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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 Tuesday, 9th July, 2019 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor T.Thomas (Chairman)
County Councillor L. Jones (Vice Chairman)

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Will McLean	Chief Officer for Children and Young People
Nikki Wellington	Finance Manager
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Tyrone Stokes	Accountant
Cath Saunders	Children and Young People Directorate

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor L.Brown

1. Declarations of Interest

Personal non-prejudicial declarations of interest in respect of agenda items 4 and 5 were received as follows:

County Councillor M. Powell: Governor of King Henry VIII Comprehensive School.

Mrs. M. Harris: Governor of Deri View Primary School.

County Councillor T. Thomas: Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni.

County Councillor D. Jones: Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni and Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School, and the Federation of Llanfoist and Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary Schools.

County Councillor R. Harris: Governor of Deri View Primary School and Llantilio Pertholey Church in Wales Primary School.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. Maintained Schools Partnership Agreement

Purpose:

The purpose of the report is for members to agree the Statutory Partnership Agreement having taken on board comments made by the Committee during its meeting in January 2019.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that members agree the Statutory Partnership Agreement.

Key Issues:

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1. The Partnership Agreement includes those statutory functions that must be included which are:
 - How the Local Authority (LA) will promote high standards and support schools in particular those giving cause for concern, in special measures or requiring significant improvement and the factors the LA will take into account in identifying schools giving cause for concern.
 - The support the LA will provide for governing bodies where the authority has exercised its powers of intervention or suspended the right to a delegated budget, and in instances where an inspection of a school causes concern or the LA appoints additional governors.
 - Responsibility of the Local Authority to provide governors with support
 - The reports which the governing body provides to the LA on discharge of its functions.
 - The responsibility of the school and LA for Health and Safety matters and their duties to employees and other persons in respect of these matter.
 - The responsibility of the school and LA for the control of school premises and their maintenance and repairs and how the governing body may exercise its powers to provide community facilities; and
 - The LA duties regarding the defrayment of expenses and maintaining schools.

In addition, for schools providing primary education the Agreement must include:

- The exercise by the LA and governing body of functions that will promote high standards and secure effective transition of pupils from Key stage 2 to 3 and;
- LA target setting in relation to education plans and governing body target setting in relation to pupil performance and absence.

For schools providing secondary education the Agreement must include

- The exercise by the LA and governing body of functions that will promote high standards and secure effective transition of pupils from Key stage 2 and 3 and from key stage 3 to 4; and
- A target setting in relation to education plans and governing body target-setting in relation to absence.

2. Headteachers and Monmouthshire Association of School Governors have been consulted on the Partnership Agreement and views and comments will be included in the final document that will be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

Member Scrutiny:

The Partnership Agreement was presented by the Children and Young People, Governance Manager. Members of the Select Committee were invited to ask questions and comment as follows:

- County Councillor M. Groucutt explained that the Partnership Agreement had been reviewed due to concerns raised by the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors; mainly, that the document identified functions for governors that would ordinarily be the domain of school leadership. Governors undertaking such functions would have to rely on information received only. Since the review and following alteration of some wording, Councillor Groucutt endorsed and commended the document that now resolves the concerns of governors.

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- The representative of the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors confirmed that the association appreciated the opportunity to resolve concerns and were satisfied with the revised version.
- A Committee Member suggested some technical changes to ensure the document was up to date and agreed to e mail her suggestions separately for incorporation prior to consideration by Cabinet, and onward progression to school governing bodies.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair, on behalf of the Select Committee, accepted the Partnership Agreement as presented.

In view of the size and complexity of the document, it was suggested that School Governors and individual governing bodies would require training to ensure clarity of responsibilities.

4. Revenue & Capital Monitoring 2018/19 Outturn Statement

Purpose:

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on the revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority based on capital slippage and reserve approval and deferment.
2. This report will also be considered by Select Committees as part of their responsibility to:
 - assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place,
 - monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with agreed budget and policy framework,
 - challenge the reasonableness of projected over or underspends, and
 - monitor the achievement of predicted efficiency gains or progress in relation to savings proposals.
3. Recognising the twofold purpose to brief Cabinet/all members of the collective position, and individual scrutiny committees of specific aspects affecting their portfolio interests, the latter have been colour coded (green) to assist scrutiny members of particular committees

Recommendations proposed to cabinet:

1. That Members consider a net revenue outturn of £49k surplus.
2. That members endorse the revenue surplus for the year being used to replenish Capital Receipts generation reserve, and notes the effective closure of the priority investment reserve, appreciating the use of reserve balances at outturn, the slippage to 2019-20 proposed and the low level of earmarked reserves, which will notably reduce the flexibility the Council has in re-engineering services and facilitating change to mitigate the challenges of scarce resources going forward.

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3. Members note the extent of movements in individual budgeted draws on school balances, and reported recovery plan intentions as a consequence of their approving changes to Fairer Funding guidelines since month 2
4. That Members note the 81% delivery of the budget setting savings agreed by full Council previously and the implicit remedial action/savings included in the financial monitoring to compensate for circa 20% savings (£951k) reported as delayed or unachievable by service managers.
5. That Members note the enhanced monitoring of Children's services and additional learning needs proposed, to supply details for instance of average unit costs, the activity and predicted volume of presentations used in forecasting, to allow services an earlier opportunity to highlight cost pressures and more time to resolve such by remedial action in year.
6. That Members consider the capital outturn spend of £70.31m, introducing a £1.015m anticipated overspend, accepts slippage requests of £9.9m being endorsed and the related presumptions made around net financing consequences.

Member Scrutiny:

The Finance Managers for Social Care Safeguarding and Health, and for Children and Young People presented the report. Following presentation of the report, Members were invited to ask questions and make comments:

Children Services Budget

- A Member commented about the significant rise in numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) and asked if this number is likely to continue to rise. It was agreed that there is an increasingly upward trend. Select Committee Members were reminded that the service undertakes a lot of preventative work but there is also a statutory duty for remedial action to address any significant risks. It was explained that Monmouthshire receives the lowest funding in Wales and confirmed that every opportunity for efficiency is explored (e.g. a successful, in-house, fostering recruitment campaign and more use of special guardianship orders).
- It was questioned if there was a change in provision for Breakfast Clubs, and any consequent effect on take up. It was responded that from September 2018, a £1 charge for children not eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) had been introduced for the childcare element. There had been some reduction in take up, and a small amount related to low income families. Additionally some schools have introduced a booking system which has also caused some reduction in use.

Children and Young People Budget

- A Member noted that schools have to raise funds more regularly to cover some activities such as away sports fixtures, trips abroad for low income families, extra-curricular activities. It was explained that the majority of funding is from the revenue support grant and it is for Members to consider school budgets when determining budget strategy.
- A Member expressed concern that there may be some disadvantaged children.

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- A Member commented that the county is known for being one of the most efficient councils in Wales and recognised the work of officers accordingly.
- Assurance was provided that there would be no impact on schools arising from the shortfall associated with breakfast clubs as they are centrally funded.
- Regarding the overspend relating to Additional Learning Needs a breakdown of costs was requested for Members to better understand the implications as numbers and consequently costs are increasing. Work is in progress to develop better data and it was suggested that this could be a topic for a future meeting.
- Information on fair funding for schools was also requested. Fair funding regulations are explicit in precluding schools from setting deficit budgets if all schools collectively are in a deficit position. All schools have been reminded of the recovery plan process. It was commented that the level of revenue grants has been lower this year and that schools should not rely on the possibility that there will be a late disbursement of funds.
- A Member provided information that Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education may consider a review of the funding formula.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair summarised the main conclusions

For Children's Services Budget, it was accepted that there is some volatility beyond the control of the authority and also a statutory and moral obligation to look after children. The rise in numbers of LAC is a nationwide trend.

In terms of the Children and Young People's Budget, there was concern about the number of schools in a deficit budget position and this should be noted in the budget strategy meetings.

5. To confirm the minutes of previous meetings:

6. 8th May 2019 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th May 2019 were confirmed as an accurate record.

7. 21st May 2019 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2019 were confirmed as an accurate record.

8. Actions arising from the previous meeting

The actions arising from previous meetings have been added to the Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Work Plan.

9. Children and Young People Select Committee Forward Work Plan

The Chief Officer, Children and Young People, attended the meeting and with the Select Committee Chair, identified suggestions for the future attention of the Committee:

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- ALN Code of Practice changes (Tracey Pead, Regional Lead Officer)
- Transformation Health Board and Regional Partnership Board: Support for children with mental health and wellbeing needs – Dr. L. Jones
- Inclusion in schools/ behaviour management/ Exclusion: LA Behaviour Policy for all schools
- Areas of Risk e.g. Financial pressures
- Changes relating to the 2 year plan for Children's Services and the impact on schools
- Annual Report for Children and Young People – Chief Officer, Social Care , Safeguarding and Health
- Free School Meals performance: Report from Chepstow School
- Plans for Mounton House Special School – scrutiny before consideration by Cabinet and consideration of what will happen to such children in their own schools
- Chepstow School losing pupils over the county border.
- 10 year strategic: Welsh Medium Education, proposed new school and implications for Welsh Medium Education in the county.
- Engagement with Youth Forum
- Young Carer Strategy
- Childcare sufficiency
- Wellbeing – obesity, eating disorders
- Exam results – significant change, no longer aggregation

Agenda for 17th September 2019

- Mounton House
- Budget monitoring

Early September 2019: Joint Children and Young People and Adults Select Committees

- Corporate Plan
- Chief Officer (Social Care, Safeguarding and Health's) Annual Report

10. Council and Cabinet Work Planner

Any items to highlight for scrutiny or just to see the report

11. To confirm the date and time of the next meeting as 17th September 2019

The meeting ended at 11.37 am