

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Thursday, 3rd November, 2016 at 10.00 am

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

County Councillors: P. Clarke, L. Guppy, R. Harris, M. Hickman, D. Jones & M. Powell.

Added Members:

Members voting on Education issues only:

Mr. M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

Added Members: Non-Voting

Mr. K Plow (Association of School Governors)

County Councillors A. Easson and V. Smith attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Claire Marchant	Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Housing
Will McLean	Head of Democracy, Engagement and Improvement
Sharon Randall-Smith	Head of Achievement and Attainment
Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant
Annette Evans	Customer Relations Manager
Andrew Evans	Senior Management Accountant
David Barnes	Data and Information Systems Officer
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors D. Blakebrough

1. Welcome

On behalf of the Children and Young People Select Committee, the Chair welcomed to the meeting, Kerry Cole, Chief Officer for Education, Caerphilly County Borough Council.

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2. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor P. Farley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda item 7 – presentation on schools in a deficit budget and the recovery plan process, as he is a local Authority Governor of the Dell Primary and Chepstow Schools.

County Councillor L. Guppy declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda item 5 – Welsh Education Strategic Plan, as she has relatives accessing Welsh Medium education.

County Councillor R. Harris declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda items: 6 - Annual complaints, comments and compliments report for Children's Social Services, 7 - Presentation on schools in a deficit budget and the recovery plan process and 9 - List of actions arising from the previous meeting, as the Foster Panel was mentioned and he is a member of this panel, Deri View Primary School was used as an example of a successful recovery from a deficit budget and he is a governor of Deri View Primary School.

County Councillor D.W. H. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of agenda item 5 – Welsh Education Strategic Plan, as he is a governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni, his daughter works there and his granddaughter attends the school. He is also a governor of Llanfihangel Crucorney Primary School and his grandson attends Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw.

County Councillor P. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda item 6 – Annual Complaints, Comments, and Compliments Reports for Children's Social Services, as she is a member of the Adoption Panel.

County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda item 8 – Quarter 2 Performance Report 2016/17, as she is a governor of King VIII School.

County Councillor A. Easson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest, pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of agenda item 7 - Presentation on schools in a deficit budget and the recovery plan process, as he is a local Authority Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin.

3. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting dated 6th October 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment to Minute 3 – Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2016/17 Period Outturn Forecast Statement, Committee's conclusion, bullet point 5 on page 4 of the minutes:

Steve Davies (Welsh Government)

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4. Quarter 2 Performance Report 2016/17

Context:

To provide Select Committee members with the latest data showing educational attainment information they need to hold services to account. This includes:

- Performance of pupils at the end of Foundation Phase, Key Stages 2 and 3.
- A breakdown, where possible of performance across all key stages for the following groups:
 - Girls and Boys.
 - Pupils who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM).

Key Issues:

- The report draws together the headline messages from a number of more detailed analyses.
- The reports contain a wealth of information enabling Members to drill down from authority level data to figures for specific learner groups.
- Most data provides comparisons back to 2011/12, which was the academic year just prior to the last, full Estyn inspection. Over the last five years, there has been a notable improvement in headline indicators.
- The report enables the Select Committee to look beyond the high-level measures to some of the detail that sits underneath.

Foundation Phase

- Monmouthshire saw a minimal drop by 0.1 percentage point in the Foundation Phase Indicator with 91.7% of pupils achieving the Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI), compared to 91.8% in 2014/15 and 86.8% in 2011/12.
- Despite the drop in performance, Monmouthshire moved up one place to 1st in the Wales local authority rankings for FPI.
- In 2015/16, performance has declined at the expected level (O5+), with the exception of an increase in Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC) in Welsh at O5+.
- Performance at the expected level +1 (O6+) has increased across all indicators.
- Monmouthshire continues to be ranked amongst the top three performing authorities in Wales for all areas of learning with the exception of LLC Welsh first language.

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Key Stage 2

- Performance continues to improve, with 94.1% of pupils achieving the key stage 2 core subject indicator (KS2CSI) in 2014/15, compared to 86.3% in 2011/12 and 92.5% in 2015. Monmouthshire is still ranked 1st in Wales for KS2CSI.
- Performance across English, Welsh, mathematics and science continues to improve at both the expected curriculum level 4+ and the higher level 5+.
- Monmouthshire ranks 1st in Wales for all indicators with the exception of Welsh first language.

Key Stage 3

- Performance continues to improve albeit at a slower rate than across Wales as a whole. In 2015/16, 91.9% of pupils achieved the KS3CSI, compared to 90.8% in 2015 and 77.7% in 2011/12.
- Monmouthshire is now ranked 3rd in Wales for the KS3CSI.
- Performance across English, mathematics and science continues to improve at both the expected curriculum level 5+ and at the higher level 6+.
- Monmouthshire is now ranked 2nd in Wales for English at Key Stage 3, 3rd for mathematics and 4th for science.

Member scrutiny:

- Key Stage 4 and 5 data will be available at the next Select Committee meeting including data regarding vulnerable pupils.
- The performance gap between girls and boys at key stages 2 & 3 is closing. However, the gap has widened at the foundation phase. Therefore, there was a need to investigate this matter in order to ensure that equal engagement was being provided to all students.
- Free School meals (FSM) Expected Level (Outcome 5+) – 2016 achievements are below 2014 and 2015. The Select Committee was informed that when looking at the end of Foundation Phase, there are 111 pupils who are FSM pupils within that group. Of this 111 pupils, there are only 21 pupils who did not achieve the Foundation Phase Indicator and that difference in performance would have been recognised within the pupil level targets. Therefore, it would have been anticipated that perhaps the performance would not have been as high this year given the nature of the cohort. It was noted that such detail will be available in a more detailed report that will be presented to a future meeting of the Select Committee.

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- There has been a strong, consistent performance and improving performance at the end of Key Stage 2. However, that has not necessarily been sustained into Key Stage 3 but there have been improvements. Clusters work well with each other but there is a need to ensure that children continue their learning from the day they start secondary school from where they left at the end of the summer term. Many of the clusters are beginning work in Year 6 and continuing into Year 7, as this is a time when performance can dip.
- Since 2012, there has been a significant uplift in improvement at Key Stage 3 going into Key Stage 4 and is an area in which the Authority continues to focus on.
- Good practice is being shared amongst schools.
- In response to a question raised in respect of Foundation Phase – by Gender regarding Outcome 5+, it was noted that more detail will be provided in a future report to the Select Committee.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that all secondary schools provide appropriate support for pupils when transitioning between the key stages.
- Benchmark Quartiles for the Core Subject Indicator (Expected Level (L4+)) - The changes from quartile 1 to quartile 3 indicates how Monmouthshire schools are comparing with other similar schools.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair summed up as follows:

- There has been a solid improvement in schools' performance since 2012. All school staff across the Authority should be recognised for this improvement.
- The Committee looks forward to receiving the next report at a future meeting of the Committee which will provide more clarity and more detail of the data being provided.

5. Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2016/17 Period 2 Outturn Forecast Statement

Context:

- To provide information on the forecast revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of period 2 which represents month 6 financial information for the 2016/17 financial year.

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- To assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place.
- To monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework.
- To challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspends.
- To monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.

Recommendations proposed to Cabinet:

- That Cabinet notes the extent of forecast revenue overspend at period 2 of £839,000, an improvement of £529,000 on previous reported position at period 1.
- That Cabinet expects Chief Officers to continue to review the levels of over and underspends and reallocate budgets to reduce the extent of compensatory positions needing to be reported from month 6 onwards.
- That Cabinet appreciates the extent of predicted schools reserve usage and an anticipation that a further four schools will be in a deficit position by end of 2016-17.
- That Cabinet approves a caveated use of reserves to finance £318,000 employment tribunal costs if the Council's budget is not able to absorb the effect of this extraordinary expenditure over the remaining six months of the financial year.
- That Cabinet considers the capital monitoring, specific over and underspends, and that Cabinet recognises the risk associated with having to rely on a use of capital receipts in the year of sale and the potential for this to have significant revenue pressures should receipts be delayed and temporary borrowing be required.

Member scrutiny:

- When a school closes, any surplus budget comes back to the local Authority to be used for educational purposes.
- Shirenewton and Trellech Primary Schools are carrying forward quite substantial sums. It was noted that Shirenewton Primary School has been quite successful at generating income, savings have been generated and the school has been prudent in its allocation of resources. Officers have met with the school to discuss establishing an investment plan for the surplus. Trellech Primary School has also been successful with its grants. The school, along with Shirenewton Primary School, is a part of the pioneer network of schools whereby they receive additional funding from Welsh Government to be able to develop the curriculum.

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Caldicot and Gilwern schools are also a part of the new deal pioneer school network, so there might be some fluctuation in these schools' budgets also.

- 10 of Monmouthshire's schools are likely to be in a deficit budget. However, officers have 'upped the ante' on schools holding large surplus budgets. At Month 9 it is hoped that an improvement will be seen whereby schools will hopefully be receiving more grants. The local Authority has been better informed by the Education Achievement Service (EAS) with regard to funding that it is distributing to Monmouthshire schools. It is anticipated that throughout the year, school's spending plans will change.
- Forecasting schools balances is challenging. Officers are working with the EAS and Welsh Government to obtain the certainty of funding earlier which will better inform the Authority's forecasts. Schools are being encouraged to have less of a surplus budget.
- Schools are working well at cluster level. It is important to maximise the value going towards pupils. Changes to the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) next year will mean that clusters will need to work more closely together to support the work into the secondary phase.
- A Court Improvement Plan has been developed which in time will address the issues around the recurring overspend on legal costs and that is the fourth pillar of the Children's Services Improvement Programme.

Committee's Conclusion

The Chair summed up as follows:

- On behalf of the Select Committee, the chair thanked officers for presenting the report.
- The Select Committee will receive an update on schools' budgets in three to four months.

6. Welsh Education Strategic Plan

Context:

- To scrutinise the Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 for Monmouthshire County Council.
- To consult with the Children and Young People Select Committee regarding the report as part of the statutory eight-week consultation period with all key partners and statutory consultees.

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Key Issues:

- Welsh Government's vision is to have one million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050 and in order to achieve this the following actions will need to happen:
 - more children in Welsh-medium education.
 - better planning in relation to how people learn the language.
 - more easy-to-access opportunities for people to use the language.
 - a stronger infrastructure and a revolution to improve digital provision in Welsh.
 - a shift in the way we speak about it.
- Education is one of the key drivers to realise this vision through ensuring that children have the opportunity to develop their Welsh skills at an early age to create new speakers of the future.
- The WESP is the key strategic document for local authorities to publish its plans for the expansion of Welsh-Medium education over the next three years.
- The WESP continues to focus on the five outcomes in the previous Welsh-Medium Education Strategy 2010 which are:
 - more seven-year-old children being taught through the medium of Welsh as a percentage of the Year 2 cohort.
 - more learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary school to secondary school.
 - more learners studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh.
 - more learners aged 16-19 studying Welsh and subjects through the medium of Welsh.
 - more learners with improved skills in Welsh.
- In addition, local authorities are required to address standards of attainment in Welsh and Welsh Second Language, Welsh-Medium provision for learning with additional learning needs (ALN) and workforce planning, and continuous professional development.
- The final WESP plan must be submitted to the Welsh Government by 20th December 2016, with implementation from 1st April 2017.

Member scrutiny:

- The WESP is a three year plan. It is aspirational but the Authority needs to try and encourage as many parents as possible to at least consider the values that one would might achieve from a Welsh Medium Education above an English only education.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding parents' concerns in respect of the need and cost involved in providing Welsh Medium

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Education, it was noted that as an Authority, we have to accept that if we are not promoting the benefits of Welsh Medium Education, then it would be a reasonable assumption that parents might not value Welsh Medium Education in the same way as other counties in Wales. However, once that happens, the real demand for Welsh Medium Education increases at quite a rapid rate. More parents are now electing for Welsh Medium Education due to the benefits of being bi-lingual.

- As an Authority, we have to comply with the statutory requirements that exist with regard to the provision of Welsh Medium Education and this is what we, as an Authority want to provide.
- For a future Select Committee meeting, it might be prudent to receive a report on the learning of languages generally, as there might be a need to re-think our priorities in terms of our ability to sustain ourselves in a post Brexit world.
- Section 2 of the WESP regarding Transport – A Select Committee Member expressed concern that this section of the report was not strong enough and that the terminology on 2.2 should be stronger regarding post 16 transport access. It was noted that the current policy does not provide transport for post 16 learners. However, as part of the consultation, it is right to consider whether the policy is appropriate and this will form part of the consultation process. Also, the vocational courses that young people need to access through the medium of Welsh are as important.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that the Home to School Transport Policy is a complex issue in Monmouthshire. Officers are looking to see how it will work in the future as a part of a broader piece of work around the challenges of home to school transport.
- A Select Committee member expressed his concern and the concerns of a number of residents that the Authority might be putting too much funding into the provision of Welsh Medium Education and might be better spent elsewhere in the education sector. It was noted that this matter could be raised via the consultation process.
- The cost of providing the WESP will be available at the final draft stage of the document.
- Funding per pupil details for 2016/17:

- Welsh Medium	-	£2252
- English Medium	-	£2203
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that there is some capacity at Ysgol Y Fenni and Ysgol Y Ffin. The Authority was unsure at present with regard to the rise in possible demand that might occur now that there is a Welsh Medium Secondary School in Newport. As this school is now

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established and pupils from Monmouthshire are attending, capacity in our Welsh Medium schools might change. Demand will be carefully monitored.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair summed up as follows:

- She thanked the officers for presenting the report.
- That officers take forward the points raised in respect of the WESP before the final draft is published.
- The Select Committee would recommend a review of the Home to School Transport Policy.

7. Presentation on schools in a deficit budget and the recovery plan process

Context:

The Select Committee received a presentation regarding information on the recovery plan process for Monmouthshire's schools.

Key Issues:

The Scheme for financing schools – updated October 2016 states:

Where a school has a deficit balance at the end of the year, such deficit will be carried forward into the next financial year. Governing bodies will be required to report to the authority on the measures that the school intends to take in order to eradicate the deficit, over a maximum of three years. The Authority may agree to increase the time period to allow a school to recover, however, this will need to be agreed with the Chief Officer for Children and Young People. These plans must be submitted within three months on initially reporting a deficit to the authority. This plan will be monitored on a termly basis at minimum, but in material cases this will be monitored monthly. The authority has the right to withdraw the delegated budget and powers of the governing body, should the plan not be followed.

It goes on to say:

The authority will not write off a deficit balance at any school.

Member scrutiny:

- Schools with a surplus budget – It was noted that the Authority can claw back funding from schools with high surpluses and use this money for education

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purposes. Schools with a surplus should be sensibly spending their allocated budget in full.

- In response to a question raised by a Select Committee Member, it was noted that a typical budget for a 210 primary school is between £600,000 and £700,000 per annum and a typical budget for a secondary school is between £4,000,000 and £6,000,000 per annum. Concern was expressed regarding the ways in which schools are governed and the disadvantages that they experience which often leaves governing bodies with 'their hands tied'.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair summed up as follows:

- She thanked officers for presenting the report.
- The presentation should be emailed to the Select Committee.
- Re-affirmed the importance of on-going governor training.
- Communication with schools is paramount.

8. Annual Complaints, Comments and Compliments Report for Children's Social Services

Context:

To provide an overview of the number and types of complaints, comments and compliments received and dealt with regarding Children's Social Services from 1st April 2015 until 31st March 2016.

Key Issues:

- All Local Authority Social Services are required to follow the new Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and The Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.
- Guidance is also issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. This means that local authorities must comply with it.
- Four comments were received regarding Children's Services.
- 14 compliments were received that related to Children's Services.
- 25 complaints were received regarding Children's Services.

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Member scrutiny:

- It was pleasing to note that only 25 complaints had been received considering that Children's Services is a very busy service with complex issues.
- Following the report, Chief Officer reviews the complaints with a view to establishing ways to reduce the number of complaints in future.
- In response to a Select Committee member's question, it was noted that children have access to advocacy services.
- It is important that young people have a voice.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair summed up as follows:

- She thanked officers for presenting the report.
- Training and communication and the changes within the department will help address these issues.

9. List of actions arising from the previous meeting

We received the list of actions arising from the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting held on 6th October 2016. In doing so, the following points were noted:

Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2016/17 Period 1 Outturn Forecast Statement

The Chair and Nikki Wellington, Finance Manager, will meet after the meeting to formulate some questions with regard to the lack of funding in respect of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Budget.

The Chair will also meet with Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager, to draft a letter to the Welsh Government to also highlight the Select Committee's concerns for the future.

Monmouthshire Integrated Youth Offer Annual Report

After the meeting, the Chair and the Scrutiny Manager will be meeting with Josh Klein, the new Youth Services Manager, to discuss the scrutiny process.

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Special meeting – Children and Young People Select Committee and Adults Select Committee – 22nd November 2016

To discuss the Social Services Act, in particular Part 11, which relates to the prison dimension.

Additional business to be discussed:

- Budget Monitoring for the Adults Select Committee remit.
- Chief Officer report for Education.

10. Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Work Plan

We received the Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Work Plan. In doing so, the following points were noted:

- A Special Joint Select Committee meeting between the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Adults Select Committee will be held on 22nd November 2016 at 10.00am.
- The next ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee will be held on 8th December 2016 at 2.00pm.
- The Children and Young People Select Committee meeting on 12th January 2017 will be held to scrutinise the budget proposals for 2017/18.
- On the 24th January 2017 there will be a Joint Select Committee meeting involving all four of the Select Committees to scrutinise the Alternative Service Delivery Model.
- A Members' seminar will be held on 14th December 2016 regarding the Governance aspect.
- On 6th February 2017 there will be a Joint Select Committee meeting between the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Adults Select Committee to scrutinise the draft Population Needs Assessment for Monmouthshire.
- On 16th February 2017 there will be an ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee.
- The Scrutiny Manager will email the report and presentation to the Select Committee regarding the 21st Century Schools update that was scheduled to be considered by the Select Committee at a previous meeting but was inquorate.

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11. Council and Cabinet Business - Forward Plan

We resolved to receive the Council and Cabinet Business Forward Work Plan and noted its content.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 8th December 2016 at 2.00pm.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm