

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Children and Young People Select Committee held at County Hall, Usk on Tuesday 23rd June 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: County Councillor P. Jones (Chairman)

County Councillors: P.R. Clarke, P.S. Farley, L. Guppy, R.G. Harris, M. Hickman and S. Jones.

County Councillors E.J. Hackett Pain and V.E. Smith attended the meeting by invitation of the Chairman.

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Mr. M. Fowler - Parent Governor Representative

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. S. McGuinness - Chief Officer, Children and Young People
Ms. S. Randall-Smith - Children and Young People Directorate
Ms. T. Jelfs - Head of Children's Services
Ms. J. Rodgers - Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager
Mr. M. Lloyd - Data Analyst
Ms. S. Hayward - Digital and ICT Manager
Mrs. N. Wellington - Finance Manager
Ms. H. Ilett - Scrutiny Manager
Mr. R. Williams - Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D. Evans, S.G.M. Howarth and M. Powell and from Canon Dr S. James, Mr. R. Robertshaw, Mr. K. Plow, and Mr. S. Burch.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There were no Members of the public present.

4. ICT IN SCHOOLS INVESTMENT

The Economy and Development Select Committee was invited to attend the meeting to scrutinise this agenda item.

Context:

To scrutinise the Outline Business Case for investing in the upgrade and renewal of the ICT infrastructure in schools, enhancing the teaching and learning experience and

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bringing schools up to a common standard in line with Welsh Government and 21st Century Schools aspirations.

Key issues:

- Last year the Authority launched its vision for ICT through its [iCounty Strategy](#) which provides a direction of travel for Monmouthshire in relation to its digital ambitions.
- The Authority's 21st Century Schools programme sets out a vision for ICT where ICT 'contributes sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Monmouthshire schools that will prepare students for further education, training and to live and work in a digital world'.
- In order to achieve this vision, the Authority's schools require a sustainable, resilient and robust ICT platform that meets the needs of the 21st teaching and learning environment.
- School Equipment is outdated. Outdated servers need to be brought into line with the 21st Century Schools Programme.
- A financial investment was required to put in place a baseline standard of connectivity for primary schools of 100MB.
- The SIMS system (School Information Management System) would be rolled out to schools.
- A collective tendering process would be entered into.
- If the investment is made, all schools will be required to sign up to a Service Level Agreement. The Schools recognise this investment is essential and is supported by schools, The Children and Young People Directorate's Departmental Management team and the Digital Board.
- The Digital Board is prepared to make the investment and had suggested that option 3 be presented to Cabinet. Also, the Board recommends that Cabinet recommends to Council that a prudential borrowing arrangement is entered into and for this to be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Member scrutiny:

- Existing equipment will be brought up to Windows 7. All schools will be brought up to a common standard.
- A voucher scheme will be established allowing schools to have equipment replaced to the value of £5000.

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- In response to an Economy and Development Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that orders for PSBA lines have not been made so the installation costs can't be identified. Some schools will cost more than others to install the lines.
- Training of teaching staff in digital teaching and learning will be required and will be the schools' responsibility.
- Four technicians will be appointed for a two year period in order to implement the rollout. This will allow all school to migrate to the Shared Resource Service (SRS) via this dedicated team.
- Under the proposed new system, all schools will migrate to the SRS making support maintenance and upgrades much easier for schools than at present.
- Quality Assurance – An escalation process will be established ensuring that the SRS is providing a good service to the schools and standards are being met. The Children and Young People Select Committee will monitor whether the standards are being met via progress report updates.
- School clusters will determine the order in which schools are upgraded.

Committee's Conclusion

The Chair summed up as follows:

The Select Committee acknowledges the importance of upgrading ICT provision in Monmouthshire's Schools. The Select Committee requested a further update in due course regarding details of the financial package and quality assurance.

Committee's recommendation:

We resolved:

- (i) to receive the report and the draft Outline Business Case.
- (ii) to endorse the proposed ICT investment of £885,775 into Monmouthshire's schools.

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5. PROVIDING MEMBERS WITH AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SAFEGUARDING WITHIN MONMOUTHSHIRE

Context:

To receive information and analysis regarding the safeguarding of children and young people. Comprehensive strategic and operational information is provided via a suite of four cross referenced reports:

- i. **Strategic Report for Safeguarding April 2015** - this provides an evaluative overview for Members on progress, areas for further work and includes case studies.
- ii. **Safeguarding Report Card April 2015** - this provides detailed evidence and analysis for Members wishing to review safeguarding performance in more depth.
- iii. **Service Improvement Plan for Safeguarding 2015 – 2016** - this is the annual plan for the safeguarding unit and lists the priorities and actions for the year.
- iv. **Children's Services Improvement Plan 2015 – 2016** - this contains the priorities and actions for Children's Services, including the actions in response to the CSSIW inspection.

Key issues:

Safeguarding children and young people is a key responsibility for the Council. These duties apply to all officers and members of the Council and include the specific child protection duties carried out via Children's Services; the corporate parenting responsibilities of the Council and the whole authority duty to ensure children are safeguarded across all services areas.

In November 2012, Estyn carried out an inspection of the Local Authority and found that the arrangements for safeguarding were unsatisfactory. A monitoring visit in February 2014 found that whilst the Local Authority had made some good initial progress, the shortcomings identified in the strategic management of safeguarding had not been addressed well enough. This judgement was echoed by a Welsh Audit Office inspection in March 2014. It was partly as a result of this that the current suite of reports were commissioned to ensure that Members had access to comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of the state of safeguarding in Monmouthshire.

CSSIW carried out inspections of Monmouthshire Children's Services in April and November 2014. Whilst confirming that children involved in the child protection process were safeguarded, CSSIW did identify some key deficits and areas for improvement including the consistency and quality of management oversight within Children's Services and the effective embedding of performance management and quality assurance arrangements.

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Member scrutiny:

- Summary of the Key Areas of Activity and Score Table – Key Priority Area 8 – Best Safeguarding Practices – The evaluation figure for April 2014, September 2014 and April 2015 has remained the same. This is an area that requires attention and focus across the whole Authority, and specifically within Children’s Services. The Directorate is aware of the work required in this area and has consequently used a conservative approach with the evaluative score. This is a whole Authority approach and a conservative approach has been taken.
- Professional allegations and concerns – In response to a Select Committee Member’s question, it was noted that there is a link between training and best practice in generating referrals related to individual children / professional issues. The requirement to refer professional concerns is emphasised in training sessions. The number of allegations has remained consistent. The professional concerns process is a way of working with other organisations to ensure wider safeguarding is in place.
- The Directorate is looking to establish training sessions for Elected Members in the coming months.
- In response to a Select Committee Member’s question regarding volunteer involvement, a volunteer handbook is being created for volunteers who work for the Authority. Links with the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) have been established regarding safeguarding issues. However, it was noted that GAVO was being restructured. The Directorate was aspiring to create links with all voluntary sectors within Monmouthshire in due course.
- Staffing levels – It is anticipated that a part time post will be recruited over the Summer of 2015 to provide more capacity. However, it was noted that the current post of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager has regional responsibilities under the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board.
- The Key areas requiring development over 2015/16 would be better located at the beginning of the report.
- The percentage of initial child protection conference held within 15 days of the strategy discussion was 75%, which was short of the target of 93.4%. It was noted that the percentages were affected by the low numbers, i.e., if one conference was missed then the percentage would drop considerably; large sibling groups and the balance over delay and ‘getting the right people round the table’

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Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair summed up as follows:

The Select Committee had received a comprehensive report. However, a reference point within future reports would be useful. Estyn, CSSIW and Wales Audit Office had identified some shortfalls within the service. However, having scrutinised the report the Select Committee recognised the improvements that had been and the improvements that were being made. Strong Leadership ensures that children and young people in Monmouthshire are safe and that they are being listened to and that Safeguarding is culturally embedded across the whole authority. On the whole, the progress being made outweighs the shortfall.

Committee's recommendation:

That a further update report be presented to the Select Committee before the next Estyn visit.

6. REVIEW OF SCHOOL EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE AT KEY STAGES 4 AND 5 AND SPECIFIC PUPILS GROUPS ACROSS ALL KEY STAGES DURING ACADEMIC YEAR 2013/14

Context:

To provide a summary of:

- Performance of pupils at the end of Key Stages 4 and 5
- A breakdown of performance all key stages for the following groups:
 - Girls and Boys.
 - Pupils who are eligible for free school meals (eFSM).
 - Pupils who are looked after by a Local Authority (LAC).
 - Pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL).
 - Pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

Key issues:

The key issues identified related to pupil performance at Key at Stage 4, Key Stage 5, and Pupil Group Performance. Pupil Group Performance provided details in respect of pupils' eligible for Free School Meals, gender, Looked After Children, English and an additional language and Additional Learning Needs.

There will be three Members' Seminars to be held in July, October and December 2015 to provide an update on progress since the Estyn Inspections. All Members will be invited to attend. The second seminar would be to look at unverified data and to assess the trends.

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Select Committee Members were informed that unverified data would be presented to the Select Committee for Scrutiny purposes before the end of 2015.

Member scrutiny:

- The examination results contained within the report referred to examinations that had been sat one year ago. The report therefore had been received too late in order to undertake any constructive scrutiny.
- The Education Achievement Service (EAS) was present when the report was presented to Select Committee last year. The Select Committee feels very strongly that the EAS should be present at Committee alongside this report.
- We requested for early Autumn 2015, to receive unverified examination results for 2015 in order to scrutinise the data with the EAS representatives being present.
- Parents of children eligible to receive Free School Meals (FSM) were required to apply for this service. Work was being undertaken with Monmouthshire's schools to encourage parents that were eligible to take up the offer of FSM for their children. However, some parents were choosing not to take up this offer.
- Unverified data for Foundation Phase, Key Stages 2 and 3 was indicating an uplift in pupil performance. For example, there is almost a 2% uplift in Key Stage 3 Science this year.
- The Children and Young People Directorate was keen to share unverified data with the Select Committee as soon as possible.

Committee's Conclusion:

The Chair summed up as follows:

The data received had been received too late in order to undertake effective scrutiny.

Committee's Recommendation:

We resolved that the unverified data would be presented to the Children and Young People Select Committee in early Autumn 2015 and that representatives of the Education Achievement Service (EAS) would be invited to attend the meeting.

7. SCHOOL BUDGET FINANCE FORUM

We resolved that County Councillor P.R. Clarke would be the Select Committee's representative serving on the School Budget Finance Forum.

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8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

We resolved to change the time of the next meeting to commence at 2.00pm on Thursday 9th July 2015.

The meeting ended at 4.01 pm.