting forward 2/3 years, it would be positive to identify the involvement of more colleagues from different departments and that support is "just given" as required.

In response to a question about what would be expected of schools and what training would be available for school staff, it was explained that the Young Carer's Strategy Group, consisting of involved partners, is committed to support and provide training. Young Carers have expressed an interest in being trainers and want to be involved in the programme design.

The Committee were given an account of a Young Carers' awareness day held in January in a secondary school via PSE lessons to explore the role of young carer. These sessions identified three unknown young carers. It was added that academic research suggests that 12% of a school population will be Young Carers which demonstrates the importance of availability of support. The Award Framework ensures there is a school policy for the identification of Young Carers to highlight to school staff, school leaders and governors and encourage sharing of information.

It was confirmed, in response to a question, that each school must have a point of contact to facilitate contact between the Young Carers' Service and the school.

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The Chief Officer, Children and Young People acknowledged the challenges being faced by young carers and emphasised the importance of making information better available and better managed to provide seamless co-ordination of support. It was recognised that schools play a fundamental role and must understand the conflicting needs involved. The Chief Officer committed to bring the strategy and Awards Framework to the attention of Headteachers and to clarify expectations.

The Cabinet Member, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health, thanked the Young Carers' Group for their impressive contributions that will give strong messages to decision makers. It and suggested that the strategy should be revisited in 12-18 months to explore the extent of the changes made to hold those responsible to account. He congratulated all involved in the excellent strategy document.

A Member recognised of importance of education but was also keen to raise the importance of leisure time and queried if there were any schemes or opportunities to offer respite. The Committee was informed that there is a Young Carers Festival later this year in Southampton. Some Young Carers will be attending and a funding bid is being prepared. It was confirmed that respite is something that is being looked at to provide time away from the role with peers ensuring that the person being cared for will be adequately supported.

A Member questioned what happens when a Young Carer leaves school and wants to go to university. It was confirmed that support from Young Carers' Project in school is critical. It was noted that application forms did not ask if the young person was caring for anyone. It was also explained that it can be worrying not knowing if it will be possible for the young carer to do what they want to do because they are undertaking the role.

The Committee welcomed the contribution of Young Carers throughout the meeting and benefited from information relating to their personal experience, practical problems and insights. The Young Carers were keen that everyone who is a young carer is recognised as such and receives the support they need to undertake the role. They commended the strategy and looked forward to the changes it will make. They welcomed the opportunities for school staff and teachers to receive training, and suggested that the topic should be included in teacher training programmes and Continuous Professional Development events for teachers as they strongly felt that teachers did not always know how to deal with young carers.

The Young Carers provided evidence through their personal experiences of how the support they had received had changed their lives.

The Young Carers explained the importance of friends and of also respecting that some people do not wish to share their experiences. They also agreed that there was a need to provide support for all young carer age groups by continuing support for Young Adult Carers through to college or university. The transition years were identified as particularly important times.

Recommendations:

1. That the Select Committee approves the publication of the strategy.
2. That Select Committee approves the strategy as a monitoring and evaluation tool for service provision and future planning of services for carers and service providers.

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Chair's Comments:

The Chair remarked upon the excellent strategy document presented and thanked the Officer responsible. The group of Young Carers were also thanked for attending the meeting and for their participation and contribution.

The Chair acknowledged that the strategy document is in draft and looked forward to seeing the final version in due course. The strategy will be added to the Children and Young People Work Programme and it was requested that an update on progress is provided at a future meeting.

The Chair referred to the estimate that up to 12% of a school's population can be Young Carers and was pleased that the opportunity had arisen to raise awareness. The importance of monitoring progress of the strategy report and funding was identified.

The recommendations were agreed as presented.

5. Safeguarding Progress Report

Key Issues

- i. A Safeguarding Strategy and Activity Programme was endorsed by the Cabinet and approved by the Council in July 2016. This include a Strategy to steer the Safeguarding policy, changes to the WASCG terms reference and membership to ensure senior accountability and for whole authority safeguarding, and a programme of safeguarding activity supported by a measures scorecard.
- ii. These have provided direction to drive safeguarding standards and activity. WASCG has reviewed the original 19 sections of the activity programme into five clear priorities to better articulate and focus the programme. This report recommends that Cabinet members endorse this renewed programme to support clarity of safeguarding priorities and to facilitate future measurement and reporting.

The five priorities are:

- i. Good governance
 - ii. A safe workforce
 - iii. A preventative approach
 - iv. Robust protection
 - v. Safe services – delivered through commissioning arrangements, grants, partnerships and volunteering.
3. These priorities are used to report on the progress against the programme agreed by Council.
4. A revised safeguarding policy will be presented to the Council in early

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2017/18 and subsequent reports on whole authority safeguarding will be brought at mid and end of financial / reporting year in line with other Council reports.

Recommendations:

That members:

- i. Note the progress and challenge the self-assessment of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-ordinating Group (WASCG);
- ii. Support the intention to focus the safeguarding programme approved by the Council in July 2016 against five key priority areas.

Member Scrutiny:

A Member asked for details of the Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-ordinating Group and was informed that the Group is chaired by the Chief Officer, Social Care, Health and Housing and membership includes colleagues from each Directorate at Chief Officer or Head of Service level. Its aim is to monitor the Whole Authority Plan and to ensure accountability for what happens regarding safeguarding in each Directorate. Some other members of the group include Officers with responsibility for developing volunteering and colleagues from the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit. It was further queried why there were no elected member on the group and responded that such inclusion could be considered when the new Council is in place.

The Cabinet Member, Social Care, Safeguarding and Health recalled that he had initially attended the Group meetings, and reported after some time the focus became more operational and therefore it was less appropriate as a Cabinet Member role. However, he agreed that membership of an elected member could provide a wider perspective at this time.

A Member referred to the Appendix and a statement that *“Directorates are at different developmental levels in fully integrating safeguarding into operational activity e.g. Kerbcraft”* and questioned what can be done to accelerate the developmental progress in some Directorates commenting that it was disappointing to hear of the gap that had been exposed regarding Kerbcraft. He questioned how to ensure a consistent approach. In response it was accepted that there had been a failure in processes and that there is a role for the Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-Ordinating Group to drive through quality assurance processes within a clear governance framework. Development of the “Safe as a Consequence” tool relies on sound self-assessment, which depends on a good understanding by everyone to be effective. It was explained that the Safeguarding Unit will work to ensure that service areas develop their understanding to sustainably and comprehensively improve the standard of self-assessments.

A Member asked what range of mechanisms were available to ensure that sports clubs using council premises meet safeguarding standards. It was explained that there is a checklist to ensure that the club has e.g. child protection policy and an identified child protection lead. It was assured that there is a robust approach to safeguarding within Tourism, Leisure and Culture. A further question was asked concerning how bookings are dealt with regard to implementation of the checklist and it was suggested that the Head of Tourism, Leisure and Culture could provide a written response to provide more details.

A Member drew attention to the fact that a large amount of training has been carried out with the Licensing Department and that point should be included in subsequent reports. It was agreed that it would be helpful to provide practical examples for the new council when elected to demonstrate how safeguarding mechanisms are applied.

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A question was asked regarding who is the responsible person for sports facilities outside leisure centres. It was explained that, if it is school premises, Headteachers should assure themselves that whoever is using the premises is safe and suitable, and that the right systems are in place. It was added that how well this approach is embedded needs to be explored across the council.

The Cabinet Member suggested that new elected members should undertake Level 1 safeguarding training.

Chair's Comments:

The Chair reported the opinion of the Committee that an elected member joins the Whole Authority Safeguarding Co-ordinating Group.

The Chair accepted the offer for the Committee to be provided with examples to illustrate how systems are implemented.

The recommendations were accepted as presented.

Officers were thanked for their attendance at the meeting.

The meeting ended at 2.04 pm