

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Thursday, 20th January, 2022 at 10.00 am

Councillors in attendance

County Councillor T.Thomas (Chair)
County Councillor L. Brown (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: C.Edwards, M.Groucutt,
D. Jones, M.Lane, M. Powell and J.Watkins

Officers in attendance

Will McLean, Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nikki Wellington, Finance Manager
Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Ed Pryce, Challenge Adviser, Interim Service Strategic and Policy Lead
Geraint Willington, Director, Resources, Business and Governance

Apologies: None

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public Open Forum.

No public submissions were received.

3. EAS Business Plan

Ed Pryce presented the report and answered the members' questions.

Challenge:

In the Spring, the Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education are expected to agree syllabi to start in September 2022. Our SACRE meeting is scheduled for 9th March – do we need another meeting in February? What's happened with the publication of the guidance – this was expected in January?

We facilitate SACRE, on behalf of its members. I will pass on your concerns about the 9th March meeting to my colleague, James Kent, and ask him to respond to you and the other members directly.

Chair's Summary:

Thank you for this comprehensive report and presentation. It has been particularly helpful to hear about strategic plans and regional partnerships, and the more high-level discussion. It is good to hear that it is a self-improving system, and for there to be cross-fertilisation from other authorities. Schools will especially appreciate the support of a school improvement partner

following the very difficult circumstances wrought by the pandemic. 'Agile, timely and responsive' actions will help schools. The committee is happy with the report and EAS's plan.

4. Additional Learning Needs Funding Formula for schools

Nicola Wellington presented the report and answered the members' questions.

Challenge:

Could there be a further explanation of the difference between the two models? Which will be the better option?

The two models are very similar in what they propose. If we were to go for funding with a higher amount on pupil numbers, then schools with larger pupil numbers would gain more, whereas if we were to go for the 70% funding then they would have slightly less. The working group didn't have a preference with these models but felt that both should be put out for schools to consider, and are committed to the principles of pupil numbers and additional learning needs, rather than any other driver for the formula.

Anonymity in the table of responses is understandable, but can anything be drawn from looking at the responses from schools – is there a link to the size of the schools and their responses, or a delineation between secondary and primary school responses?

Looking at pupil numbers, some headteachers might be able to work out which school is theirs. Our comprehensive schools have larger pupil numbers so with these two models we will see that the secondary schools will gain funding, and smaller primary schools will lose funding. Where schools have high levels of statements, and school action plus statements in place, then moving away from higher funding for ALN and doing it on pupil numbers and additional learning needs, schools will lose. This is why they were very clear that they want that transitional funding in place, to allow schools to move from the old model to the new (this will be in place for up to 3 years), and to minimise the disruption in terms of funding, staffing and – most importantly – support for those pupils.

Is it still the case that if a school has more pupils in special needs than others then they will get more funding, and if a child moves schools the funding goes with them?

In terms of the new model, the proposal is that the funding will remain in place for the whole of the financial year, which will give the schools the flexibility to plan the funding and staffing for that financial year. If a pupil leaves, to go to another school, the funding will not move. Under the old system the funding would have moved, resulting in the member of staff supporting that child being made redundant, in most cases. However, if a family with a child with additional learning needs moves into the county, the council will be able to provide funding on a one-off basis, to provide support for the first financial year, but following that, the child would be on roll at the school properly and attract funding under this new system.

Has there been any feedback on a 75% and 25% funding split? What effect would that have?

This was discussed at the working group; they preferred the 70/30 or 80/20 versions, which is why we have gone out with those recommendations. In terms of feedback from schools, the consultation only went out on 10th January, so we have not yet had their responses.

In relation to those schools that might come under two headings i.e., large numbers of ALN and large pupil numbers, what about the 3-19 school in Abergavenny? Is there enough flexibility for when it comes online?

This was discussed in some detail in the working group. We are aware of the situation with the 3-19 school hopefully coming online in the near future. It is something that we would need to work through on the formula. With this formula, we were very keen to give flexibility to all schools: we know that for the first year, we need to consider all of these things as they come through and be open to all of the particulars. This is why we want a full review after 12 months, and goes back to the transition funding, which gives the stability for schools to continue as they are. As we move through, developing the formula, all of the formula will need to change for the new 3-19 school – it won't just be the additional learning aspect of it.

When will the final decision be made as to the 70 or 80%?

After the consultation closes on 11th February, the recommendations will go back to the school budget forum for consideration. A Cabinet report will be drafted, and a final decision made by them in their meeting on 2nd March. So, it is a quick turnaround once the consultation closes.

Chair's Summary:

The Committee commends the work that has been done. We are reassured by the transition funding system. We have clarified some of the numbers, particularly regarding school sizes and primary vs secondary, and are reassured that different permutations have been discussed and the scenario of the new 3-19 school has been considered. This will be a fairer system and allow schools to plan effectively. The committee is happy for the consultation to proceed and go to the Cabinet report.

5. Children and Young People Select Forward Work Programme

Note the 2pm start for the Special meeting on 31st January. The 3rd March date will remain in place.

6. Cabinet and Council Work Planner

7. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were confirmed and signed as an accurate record, moved by Councillor Groucott and seconded by Councillor Powell.

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

- Special Meeting – 31st January 2022 at 2.00pm
- Next Meeting – 3rd March 2022 at 10.00am

The meeting ended at **10.52 am**