

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, 16th February, 2017 at 2.00 pm

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

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

County Councillor V. Smith attended the meeting by invitation of the Chair.

Added Members:

Members voting on educational issues only:

Mr. M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Head of Democracy, Engagement and Improvement
Mark Howcroft	Assistant Head of Finance
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant
Andrew Evans	Senior Management Accountant
David Barnes	Data and Information Systems Officer
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Richard Williams	Democratic Services Officer

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. N. Allan - Principal Challenge Adviser (Education Achievement Service)
Ms. S. Davies - Deri View Primary School

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors P. Clarke and R. Harris

Mr. K Plow (Association of School Governors)

1. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor D. Blakebrough declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of schools' performance as she is a governor of Monmouth Comprehensive School.

County Councillor P. Farley declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct regarding any references made in respect of Chepstow

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Comprehensive School and the Dell Primary School. Also, in respect of the draft Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan as he is a LA Governor of both schools and a member of the EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

County Councillor L. Guppy declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of the schools' performance report and the EAS Business Plan as she is a governor of Rogiet Primary School and Caldicot Comprehensive School.

County Councillor D. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of schools' performance and budgets as he is a governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni and Llanfihangel Crucorney Primary School.

County Councillor P. Jones declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of the EAS Business Plan and the Monmouthshire Schools Outcomes of the National Categorisation Exercise as she is a governor of Raglan Church in Wales Primary School.

County Councillor M. Powell declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of school performance results as she is a governor of King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

Mr. M. Fowler declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of Monmouthshire Schools Outcomes of the National Categorisation Exercise as he is a governor of Raglan Church in Wales Primary School.

2. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee dated 12th January 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

Minute 4, page 3, first bullet point under Member Scrutiny, first sentence – remove 'In response' from the end of this sentence.

3. Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2016/17 Period 3 Outturn Forecast Statement

Context:

To provide Select Committee Members with information on the forecast revenue outturn position of the Authority at the end of period 3 which represents month 9 financial information for the 2016/17 financial year.

Recommendations proposed to Cabinet:

- That Cabinet notes the extent of forecast revenue underspend using period 3 data of £79,000, an improvement of £919,000 on the previous reported position at period 2.

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- 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 at quarterly cycles.
- That Cabinet appreciates the extent of predicted schools reserve usage, its effect of forecast outturn reserve levels and the related anticipation that a further six schools will be in a deficit position by end of 2016-17.
- That Cabinet considers the capital monitoring, specific over and underspends, and importantly 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.
- That Cabinet approves an additional investment of £30,000 into the Disabled Facilities Grant capital budget in order to respond to demands being placed on the current programme, funded by a virement from existing Highways Maintenance and Access for All budgets.
- That Cabinet approves a £30,000 increase to the Woodstock Way linkage scheme afforded by an equivalent underspend to another area improvement scheme (Abergavenny).

Member scrutiny:

- Six schools exhibited a deficit position at the start of 2016/17. This is anticipated to rise to 12 schools by the end of 2016/17. Officers are meeting with these schools with a view to producing recovery plans. However, it was noted that a number of these schools have very low deficit budgets and would therefore be likely to recover quickly.
- In response to a question raised regarding Post 16 funding, it was noted that the money is sent through to the schools via the local Authority. There are a range of different methods that could be applied to that distribution. The Children and Young People Directorate has been working with the schools to find an appropriate methodology which is based on live pupil data. Work during the previous year has been somewhat undermined by the fact that the actual quantum that was received from Welsh Government was significantly lower than was expected. An 8% reduction was received compared to last year. The Authority has a proposal with its schools that the distribution will be taken on equal shares of the reduction. However, this is being reviewed. If this is taken forward this year, the Authority will ensure that in the intervening year all of the schools will have to sign up to an agreed methodology, which will be adhered to for the next three years. The Welsh Government has increased the funding per unit of learning to schools by 1.25%. However, this is not the case for Monmouthshire as the units of learning for Monmouthshire's four comprehensive schools has decreased by 0.1%.

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- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding Fostering and external placement costs (paragraph 3.1.9 of the report), it was noted that the Children's Services budget has been very volatile in previous years, especially with regard to Fostering and external placements. The budget is currently coming in on line. However, due to the volatile nature of this service, Select Committee Members need to be aware that this budget could change quickly if one or two children go into external placement. However, the Children's Services Commissioning Strategy, which was presented to the Select Committee last year, is bedding in and is resulting in keeping children out of external placements and keeping more of them in internal fostering placements.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding the receipt of ad hoc grants from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) (paragraph 3.2.4 of the report) and the need for this money to be made available up front from Welsh Government, it was noted that with regard to the EAS, the five local authorities contribute in the region of £3.6M to the EAS every year combined. In the current financial year, the EAS will distribute £56M worth of grant from Welsh Government. Therefore, the amount of money coming via grants is hugely significant to Monmouthshire's schools. The Education Improvement Grant (EIG), the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and what was schools Challenge Cymru comes through and is identified early in the financial year. However, it is the additional pieces of money that Welsh Government has reduced flexibility over since the financial crash and this is the funding that is being distributed at the year end.
- School reserves (Paragraph 3.2.3) – There has been a sharp decrease in the reserves being held by schools. It was noted that there is a challenge to schools' governing bodies that there is a need for schools to have a balanced budget. If schools go into a deficit budget then a robust financial three year plan is established to ensure that these schools are out of a deficit budget by the end of this period. It was noted that there is a volatility in the levels of reserves held as schools are being asked to hold less of a reserves level. No school will be allowed to plan for a deficit budget.
- With regard to the issue of services bought in, it was noted that it is the governing bodies' decision as to where they procure services from. However, the close relationship that has been formed over the years between local authority staff and schools has led to a close positive relationship. The surety of the local authority ensures that processes are properly adhered to. Hybrid models are an option which are also being looked at. The Authority has to look to see if it is providing an excellent service. It was considered that, for a future meeting, a report could be presented regarding the relationship of the Authority and its schools with governing bodies.
- Children's Services – It was noted that in terms of the forecast outturn a large aspect of the over spend pertains to the continued use of agent staffing. A work force plan is being produced to identify the way in which the authority looks to recruit social workers. Much success has come via social media regarding

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recruiting of staff. This will lead to the phasing out of agency staff over a period of time. This will take place over the next 12 to 18 months. However, the forecast for 2017/18 has the potential to move away from using some agency staff from April 2017. It was noted that a firm base will be required before these changes can be made.

Committee's Conclusion

The Chair summed up as follows:

- She thanked the officers for presenting the report.
- Effective budget monitoring has taken place.
- The concerns raised were noted and would be continually monitored by the Select Committee.

We recommended that the Select Committee, at a future meeting, receives a report regarding the relationship between the Council and schools and also schools and governing bodies.

4. Final Performance Report on Key Stages 4 & 5

Context:

To receive the latest educational attainment data allowing the service to be held to account. This includes:

- Performance of pupils at the end of Key Stages 4 and 5.
- 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:

- Draws together the headline messages from a number of more detailed analyses which are included as appendices to the report.
- Contains a wealth of information enabling members to drill down from authority level data to figures for specific learner groups.
- Comparisons are provided from 2011/12 which was the academic year prior to the last full Estyn inspection.

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- Enables the Select Committee to look beyond those high level measures to some of the detail that sits underneath.

Key Stage 4

- Monmouthshire saw a minimal increase by 0.1 percentage point to 67.0% in the headline Key Stage 4 indicator – the Level 2 Threshold including English / Welsh & Maths, compared to 66.9% in 2015 and 56.3% in 2012.
- Monmouthshire moved down to 3rd place from 1st in the Wales local authority rankings for Level 2 Threshold including English / Welsh & Maths.

Key Stage 5

- Performance improved in the percentage of pupils achieving the Level 3 Threshold, with 99.1% achieving the benchmark, an increase from the 97.9% in 2015.

Member Scrutiny:

- Free School Meals (FSM) gap – What is key is how the Authority identifies the early need of support required by FSM pupils. Working with the EAS there are now bespoke intervention plans in place for English and maths for all secondary schools.
- It was noted that in English, boys are underperforming, which needs to be improved. The change in the curriculum is leading to more technical accuracy in English language as opposed to English literature which should aid boys. The risk around English language this year is that it is a new qualification and schools have not taught it before.
- Self-evaluation and target setting – Some of Monmouthshire's schools were closer to their targets than other schools. Target setting is a process and we as an authority are working closely with our schools from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4. Targets have been verified and pupil level data has been analysed to ensure that the targets are reliable.
- We are not where we would like to be in terms of our outcomes achieved last summer. The work that is being undertaken this year puts us in the right direction to break the 70%. The challenge will be the new qualifications and this might have an effect across the whole of Wales.
- The Authority continues to work with its schools. It has a close relationship with both primary and secondary schools.
- Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) – the Authority has commissioned the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to drive forward this piece of work.

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- Courses and training is on offer via the EAS for teachers regarding Free School Meals (FSM) provision.
- The plans that schools produce on how they spend their PDG - The challenge adviser works with the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team regarding how they spend that money and whether the money has made a difference.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding BTEC courses it was noted that BTEC qualifications do contribute to the outcomes. It is important for students to have a curriculum that is right for them.
- The Authority works closely with schools to make sure that it is understanding where they are in terms of their tracking and children's progress against their targets.
- It is important that there is consistency across the four comprehensive schools within Monmouthshire.
- In the coming years there might be some predictable volatility due to the changes in examinations. For all of the schools across the region, the EAS has delivered some of the grant money and funding in order for them to join an organisation around partnership in excellence.

Committee's Conclusion

The Chair summed up as follows:

- She thanked the EAS representative and officers for presenting the report.
- There were some disappointing results which were not in comparison with the Wales average but it was noted that improvements were being made.
- The focus must be on supporting pupils with a view to them achieving five GCSE qualifications.
- Expect Improvements to be achieved when the new curriculum has bedded in.

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5. Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2017-2020 (First Draft for consultation)

Context:

We received the South East Wales EAS Business Plan 2017-2020. The plan sets out the priorities, programmes and outcomes to be achieved by the Education Achievement Service on behalf of the South East Wales Consortium. This consideration by key partners is part of the construction of the plan.

Key Issues:

The South East Wales Consortium is required to submit to the Welsh Government a three-year business plan that will be updated annually. This is the fourth iteration of the plan first submitted in 2013. This plan covers the period 2017-2020.

The South East Wales EAS Business Plan sets out four priorities: Improving attainment overall but narrowing the gap between eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) and non Free School Meals (FSM) pupils; raising attainment in English; Welsh and Mathematics. These are the core priorities for the service and all other activities and programmes are now supporting the achievement of these outcomes.

The Education Achievement Service (EAS) for South East Wales has prepared this Business Plan for 2017-2020 to outline the programme of work required to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people. This version builds on the current Business Plan for the service (2016-2019) but takes account of the framework of new Welsh Government (WG) policy, particularly:

- National School Categorisation system.
- 'Qualified for Life 2'- the National Education Improvement Strategy.
- 'Successful Futures' - the review of curriculum and assessment.
- 'Teaching tomorrow's teachers' - the review of Initial Teacher Training.

The programmes of work are closely targeted to achieving improvement where the needs are greatest. The aim of the Education Achievement Service (EAS) in partnership with Local Authorities is to:

- Improve leadership, teaching and learning to secure sustained improvement in outcomes for learners (in literacy/ Welsh / English and numeracy / mathematics) at least in line or above the rate of progress in Wales.
- Increase the pace of improvement for groups of learners across the region, particularly FSM and more able learners in Key Stage 4.
- Improve regional capacity to implement a self improving system.

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There is a comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders that will lead to the publication of the final version of the Business Plan within the timescales agreed in the EAS Business Planning Cycle. The first draft version has been shared with each local authority Director of Education and takes into account actions and deliverables that have been requested.

There is a high level summary of the main actions within the Business Plan and a section with Accountability Measures. In addition, there are detailed delivery plans and detailed reviews of progress for the previous Business Plan.

The Business Plan sets out the overall priorities for the South East region and in addition an annex that focuses in particular on the priorities and programmes for each local authority in the Consortium, these have been discussed with local authority Directors and Cabinet Members prior to submission. These documents will also form part of the consultation process.

Member scrutiny:

- The Regional More Able Strategy will be linked to the 14-19 Strategy and the aim is to get primary schools involved. Primary schools are being challenged in preparation.
- The EAS has re-aligned the structure of its teams internally to reflect the model of the new curriculum. With every review of the Business Plan the EAS will look to align it more closely with the new curriculum as it comes on line.
- Each school cluster is in the process of drawing up a plan to work with £20,000 within their cluster to dedicate that spending on areas that they have identified from their data. The EAS will review this and take it forward with a view to developing it further.
- For some of Monmouthshire's cluster areas, the Authority is looking to develop a solution around business managers working across clusters bringing in additional levels of support and expertise but also looking at developing ALN provision based on clusters. Also, looking to provide a north / south cluster arrangement.
- The children's wellbeing is key and is being catered for. A part of the Business Plan refers to wellbeing in education. However, it is difficult to measure a child's wellbeing. This is best achieved by listening and talking to individual pupils and checking that they feel safe and cared for.
- Involving the family in the child's learning and raising expectations and aspirations is key. Many of Monmouthshire's schools already do this.
- All data relating to individual pupils is kept. However, it is more difficult to track the holistic wellbeing of pupils. The Youth Service undertakes surveys to understand how safe children feel. Interventions have been put in place within schools to make pupils aware of the risks of E bullying via social media. The

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Authority works with the NHS to understand the levels of need with regard to children's mental health. Therefore, the Children and Young People Directorate and schools provide more than just a set of examination results.

- The Principal Challenge Adviser recognises the different needs that Monmouthshire's schools require. The EAS has a close working relationship with the County Council and its officers.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding any potential threats to the Business Plan, it was noted that there were two issues, namely, the nature of the curriculum and the coming changes and the unpredictability and volatile nature of the grant funding.

Committee's Conclusion

The Chair summed up as follows:

- The Chair thanked the Principal Challenge Adviser for presenting the EAS Business Plan.
- It is a very clear and concise business plan which will be monitored annually by the Select Committee.

6. Monmouthshire Schools Outcomes of the National Categorisation Exercise

Context:

To advise the Select Committee of the outcomes of the annual national school categorisation exercise.

Key Issues:

The categorisation of schools is a useful annual barometer of the progress Monmouthshire's schools are making in two key areas; their academic performance and their capacity to improve.

Member scrutiny:

- Concern was expressed regarding how the National Categorisation Exercise is seen from the public's point of view and how Free School Meals (FSM) pupil data can have an effect on the categorisation of a school. The EAS recognises the unusual nature of Monmouthshire which has low levels of FSM pupils in comparison with other local authorities. However, it was noted that the data that had been examined by the EAS year on year had indicated that the gap in performance for FSM pupils and non FSM pupils was evident.

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- It was noted that for primary schools, FSM data is not a consideration in terms of the measures. It is in secondary schools only.
- In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding 'Green' secondary schools, the Principal Challenge Adviser stated that 'Green' is about whether a school only requires four days support from the EAS. A school with a 'Green' status is very different from being a school in a standards Group 1 at Step One. A school in a standards Group 1 at Step One will require more than four days support from the EAS.
- Concern was expressed that the public perception of this system is not fully understood and may give the wrong impression of how a school is actually performing due to its colour status.

Committee's Conclusion

The Chair summed up as follows:

- She thanked the Principal Challenge Adviser for presenting the report.
- It is reassuring to see that no secondary schools in Monmouthshire are in the 'Red' category.
- The Select Committee recognises the significance of support associated with the colour coding provided by the EAS. This should be further publicised.
- There was a need to recognise that the concerns raised by the public regarding the colour coding and how this is perceived are unlikely to diminish.
- The Select Committee will monitor the National Categorisation Exercise on an annual basis.

7. List of actions arising from the previous meeting

We received and noted the list of actions that had been completed arising from the Children and Young People Select Committee meeting held on 12th January 2017.

8. Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Work Plan

We resolved to receive the Children and Young People Forward Work Programme. In doing so, the following points were noted:

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- A Joint Select Committee meeting for all four select committees will be held on 27th February 2017 at 2.00pm to scrutinise the business case for the Alternative Service Delivery Model and the Council's Wellbeing objectives.
- The next ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee, scheduled to be held on Thursday 23rd March 2017 will become a Joint Select Committee meeting with the Adults Select Committee. This Committee will consider the first Young Carers Strategy in Wales whereby some young carers will be invited to the meeting. A report on Safeguarding will also be considered at this meeting.

9. Council and Cabinet Business - Forward Plan

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

10. Next meeting

The next meeting will be a joint meeting with Adults Select Committee which will be held on Thursday 23rd March 2017 at 2.00pm.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm