

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, 17th September, 2015 at 10.00 am

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

County Councillors: L. Guppy, R. Harris, M. Hickman, D. Jones and M. Powell

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officer, Children & Young People
Youth and Community Manager
Finance Manager
Youth and Community Officer
Youth and Community Officer
Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors P. Clarke, S. Howarth and K Plough (Association of School Governors)

1. Declarations of Interest.

County Councillor L. Guppy declared personal non prejudicial interests pursuant to the Members Code of Conduct as a member of Caldicot Youth Group.

2. Public Open Forum.

No members of the public addressed the Committee as part of the public open forum.

3. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting:

Members confirmed and signed the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting held on 23rd June 2015. In doing so the following points were noted:

- Members require an update regarding the uptake of ICT in schools and progress report **(ACTION – SH)**
- County Councillor D. Jones was present at the meeting.

Members confirmed and signed the minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting held on 9th July 2015, noting the following amendment:

- Item 6, point 4 - typographical error should read closest not closet.

4. Scrutiny of Performance Reports on Youth Service Income Generation:

The Chairman advised the Committee that Items 6 and 7 of the agenda may be integrated, and therefore scrutiny may overlap.

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Context:

Members received a report for scrutiny detailing the progress made on Monmouthshire Youth Service's income generation and savings (Members were referred to budget Mandate 42), in response to the request for an update made by Members at the 21st May 2015 meeting.

Key Issues:

In accordance with the 2015-16 approved budget, Monmouthshire Youth Service had to find £200k to sustain its current provision whilst improving services to young people in Monmouthshire.

Income generating programmes had been developed so that the Youth Service would be less dependent on local authority funding but continued to provide a high quality service to young people in Monmouthshire. The Youth Service had taken a creative approach to exploring funding streams from external sources although these sources were reducing and becoming more competitive in the current financial climate.

Income generation would not be sustainable in the long term if the delivery of services continued in the same way to young people.

Annual grants were not confirmed for 2016/17 and should they not be received there would be a greater shortfall.

Member Scrutiny:

We heard that the Youth Service were engaging with the community and were currently working on marketing material. A Member offered to add the advertising information to his next newsletter.

We heard that the anticipated shortfall expected at the end of the year was anticipated to be £140,000.

Members noted that the Youth Service was an invaluable service and noted that implications of the failure of the service would have an effect on all areas of the organisation. The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning reassured the Committee that there were no thoughts to close the Youth Service and any shortfall would be defended and sought from other areas.

A Member referred to the deflection of staff and management time to income generation, and questioned if this was too great a burden and at a cost to the service. The Youth and Community Manager reassured Members that to date there had been no reduction to frontline services, and management were mindful to the wellbeing of staff. Officers were currently exploring models of alternative working methods.

Concerns were raised regarding the profits made through the training courses, in response it was explained that the figures were low currently but when the programmes were imbedded they could then move forward. In future the costs could be increased when the market was established.

Recommendations:

The report recommended that Members receive the performance report and take account of its content in decisions that may affect young people in Monmouthshire.

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Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Committee commended officers and noted the invaluable service. It was noted there were some concerns regarding profitability but Members were assured this would improve going forward.

Members were reassured by the Cabinet Member support.

The Committee agreed to scrutinise the item in 6 months.

5. Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Monmouthshire NEET Reduction Strategy.

Context:

Members were presented with the draft Monmouthshire NEET Reduction Strategy (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and action plan, which would be delivered by Monmouthshire's schools and Youth Service.

Key issues:

The Monmouthshire NEET Reduction Strategy sets out its commitment to creating better outcomes for young people aged 11-25 through increasing engagement and progression of existing and future provision, with the aspiration of creating a NEET free county.

Schools, Education Welfare Service, Pupil Referral Service, Youth Service and Careers Wales with the LA would work together with a single goal, to support and improve outcomes for young people at risk of becoming NEET or who those who were NEET. The model had reduced Monmouthshire NEET figures to 1.7% in 2015 (2nd lowest in Wales).

Whilst the good work achieved in Monmouthshire Schools to date in identifying and preventing disengagement at all stages of their education was acknowledged, this strategy would build on schools' contributions and would work toward an early identification system, a suitable curriculum and learning pathway to support skills development and qualifications.

Primary Schools have a key role to play in the early identification of children at risk of becoming NEET.

Member Scrutiny:

Members were informed that the 3 year funding would be received on a quarterly basis. We heard the figures were:

- Inspire to Achieve, the pre-16 programme – total programme cost is £827,180, with a match funding element of £454,949, the ESF injection of £372,231.
- Inspire to work – total programme cost is £516,947, with a match funding of £284,321, bringing an income of £232,626.

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A Member questioned if there were links with Community Learning as part of the work in association with Coleg Gwent. We heard that MCC would be working with Coleg Gwent on the Inspire to Achieve programme. Adult Education had been approached in regards to European funding and may be looking to come in on the Skills for Growth Project. Further information to be provided (**ACTION – HJ**).

It was noted that the report was part of a bigger arrangement with other Authorities and clarification was requested regarding the scrutiny arrangements. The Cabinet Member explained that authorities would likely scrutinise their individual areas of the agenda. It was agreed that this could be looked into further. It was noted that Newport City Council were leading the project, and all authorities were following the same model.

Members stated that it would be preferable to receive figures rather than percentages to enable efficient scrutiny. Further information was also requested regarding the information received from the consultees.

We heard that the figures in the report were produced in relation to the school attended rather than the place of residence, which could be an issue where pupils were residing in England but attending schools within Wales.

The Committee would welcome further updates on the figures following implementation of the plan.

A Member questioned benchmarking processes undertaken. In response we heard the consultee groups held discussions surrounding good working practices, and significant progress and impact had been made through work through schools and transition groups.

Clarification was required regarding children residing in Wales but being schooled in England. We heard that the Local Authorities held responsibility for individual being schooled in their authority. The individual could access MCC services outside the school environment.

Recommendations:

The report recommended that Members receive and scrutinise the draft NEET strategy prior to submission to Cabinet for approval.

Committee's Conclusion:

Chair's Summary:

The Chairman expressed thanks to the Officers.

It was recognised that the committee had discussed and scrutinised the report as part of a pre-scrutiny process.

The committee resolved to recommend that an update is brought back to Children and Young People Select three months after implementation.

6. Work Programming:

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We received and noted the Children and Young People Select Committee work programme.

Members questioned if the Education Strategic Review should be sighted by the Committee. The Cabinet Member explained that the Education Strategic Review had been resurrected as an ongoing piece of work led by Cabinet, being an over-arching strategy looking at short, medium or long term aspects of education. Reports would be brought to Select Committee where policies were established. All Members were welcome to sit on the review panel, whether it be at every meeting or as and when.

A concern was raised regarding The Capability Policy, and if Select Committee would have an opportunity to look at the changes. **(ACTION – SM)**

7. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting.

We noted the next Children and Young People's Select Committee Meeting would be not be 15th October 2015 as stated on the agenda. The correct date for the next meeting:

- Wednesday 21st October 2015 at 2.00pm – Budget Scrutiny

The meeting ended at 12.40 pm