

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, 29th November, 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 and S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Mike Moran	Community Infrastructure Coordinator

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors T.Thomas and J.Watkins

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. Support for Refugee Children

Context:

The Children and Young People Select Committee received a private presentation on the support provided for Refugee Children from:

- Mr. M. Williams, Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion and Additional Learning Needs Co-Ordinator), King Henry VIII Comprehensive School;
- Amy Edwards, Nursery Teacher and Additional Education Needs Co-Ordinator), Deri View Primary School;
- Nerys Wherry, Gwent Education Minority-ethnic Service; and
- Rana Ghalta, Gwent Education Minority-ethnic Service.

Key Issues:

The private presentation reported on:

- Transition into school and settling in;
- Positive staff and pupil reactions;
- Support provided by Gwent Education Minority-ethnic Service;
- Challenges encountered;

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- Learning English and Welsh; and
- Socialisation and Wellbeing.

Member Scrutiny:

- A Member agreed that the use of sport and food was an excellent way to break down barriers.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that there are likely to be more refugees settling in the county in future.
- Members were very impressed with the enthusiasm of the school staff and asked if there were refugees in any other Monmouthshire Schools.
- A member asked how the resources are funded. It was responded that GEMS works across the wider Gwent region and is grant-funded.
- Members were interested to hear that the students find Arabic very similar to Welsh.
- Exam concessions were confirmed as 15% extra time plus provision of a bilingual dictionary. Members noted that pupils with Additional Learning Needs receive 25% extra time. Members were impressed that all eligible pupils wanted to take their exams and that there had been some GCSE and A Level successes.

Committee Conclusions:

It was agreed that a letter should be written to Welsh Government to advise of the outstanding support provided in these Monmouthshire schools, and to express the Committee's desire to help to spread best practice and expertise across Wales and UK.

It was also agreed that the letter to Welsh Government includes a request that examination concessions for refugee children are raised to 25% in future

The Chair, on behalf of the Select Committee thanked the professionals for their presentation. The Chair also asked that all staff involved with the young people in schools are thanked for their work.

4. Play Action Plan and Play Sufficiency Assessment

Purpose:

To present progress on delivery of the current plan (including the summer play schemes) and preparations for the new Play Action Plan and Play Sufficiency Assessment for completion by March 2019.

Recommendations:

1. To receive and scrutinise an update of progress on the delivery of the current Play Action Plan and the emerging issues for the review of the Play Sufficiency Assessment
2. To agree to receive a draft of the revised Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan at a future meeting prior to its consideration by Cabinet and submission to Welsh Government on 31 March 2019.

Key Issues:

1. The Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and Play Action Plan was first completed in 2013, reviewed in 2016 and now requires further review after three years. The new PSA must be submitted to Welsh Government by 31 March 2019, having either been approved by Cabinet or in a final version timetabled to be so approved.

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2. "Wales: A Play Friendly Country" is Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities (See Appendix 1) on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas to give detail to the duty on Local Authorities under Section 11, Play Opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

In summary the statutory requirements are:

- A local authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area
- A local authority must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment

3. The following internationally recognised definition of play is noted in the guidance:

"Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live".

4. As part of the 2016 PSA review and following consideration by this committee Cabinet approved a new model for managed play provision (the summer play scheme) to deliver open access play schemes during the school summer holidays in partnership with Town and Community Councils. Since 2016 Torfaen Play Service has been commissioned to deliver this provision.

Member Scrutiny

Matthew Lewis, MonLife Project Team (Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead & Green Infrastructure and Countryside Manager) and Mike Moran, Community Infrastructure Coordinator presented the report and invited questions from the Select Committee Members, as follows:

- A Member was concerned that there was no provision in Chepstow Leisure Centre, which is central for all children, only in Thornwell and Bulwark. It was queried how many children previously used the play provision in the Leisure Centre and secondly, the numbers of children from other areas of Chepstow who now attend Thornwell and Bulwark. It was responded that provision in the Leisure Centre stopped in 2004. At that time, approximately 200 children were registered. This number included limited numbers from the Thornwell and Bulwark area. Current figures plus numbers of children attending MonGames will be provided to Select Committee Members after the meeting.
- Referring to Piggy's Hill, funding is being sought to improve CCTV and provide a voiceover to move users on after the lights switch off at 9.30 pm. It was agreed that there are some identified safe areas in Bulwark and Thornwell that are rarely played on because there are "No Ball Games" signs. This point will be raised with the housing associations.
- It was commented that school children recently made a presentation to Chepstow Town Council and the issues they raised are being addressed. An application will be made to Welsh Government for a Play Opportunity grant to fund some of the ideas e.g. the pilot scheme to open school grounds outside school hours in partnership with Chepstow Town Council.
- A Select Committee Member observed that the photo supplied showed staff with T shirts branded with Torfaen Play and questioned if there could be Monmouthshire branding. This matter will be raised with Torfaen County Borough Council.

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- A Select Committee Member asked where the criticism about Welsh language provision had originated. It was explained that the criticism arose from the Urdd and was about compliance with the Welsh Language Act. It was noted that the majority of schemes in Torfaen are provided bilingually and it is considered feasible to provide the same in Monmouthshire by recruiting staff with Welsh language skills or through provision of intensive training.
- A Member commented that planning regulations in Wales allow buildings in back gardens which removes safe play facilities at home. Referring to Future Generations and Wellbeing, the Member supported, where buildings are permitted in rear gardens, that a small area is retained for children's play and for recreation for older generations. Whilst no information was available about planning policy, it was explained that there is concern that there are 107 play areas to maintain for which there is limited budget for improvement or maintenance and that there may be opportunity for review and rationalisation in the future. It was reported that new developments within the county often come with play area opportunities.
- A Member asked what would enable improvements to the summer play scheme. It was agreed that it would be beneficial, if possible, to extend the scheme to include Easter and half term school holidays. It was agreed to write a letter to the Welsh Government regarding the social and health benefits of the scheme, especially where food is provided as it was the Committee's view that it is important to invest in children.

Additionally, in the past, the Play Opportunity grant has been funded from underspend and allocated at short notice. It was requested that, in future, grants are ring fenced and guaranteed every year to allow better planning and strategic spending, such as working with partners to attract further contributions.

- Officers were invited to provide information about the End of Summer Play Scheme Awards. Members were told that the event is a celebration for young people involved in facilitating the scheme. It was agreed that it may be possible to arrange a similar event in Monmouthshire in the future.
- A Member commented that many play areas are only for the very young and that provision is needed for older children. It was responded that there are plans to assess the play value of existing areas. The Chair asked about the basis of play assessment and asked, if MonLife proceeds, if there would still be a statutory assessment. It was confirmed that the statutory duty will remain with the authority.
- It was suggested that ensuring new developments have small gardens for play purposes is a matter for Planning Officers and the Planning Committee.

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Committee Conclusions:

The Chair highlighted the importance of developing a co-ordinated approach between the authority and MonLife going forward regarding the statutory duty to undertake play assessments and agreed that this point should be reported to Cabinet.

It was agreed that a letter should be written to the Welsh Government:

- a) to request that the Play Opportunity Grant is embedded into a formal grant programme so that it can be used in a more planned and strategic way over the course of the year, rather than rushed over a 6 week period, which makes it very difficult to spend in a sustainable way; and
- b) the scheme currently administered by Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to provide food for children attending play schemes is continued.

The Committee supported giving the Monmouthshire Play Scheme a separate identity from Torfaen schemes, in terms of branding.

The Committee also supported the idea of extending bilingual provision.

Officers were requested to report the results of the play sufficiency assessment at the meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee to be held on 21st February 2019.

On behalf of the Select Committee, the Chair thanked those who provide the valued service and the officers for their contribution.

5. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record.

6. Actions arising from the previous meeting

1. Wales Audit Office Whole Authority Review of Children's Safeguarding report and the Council's Management Response:
 - Specific examination of Home to School Transport to be presented to a meeting of the Select Committee in the New Year. It was noted that a Special meeting may be required.
 - The Wales Audit Office Whole Authority Review of Children's Safeguarding report has been referred to the next meeting of the Audit Committee for consideration.
2. Project 5:

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- Following consideration at the last meeting, the recommendations of the Select Committee have been added to the Cabinet Report.
 - Team Around the Family (TAF) will be invited to return to Select Committee; this will be added to the Work Programme.
3. 2018 End of Key Stage Teacher Assessment Outcomes and National Test results – Monmouthshire:
- A Special meeting will be held to consider achievement in the New Year.
 - Fisher Family Trust data will be considered at a future meeting – date to be arranged.

7. Children and Young People Select Forward Work Plan

The Forward Work Programme was received. Changes were noted as follows:

- 3rd January 2019 at 2.00pm: Special meeting to consider additional business. Concerns were noted that the meeting will be in the school holidays. It was explained that this was the only available date and time. Written responses are welcome from Members unable to attend and will be read out.
- 24th January 2019: Budget Scrutiny (Single Item)
- 21st February 2019: School Transport (incl. Safeguarding and Wellbeing), Future Options for Mounton House Special School, Schools Admissions Policy and School Catchment Areas (Under consultation until 25th February 2019).
- Mid-March: Special Meeting for pre-Cabinet decision scrutiny and Family Support Services.
- 4th April 2019 at 10.00am: School outcomes, Donaldson and 21st Century Schools (to include a report on Pioneer Schools).

8. Council and Cabinet Forward Work Planner

The Forward Work Planner was noted.

9. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting as 24th January 2019 at 10.00am

Special Meeting: 3rd January 2019 at 2.00pm

Ordinary Meeting: 24th January 2019 at 10.00am (Budget Scrutiny)

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm