

## 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, 28th June, 2018 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, J.Watkins, S. Woodhouse and  
M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Hannah Jones	Youth and Community Officer
Ruth Donovan	Assistant Head of Finance

### **APOLOGIES:**

Dr. A. Daly and K Plow (Association of School Governors)

#### **1. Election of Chair**

County Councillor M. Groucutt was elected as Chair.

#### **2. Appointment of Vice Chair**

County Councillor L. Jones was appointed as Vice Chair.

#### **3. Declarations of Interest**

County Councillor M. Groucutt declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a Governor of King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

County Councillor R. Harris declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a Governor of Deri View Primary School.

#### **4. Public Open Forum**

Two members of the public were present at the meeting. One did not wish to make a contribution to the meeting. Also present was County Councillor David Jones of Powys County Council, and Mr. Geoff Burrows from Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) who were interested in the approach to scrutiny in Monmouthshire.

#### **5. Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018 were confirmed as a true record.

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### **6. Care Leavers Report (Pre-decision scrutiny of a new policy due for Cabinet consideration on 4th July 2018)**

#### **Purpose:**

This report seeks approval to exempt all care leavers up to the age of 25 from paying council tax.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. To award 100% discretionary council tax relief to all care leavers aged between 8 to 25 who are residing in the County.
2. To adopt the proposed relief scheme noted in 4.4.2 below

#### **Key issues:**

1. In October 2017, Torfaen County Borough Council became the first council in Wales to take the decision to exempt care leavers from paying council tax, effective from April 2018. Since then the Welsh Revenues Group and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) have been lobbying Welsh Government to change Council Tax Legislation to exempt all care leavers across Wales.
2. To date the Welsh Government has decided not to update the Council Tax Legislation and have instead encouraged Council's to introduce their own schemes under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This Act gives the Council power to reduce a liability for council tax in relation to particular cases or by determining class(es) of cases that it may determine and where national discounts and exemptions cannot be applied.
3. The Council has responsibility as a Corporate Parent to support young people in its care. In agreeing the Corporate Parenting Strategy on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Cabinet agreed to ensure that young people in our care have the opportunity to live a safe, happy and fulfilling life.
4. In extending this relief to care leavers from both Monmouthshire and other Local Authorities this will enhance our corporate parent responsibilities and help to support all care leavers living in the County to move into adulthood.

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

The report was presented by the Asst. Head of Finance (Revenues, Systems & Exchequer) and Select Committee Members were invited to comment and ask questions.

- Members commended this small but worthwhile gesture.
- It was queried what other neighbouring counties do and explained that there is a mixture of approaches. Some have introduced a scheme; others are developing schemes currently.
- It was questioned if there was any impact on benefits or due to the roll out of universal credit. It was explained that this exemption would be included after all other exemptions and discounts are applied.
- It was also confirmed that the scheme would apply to care leavers from other authorities living in Monmouthshire.

**Committee Conclusion:** The Chairman noted that every Select Committee Member is in favour of the proposal. The report was commended to proceed to Cabinet and the Officer was thanked for bringing the report.

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### **7. A Great Start for All**

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with the opportunity to scrutinise and contribute to the draft Monmouthshire NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Reduction Strategy 2018 -2021.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. The committee to scrutinise the draft Monmouthshire NEET Reduction Strategy 2018-2021 and make recommendations accordingly.
2. Subject to any recommendations made, Committee to endorse the Draft Monmouthshire NEET Reduction Strategy for submission to Cabinet for approval on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018

#### **Key issues:**

1. This draft Monmouthshire NEET Reduction Strategy demonstrates our commitment as a Council to address NEET reduction in our county in order to create better opportunities and outcomes for our young people, through a partnership approach.
2. Committee have previously been made aware of the Welsh Government Youth Engagement and Progression Framework 2013 and the Authority's responsibility to provide a delivery model centred on individual need. The six key areas of the framework are embedded in the draft Monmouthshire NEET Reduction Strategy and reflect added value whilst addressing the needs and aspirations of Monmouthshire's young people.
3. The Strategy details a range of programmes to address NEET reduction which include
  - Inspire2Achieve which provides education and well-being support, qualifications for young people aged 11-16 years most at risk of becoming NEET; and
  - Inspire2Work which provides employability support, qualifications and work placements for unemployed young people aged 16 -24 years.

In order to meet the ambitions of the NEET Reduction Strategy, the Inspire programmes will need to be extended and additional match funding will be required. The extension will help sustain the reduction in the number of school leavers that are NEET and continue low levels of unemployment amongst 16 – 24 years olds. Without this additional match funding potentially 397 young people could be at risk of becoming NEET over the next four years. A report requesting the additional match funding will be presented to Economy and Development Select Committee for scrutiny on 19th July with a view to requesting a formal decision from Cabinet in due course.

#### **Member scrutiny:**

- In response to a question about lessons learnt, it was explained that the previous strategy was vague, didn't have targets and lacked reference to working with partners. The new strategy has measurable performance targets that link to the Service Improvement Plan (SIP). There has been positive feedback from partners and schools. The Chair welcomed the inclusion of measurable targets.

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- A Member commended the policy to support young people who lack social and employability skills, and have limited qualifications. Another emphasised the importance of finding out what the young person is interested in and for schools to engage with small companies to encourage employment/training placements.
- Select Committee Members were reminded of the importance of celebrating young people's successes and they were referred to Declan's story on the Hub. <http://hub/mcctoday/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=729>
- Answering a question about the early identification tool, it was accepted that there are some anomalies in the scoring arising from individual circumstances (e.g. due to unauthorised attendance) and noted that conversation with the school is key. Other models have been considered but the tool works and is supported by the secondary schools.
- A Member noted that indicators show that 16 year olds are in more need but there is less available for the older groups e.g. graduates come home and can't find work. It was questioned what apprenticeships are available for all NEET young people not just those who have been educationally disadvantaged and how this position can be improved with local employers and schools. It was suggested that schools can be reluctant to discuss apprenticeships preferring students to remain for A Levels.

It was responded that if a child leaves school at 16, the school notifies Careers Wales so that the young person is tracked. A monthly multi-agency meeting is held to consider barriers and to create action plans. Concern was noted that the number of young people unable to engage is not reducing. The Inspire2work programme works on employability skills. The Welsh Government is also introducing a new scheme called Working Wales to support those with multiple barriers to employment, education or training.

There are currently 14 apprenticeships in the Council and services are encouraged to consider the benefits of employing apprentices. Enquires are being made with Procurement to find opportunities within the supply chain to offer apprenticeships. Other opportunities may arise from City Deal.

It was acknowledged that employability for all is an action point. The role of schools was questioned and the Chief Officer responded that this was discussed with the four secondary headteachers and the Principal of Coleg Gwent especially how to broaden opportunities post 16 and post 18. Higher Education is the preferred route, but it was acknowledged that there was significant competition for high level apprenticeships. This matter will continue to be explored especially linked to City Deal.

- The point was made that pupils are receiving support from Year 8 to avoid NEET status and school staff were credited on their work to limit the numbers.
- A Member suggested that the Council should offer apprenticeships for ages 16-24 with or without qualifications and that more work experience weeks should be offered for school aged pupils.

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

The Chair, on behalf of the Children and Young People Select Committee, confirmed that the Committee had scrutinised the draft report prior to consideration by Cabinet and agreed that an addition should be made that there is a need to increase the number of apprenticeships available within Monmouthshire County Council.

The officer was thanked for delivering the report and providing clear reasons why changes to the previous policy are proposed. The Select Committee look forward to annual reports to monitor progress.

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### **8. Presentation by Chief Officer: Review of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Services**

#### **Purpose:**

This report seeks to provide Cabinet with an update on the statutory consultation exercise undertaken in relation to the proposed new delivery model of services for pupils with Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion services across Monmouthshire.

This report also seeks permission from Cabinet to amend the consultation timeline, allowing for an opportunity for further reflection on the feedback received during the consultation process and consider how this may impact on the proposed delivery model going forward.

#### **Recommendations:**

To approve the amended timeline associated with this statutory consultation process, which proposes that Cabinet take their final decision on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 rather than 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018 as originally proposed.

#### **Key Issues:**

1. On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018 Cabinet gave approval for the local authority to engage in the statutory consultation process which proposed a new model for the delivery of ALN and Inclusion services.

2. The proposed new delivery model outlined the following:

*Establishment of a new special school that will deliver the full range of provision required to meet the needs of children and young people aged 3-19 with ASD, SEBD, PMLD and severe learning difficulties within the County. The existing Mounton House Special School will close as a result of the proposal and form the site of the new special school.*

*The new special school will offer provision for a wide range of Additional Learning and behavioural needs delivered through multiple satellite settings placed across the County. The proposal will ensure provision is provided locally to children whose needs cannot be met within mainstream settings and require more specialist support. The existing Pupil Referral Service (PRS) will also be enhanced to provide a greater range of outreach support and provision for children and young people at risk of exclusion.*

3. The consultation period commenced on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018 for a period of 6 weeks, concluding on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

4. During the consultation period, officers engaged in an extensive consultation process with the community and key partners. Consultation sessions with children, staff, governors and parents were undertaken for the 8 schools identified as being directly affected by the proposed new delivery model. A consultation meeting with staff and management committee for the Pupil Referral Service was also undertaken.

5. Following the closure of the consultation period, officers are now analysing the responses received and preparing the consultation report required to engage in the next stage of the statutory process.

6. The consultation process thus far has identified many positives and on balance shows support for the proposed new delivery model. The general themes around the positive feedback received were:

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- The proposals will ensure equity across the county in terms of the provision offered for children with ALN and behavioural difficulties through the delivery of a single management structure
- The proposals provide greater opportunities for children and young people to be educated within their communities alongside their peers.
- The proposals enhance the support to schools through the delivery of onsite inclusion centres, which will provide opportunities to support children often at risk of exclusion.
- The clear approach of early intervention, development of skills and capacity within the school system is welcome and aligns to the National and Regional position.

7. However, the process has also identified some key themes / areas of concern which in summary include:

- The management arrangements for the proposed new delivery model, which would see the new special school taking responsible for the satellite Special Needs Resource Base (SNRB) centres as opposed to the schools on which they are currently hosted.
- A concern regarding the lack of equity associated with the proposals and as a result the distances that children and young people may still need to travel even with the provision located within Monmouthshire.
- The proposed designations for some of the satellite SNRB centres located on school sites and whether the current provision available can meet these needs
- How the needs of children with moderate learning difficulties would be met outside of an SNRB environment
- The proposal for a mixed gender, full age range provision for children with ASD and SEBD on the same site raised some concerns both in terms of safety of pupils and general management arrangements.

3.8 An amendment to the timeline as proposed below would allow for an opportunity to fully explore and reflect on the concerns raised prior to bring further recommendations to Cabinet.

<b>Consultation Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet to receive a copy of the consultation report with recommendations on a delivery model against which statutory notices will be published	<b>5th September 2018</b>
Statutory Notices are published and statutory objection period opens	<b>17th September 2018 – 15th October 2018</b>
Cabinet to receive objection report and take final decision on whether to implement the proposals	<b>5th December 2018</b>
Proposals Implemented	<b>Between 1st April 2019 and 1st September 2019</b>

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#### Member Scrutiny:

Following a presentation from the Chief Officer, Children and Young People, Members made observations as below:

- In response to a query, it was confirmed that responses from individuals and other bodies (e.g. Special Needs Advisory Project - SNAP Cymru) are strongly in favour of the proposals.
- Regarding the proposed timescale and the new Code of Practice, it was confirmed that some change is needed for the new Code of Practice, and work is already in progress with regional partners e.g. a state of readiness for the new act assessment has been undertaken by the regional group.
- County Councillor M. Powell declared an interest as a Governor of King Henry VIII Comprehensive School. In response to a question, it was confirmed that currently girls' needs are being met in Headlands School, Penarth or Talocher School, Monmouth, for which there are cost implications so provision in county is under consideration.
- A Member questioned safety and general management in terms of the potential for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) pupils to influence the behaviour of Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) pupils, and also the complex teaching methods to provide for differing needs. A further question was asked about pupils with both Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and SEBD. Assurances were sought that neighbours of the school would be kept informed of developments. The Chief Officer assured that the site will be carefully managed. It was clarified that the needs of pupils with a single diagnosis of ASD or SEBD can continue to be accommodated in mainstream schools or other specific provision as appropriate, and will continue to do so. Those with a professional diagnosis of both ASD and SEBD will have their needs met in the proposed setting. Regarding teaching, work to ensure that all pupils can access the curriculum will be a priority.
- It was commented that the needs of children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) won't be met in SNRBs any longer in line with the Code of Practice and queried how their needs will be accommodated. The Chief Officer explained that provision will be on a sliding scale from small group provision to mainstream with support and excellent teaching. Children with profound multiple learning difficulties may still be best placed out of county.
- A Member expressed some concerns that teachers in mainstream would need effective support to provide for pupils with such needs due to the pressure to improve results. It was explained that excellent teaching and differentiation would be key.
- County Councillor R. Harris declared an interest as a Governor of Deri View Primary School and SNRB. He emphasised the importance of children staying within their community. It was questioned how to speed up diagnosis as MLD pupils can be disruptive in mainstream. It was added that there can be budget reductions which may cause the loss of the Teaching Assistants that are of critical importance to these children. Regarding the proposal for a 3-19 school in Abergavenny, it was questioned how much planning has been done on additional learning needs provision.

The Chief Officer referred to early identification and the creation of two early assessment centres to allow daily observation over a 4-6 week period. It was explained that Statements will no longer be used and will be replaced with the Individual Development

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Plan (IDP) to be completed within 10 weeks. Cabinet have afforded additional budget this year and next to accommodate the pressure of this change. Initial thoughts regarding the proposed 3-19 school, include the transfer of provision at Deri View School to the new school. It was clarified that the policy of providing for pupils within the county causes budget pressures, and that everything is done to support schools in their effective use of budget.

- The Chair invited the Chair of Deri View Primary School Governing Body, Mrs. M. Harris, to speak. She explained that the school has the highest level of Free School Meals in the county. She expressed concerns that a small cohort of children may be missed specifically those who can't access SAPRA (School Action Plus Resource Assist), that there are delays in diagnoses and tight budgets which can affect TA support, special intervention and small group work. More funding will be required to retain the special nature of the school.

The Chief Officer accepted that Deri View Primary School is a challenging setting and the limited size of the area of deprivation prevents access to some funding opportunities. It was agreed that speed of diagnosis is key. More work will be needed to successfully address the issues in the area.

#### **Committee conclusions:**

The Chair reminded the Select Committee that major and significant changes for many children are to be expected. The Chief Officer was thanked for his input and for keeping the Select Committee Members updated.

As per the recommendations, the Select Committee supported the suggestion to extend timescales by one month in view of the number of responses received.

#### **9. Budget Monitoring Outturn Report**

##### **Purpose:**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority at the end of reporting period 3 which represents the financial outturn position for the 2017/18 financial year.
2. This report will also 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 outturn unspend of £653,000, an improvement of £694,000 on period 2 (month 7) outturn predictions.
2. Members consider a capital outturn spend of £46.8 million against a revised budget of £47.2 million, after proposed slippage of £11.8 million, resulting in a net underspend of £395k.
3. Considers the use of reserves proposed in para 3.7.1,



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4. Supports the apportionment of general underspend in supplementing reserve levels as described in para 3.7.3 below, i.e.:

Priority Investment Fund £155k  
Capital Receipts Generation Reserve £50k  
Balance Invest to Redesign Reserve £448k  
Total £653k

5. Members note that the low level of earmarked reserves will notably reduce the flexibility the Council has in meeting the challenges of scarce resources going forward.

6. Members notes the extent of movements in individual school balances placing emphasis on schools to review the extent that recovery plans can be delivered over shortened timescales, and appreciates a net use of balances of only £94k instead of the original budgeted intention of schools to draw on balances by £877k.

#### Member Scrutiny:

- A question was asked about school transport for one off costs and if this included inter school sports and it was confirmed that this refers to support for home to school transport on specific routes at a school's request.
- It was queried what lessons can be learned from the experience of Chepstow School moving from deficit to surplus budget. The school was congratulated upon this changed position amid intense scrutiny. Some redundancies were made last year and an expensive photocopying contract has been ended; a cheaper contract has been negotiated. All secondary schools can benefit from the lessons regarding staffing, and early intervention to address savings when necessary. Schools are also generating income e.g. through working for the EAS

In response to a question about the Chepstow cluster of schools, it was confirmed that the Chepstow schools work together but budgets are monitored individually. The newly appointed business managers in the four cluster areas are working together to share ideas on contracts and other work; some savings are being made.

With regard to supply of utilities, a benchmarking tool is available to compare costs on a variety of subjects, including utility usage, with similar schools across Wales to identify potential for savings. The Energy Officer can also provide schools with advice and guidance.

#### Committee's Conclusion

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

The committee resolved to receive the report and noted the contents.

#### 10. Actions arising from previous meetings

The Action list from the last meeting was noted; all actions have been completed.

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#### **11. Children and Young People's Work Programme**

The Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Planner was noted. The following addition was noted:

Special Meeting - 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at 2pm to include:

- Scrutiny of support for refugee children; King Henry VIII Comprehensive School and Deri View Primary School invited.
- Performance of Looked After Children.
- Supporting People Report

Suggestions for future meetings:

- A Pioneer School could be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss changes to the curriculum with representation from the EAS;
- Changing role of Estyn;
- New teaching and leadership standards;
- Results from the Summer examinations including scrutiny of individual schools for their outcomes at KS4.

The Chief Officer acknowledged the significant changes are in progress currently and noted that, from this year on, national comparison data will not be available.

The representatives from Powys County Council thanked the Committee for the opportunity to observe good practice.

#### **12. Cabinet and Council Forward Planner**

The Cabinet and Council Forward Plan was noted.

#### **13. Next Meeting - Special Meeting 10th July 2018, 2pm**

**The meeting ended at 12.10 pm**