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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, 21st February, 2019 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, T.Thomas, J.Watkins and S. Woodhouse.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Matthew Lewis (Countryside)	Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife
Mike Moran	Community Infrastructure Coordinator

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

County Councillor R. John	Cabinet Member
County Councillor A. C. Watts	
Mike Fowler	Parent Governor Representative
Leanne Wakerley	Chair, Monmouthshire Association of School Governors
Peter Strong	NEU
Helen Power	Principal Challenge Adviser, Monmouthshire
Hayley Davies-Edwards	Principal Challenge Adviser, Newport
Roger Thurlbeck	Head of SENCOM

APOLOGIES:

None

1. Declarations of Interest

Item 5: EAS Business Plan 2019-20 – County Councillor T. Thomas declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as a Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. Reconfiguration of the Sensory and Communication Support Service (SENCOM): Roger Thurlbeck, Head of SENCOM

The Select Committee welcomed Roger Thurlbeck, Head of Sensory and Communication Support Service (SENCOM) and thanked him for providing information on the service and the update that Newport City Council (NCC) has agreed to defer withdrawal for 12 months. Questions and comments were invited as follows:

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Member Scrutiny:

- The opinion was expressed that the best outcome would be for NCC to remain in the service. The Chair explained that NCC's Leader had responded to letters that its original position was that an equivalent service could be delivered at less cost to benefit young people in Newport by running its own service.
- A Member questioned the impact on staff of a deferment and was informed that if that was the case, the original staffing complement of 46 staff across three teams would continue, the change management process would be deferred and the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment) process would stop.
- County Councillor A. Watts, attending as a guest, asked what the day to day service would be if the changes occurred. Considering the authority's funding share, it was asked if there was an opportunity to seek new partners, commenting that Bristol City Council has an excellent service. It was responded that it is intended to continue with the same advice, support and teaching input by looking at the data for the remaining authorities, trends and time required to retain the current range of skills and experience and to balance the budget. A staffing structure was developed using this information. Potentially 16 staff would be lost and families would experience changes in personnel for which a transition process would be established.

Concern was expressed about longer term resilience. Professional partnerships are always welcomed but initially some time will be necessary to embed the new structure before exploring opportunities. The Chair commented that education is devolved and delivered by Welsh Government and Welsh local authorities and provided assurance that there is considerable expertise within Wales. Councillor Watts observed that courses for mandatory qualifications are only available in England and Scotland.

- A Member raised concerns that there should be no reduction in time allocated to students. It was responded that students have different levels of need that impact on their learning and so training, support and communication with schools has been reviewed to provide service levels according to need.

The Cabinet Member empathised with staff, particularly in respect of impact on their morale and wellbeing. He emphasised the authority's commitment to the Gwent-wide service and welcomed the deferment of withdrawal by NCC. He acknowledged the uncertainties for staff, parents and children. An urgent meeting with NCC has been requested to provide reassurance for staff and families.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair, on behalf of the Select Committee, expressed the authority's unanimous support for the comments of the Cabinet Member and noted that it has already been agreed that Cabinet liaises and negotiations as soon as possible for a clear way forward for staff and children and to help the staff do the best they can. It was asked that the unanimous support for the service and staff is communicated to them.

It was agreed that a letter would be written to Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education, to request that qualifications courses for SENCOM services are restored in Welsh universities.

The Head of SENCOM was thanked for his attendance at the meeting.

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4. Mounton House: Proposed Change to Funding Formula

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to seek the view of the CYP Select members regarding the consultation on the proposed changes to the funding formula for Mounton House Special School.

Key issues:

Background

1. The funding formula for schools is regularly reviewed for schools to ensure that the funds are distributed fairly.
2. The consultation document attached in appendix 1 identifies the issues with the current formula and the reasons to make the changes.
3. The consultation document details the list of consultees this includes all elected members.
4. The consultation period is for 4 weeks and closes on 22nd February 2019 (noon).
5. The Headteacher has met with the CYP finance manager to discuss the proposal.
- 3.6 At the time of writing this paper no responses have been received, however all responses up to the closing date will be included in the cabinet paper for the meeting on 6th March 2019.

Member Scrutiny:

The Children and Young People Finance Manager presented the report seeking the views of the Select Committee on proposals to alter the funding formula for Mounton House Special School. Following presentation of the report, questions and comments were invited. (Members were informed that these would be added as consultation feedback).

- A Select Committee Member supported making the funding formula appropriate to the needs and requirements of schools but expressed concern that changing the formula would effectively remove £275,000 from the Education budget. It was accepted that there is a gap between the funding received by the authority and the costs of services; Children and Young People Directorate have to contribute towards this and various options have been considered. Formula funding of school budgets is based on pupil numbers; these have reduced at the school.
- In response to a query, it was confirmed that a formal response from the Governing Body has not yet been received.
- A Select Committee Member, in response to a question, was informed that income from out of county pupils is held centrally and this has been reported as a budget pressure as numbers have reduced.
- Seeking clarification of the total funding, a Select Committee Member was informed that the school received funding of £1,559,000, centrally, £756,000 is recouped from other authorities leaving the net running costs of the school as £803,000. £275,000 for SEBD (Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties) has been removed from the funding as explained in the consultation report. It is anticipated that the out of county pupil income will be reducing to £350,000 due to a reduction in admissions.
- A Member expressed surprise that the number of pupils in the school is reducing and queried if some pupils were being retained in mainstream schools with support. The Chief Officer explained that there had been a steady decline, adding that the restrictive profile of the school plus the impact of neighbouring authorities making their own provision is affecting admissions numbers. He confirmed that proactivity on inclusion is encouraged.

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- A Select Committee Member asked about the numbers of out of county pupils and was advised that, next year there will be half as many.

Committee Conclusion:

The Select Committee considered the recommendation to scrutinise and provide feedback. Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

For : 6

Against: 3

Abstain: 0

The Chair announced the outcome that the Select Committee accepted the proposals to make changes to the funding formula for Mounton House Special School.

5. EAS Business Plan: Helen Power, EAS

Purpose:

This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2019-2020 and the Local Authority Annex 2019-2020, as part of the regional consultation process. Through this activity members will ensure that the plan enables appropriate support for schools to improve and that all pupils reach their potential across Monmouthshire.

Recommendations:

1. Members are asked to take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process, and provide a written response as appropriate.
2. Members are asked to consider the main strengths and areas for development within Monmouthshire, as detailed in LA Annex and to consider how LA services can be aligned to meet the ambitious targets within the Business Plan, therefore ensuring all pupils meet their full potential.

Key Issues:

1. The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan with accompanying annexes for each of the five Local Authorities (LAs). This Business Plan (2019–2020) outlines the programme of work that is required to continue to accelerate outcomes and provision for children and young people in settings and schools in South East Wales. The plan focuses on the need to raise aspiration and accelerate improvement in pupil outcomes, improve the quality of teaching and leadership, support schools to realise the national reform agenda and to continue to build upon the self-improving system within and across schools and settings.
2. Priorities for the Business Plan have been derived from Local Authority Strategic Plans, the progress that has been made towards the previous Business Plan, areas that have been identified as requiring improvements through internal self-evaluation processes, external research and feedback from Estyn. The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and trends within each LA are met through bespoke work with each school. This Business Plan addresses Monmouthshire local authority strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of the EAS.
3. The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and trends within Monmouthshire are met through bespoke work with each school. The EAS offers a wide range of bespoke support that is based upon best practice.
4. The EAS Business Plan priorities continues to be shaped using the outcomes of external reviews and research:

Member scrutiny:

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The EAS Principal Challenge Adviser for Monmouthshire and Principal Challenge Adviser for Newport introduced the EAS Business Plan for 2019/20. Following presentation of the report, questions were invited:

- In response to a question, it was explained that pupils have been consulted via School Councils; a summary of feedback received was offered. It was confirmed that staff have been consulted through strategy groups and should have been included on the list of consultees, and that feedback will be provided for next year. Some concern was expressed that feedback appeared to have been obtained from Headteachers only.
- Guidance on interpreting the data presented in the LA specific appendix was provided. Step 1 (data) is not now published, Step 2 examines a schools' capability to improve and Step 3 indicates the support to be provided.
- A Member requested information why Monmouthshire has less green category schools in comparison with others in SE Wales. In response, it was confirmed that there is a story reflecting the category and any changes for each school and consequently the level of support required to improve. Suggestions on layout will be conveyed to the Learning Intelligence Team (LIT).
- County Councillor T. Thomas declared an interest as a Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni and questioned the frequent change of Challenge Adviser, noting that the lack of continuity is not helpful. It was responded that this comment will be conveyed to the EAS. It was also explained that Welsh speaking Challenge Advisers are continually sought but recruitment is difficult in this area.
- It was accepted that there were some errors contained in the first report circulated and this will be reported back to the LIT.
- It was commented that the County has lower levels of Free School Meals (FSM) pupils and consequently, Pupil Development Grant (PDG). It was queried what the EAS can do to assist delivery of interventions for FSM pupils with less funding than other areas. It was explained that the EAS is partnering Monmouthshire schools with well performing schools in areas outside the region that reflect similar socioeconomic demography to share best practice. More information was offered for a future meeting. Peer review work with Professor Mick Waters is in progress and this can also be reported upon at a future meeting. The Cabinet Member explained that Monmouthshire has consistently good outcomes for children eligible for free school meals at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, but it is recognised that improvement at KS3 and KS4 is needed. It is also noted that we have the biggest gap relating to children moving in and out of county on transition to secondary school, whereas most authorities retain the same cohort and this can impact on performance data. Professor David Egan has been commissioned to carry out work on the nature of poverty in rural communities and its impact on education standards. Monmouthshire is the lowest funded authority in the country, has suffered the deepest cut this year and has the lowest shares of Education Improvement Grant and Pupil Development Grant. Referring to results at KS4 and FSM, the secondary headteachers have been asked what help can be provided for Y11 pupils. £75,000 has been made available; £1000 per FSM pupil to provide, for example, additional one to one support, resources, holiday revision.
- It was explained that Challenge Advisers monitor how schools spend their Pupil Development Grant, and the impact especially on vulnerable learners especially FSM.
- A Member noted that underperformance at Key Stage 4 is a common topic across the region. It was agreed that there is a focus on KS4 to ensure pupils achieve the best from their potential. Key Stage 3 is also a similar focus. Reassurance was provided that the focus on these key stages was not at the expense of Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2.

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- Considering exclusions, a significant increase was noted in fixed term exclusions of 5 days or fewer at primary and secondary, and a decrease at 6 days plus. The Chief Officer offered to provide further information on these statistics. There are significant behaviour challenges in schools; these are often managed by the use of short term exclusion. The ALN review recognises the need for an effective and graduated response to behaviour issues in classrooms to try and retain pupils in school.
- In response to a question about new professional standards, the difference between national and regional was explained. To support, EAS has designed a programme with less emphasis on professional leadership training and central training, and more emphasis on learning network schools (designated by a robust quality assurance process to share strengths across the region. The EAS provides a regional service to provide a joined up approach in the use of the new professional standards. Clarification was provided that higher education institutes annually review the impact of the EAS's work.
- Referring to pockets of deprivation in the county, it was questioned if any funds were available to encourage good practice. It was confirmed that a list of good work and strategies used is being collated in order to share knowledge to maximise impact.

Committee conclusions:

The Chair summarised that there had been a good discussion on the EAS Business Plan and that a few points had been highlighted to the EAS about presentation.

It was agreed that the County has identified priorities and it was considered that the plan appropriately captures the main concerns and sets out how to address them.

The recommendations were unanimously accepted.

The representatives of the EAS were thanked for their attendance.

6. School Categorisation Report: Helen Power, EAS

Purpose:

1. The Minister for Education and Skills announced the introduction of the National School Categorisation System in September 2014. The system, which covers both primary schools and secondary schools, has evolved over subsequent years.
2. From 2017-2018, Welsh Government removed the data-driven judgement that placed schools into a standards group as part of Step 1. Discussion around the school's self-evaluation and school development planning has become the central feature of the model. The school's data remains as a starting point for discussions within the school, and with the Challenge Adviser, about their capacity to improve in relation to leadership, teaching and learning.

Key Issues:

1. The following terminology is used to describe the outcomes of each step of the categorisation process:

Step 1: no standards group is published for 2018-2019

Step 2: the outcome is a judgement about a school's improvement capacity (A-D)

Step 3: leads to a support category for each school (green, yellow, amber, red)

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2. A range of other risks where they occur are considered when making a judgement about a school's improvement capacity and a decision about their support category.

3. The performance of eFSM pupils is taken into account giving consideration to the school's support category. Consideration should be given to performance over time (3 years minimum.)

4. For new and amalgamated schools any available performance data is used to inform discussions as part of Step 2 of the process – the self-evaluation of the school's capacity to improve.

5. Changes to a school's support category in year

The National School Categorisation process is carried out on an annual basis. The outcomes are communicated to the Welsh Government each year for publication following national verification in January. However, it is possible for each region to review a school's categorisation at any point during the year in response to changes in circumstance. These changes will not be published nationally.

Circumstances that may necessitate a review include:

- Schools that are making very good progress.
- Schools that become subject to a higher degree of risk
- Schools in inspection follow up

6. The National School Categorisation system is not contingent on the outcomes of an individual school's inspection. Where school self-evaluation and monitoring of schools' performance are effective this should result in appropriate action that will support a school's self-improvement and avoid the need for inspection follow-up activity. However, where a school requires follow up as a result of inspection the associated degree of risk, and the need to provide evidence of a school's progress against its recommendations, is weighed carefully when determining a judgement about a school's improvement capacity and making a decision about its support category.

7. The level of support available for each category is as follows:

- Green support category - up to 4 days of challenge adviser time.
- Yellow support category - up to 10 days of challenge adviser time.
- Amber support category - up to 15 days of challenge adviser time.
- Red support category - up to 25 days of challenge adviser time.

Each challenge adviser will determine the nature of the bespoke support package to be provided to each school according to need. This support will be aligned to the school's own development plan, through a single plan of support.

Member Scrutiny:

The report was presented by the Principal Challenge Adviser, and questions were invited:

- In response to a question about the changes, it was confirmed that there had been a review of improvement and outcomes, and of Estyn too that has led to categorisation changes and the development of a national self-evaluation tool and an authentication model which is still under development. The EAS will be working closely with authorities and schools to ensure that the appropriate support is provided. The Chair clarified that the letter he will be writing to the Minister will be bespoke to Monmouthshire.
- A Member congratulated the EAS on the support provided and the increase in green schools. It was confirmed that the one red school is provided with a range of support from e.g. challenge advisers, a learning network school.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the representatives of the EAS for their contribution to the meeting.

The contents of the report were noted.

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7. Play Action Plan and Play Sufficiency Assessment

Purpose:

To advise members of the timescale for the submission of the play sufficiency assessment and to present progress on the assessment and the proposed action plan for 2019/20.

Key Issues:

Key issues:

1. Statutory Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSA) were undertaken in 2013 & 2016. The duty on local authorities is to undertake a full review of the PSA every three years. The updated PSA is required to be submitted to Welsh Government by 31 March 2019 having been approved by Cabinet or in a final version timetabled to be so approved.
2. **“Wales: A Play Friendly Country”** is statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It gives detail to the duty under Section 11 of the Play Opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.
3. In summary, the statutory requirements are that a local authority
 - must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area; and
 - must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment.
4. In addition to undertaking a full review every three years, local authorities are required to produce a progress report and update the Play Action Plan on an annual basis.

Member Scrutiny:

Following presentation of the report by the Interim Performance, Evaluation and Programme Development Lead for MonLife and the Community Infrastructure Coordinator, the following observations were made by Select Committee Members:

- A Member acknowledged the important role of providing play facilities for children, noting in particular, the lack of all-weather sports and play facilities. It was proposed that outdoor facilities should be reviewed as a priority. It was questioned if there is the opportunity to engage with partners. In response, it was confirmed that a meeting is being set up with the Collaboration Group that manages outdoor pitches in Wales in the context of the proposals for a new school in Abergavenny. Secondly, the success of the indoor play provision in the new facility in Monmouth has encouraged interest in pursuing similar provision at Caldicot and the other leisure centre sites. Whilst welcoming this information, the Member was also concerned about rural areas.
- A Member congratulated all involved in holiday play provision.
- In response to a question about open access community play being moved from Chepstow Leisure Centre, it was confirmed that there has been growth in numbers of children attending and that choice of venue is critical. Some free places are offered for the Monmouthshire Games for FSM pupils but it is sometimes difficult for the children to travel to the leisure centre. To assist, the hours will be extended to include a food option at open hours' sessions, hopefully with Welsh Government funding. It was added that the Town Council will be considering improvements at Piggy's Hill.
- A Member recommended that Committee Members should take advantage of any invitation to visit the Monmouthshire Games to see the good work in session.

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- A Member explained that the move to Bulwark reflects where the highest concentration of young families live and work, agreeing that the leisure centre is too difficult to get to. It was commented that the existing play provision in semi urban areas is generally poor and needs to be improved. It was responded that the review will reflect further development in the area.

8. Confirmation of Minutes

Committee conclusion:

The Chair noted that if plans proceed, the provision of play opportunities will pass to MonLife. The authority will retain statutory duties regarding funding from Welsh Government, and the MonLife shadow board and Cabinet must ensure that there are protocols and systems in place so that when grants are available, they are received and delivered promptly to staff delivering play opportunities.

The Select Committee supported the proposals, and Members raised the need for more opportunities for play in rural communities, and asked that this point is considered.

The Committee reiterated the need for Welsh Government to release grant funding earlier to allow for better planning; this point already brought to the attention of Welsh Government.

The officers were thanked for their attendance

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

9. Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Plan

Special Meeting: 22nd March 2019 to consider:

- School Catchment (after consultation which concludes on 6th March 2019)
- The Future of Mounton House Special School

10. Actions Arising from previous meeting

Arising from the minutes, the Chair reported that a meeting has taken place with the Chair of the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors and the Parent Governor Representative. The outcome is that the areas of disagreement in the Partnership Agreement between the authority and the Association have been satisfactorily resolved. The amendments are being drafted and the revised document will return to a future meeting.

The Scrutiny Manager will chase progress on the Budget proposals action point.

SENCOM: This point was addressed at the meeting today with the attendance of the Head of Service.

11. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

Thanking the Select Committee for allowing his attendance, County Councillor A. Watts referred to an allegation of bullying/racial incident in a comprehensive school. In response, it was

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confirmed that schools have a statutory duty to report racial incidents. A report of incidents for all categories under the Equalities Act 2010 (not detail of individual cases) was requested for the Special Meeting on 22nd March 2019.

12. **Date and time of the next meeting: 4th April 2019**

The meeting ended at 12.33 pm