

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GUILDHALL ON
THURSDAY, 19 APRIL 2018**

MEMBERS

Councillor Robert Walsh, Chair
Councillor Michael Dixon, Vice-Chair

Councillor	Sonia Benbow-Jones	Councillor	* Paul Jones
"	Dana Davies	"	John McCusker
"	* T Alan Edwards	"	Beverley Parry-Jones
"	Carrie Harper	"	* Rondo Roberts
"	Frank Hemmings	"	Debbie Wallice
"	R Alun Jenkins		

Mr Brendan McDonald - Church Representative
Mrs Maureen Williams - Church Representative

Mrs Alison Fisher - Parent Governor Representative

Mr Brent Evans - Co-optee*

*Absent

Also Present – Councillor Phil Wynn

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors T Alan Edwards, Paul Jones and Rondo Roberts and co-opted member Mr Brent Evans.

41 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS, IF ANY

Members were reminded of their responsibility, under Article 11 of the Members' Code of Conduct, to declare any interests in relation to any of the business to be transacted at this meeting. The following declarations were made:

Agenda Item 5 – Councillors Dana Davies, Carrie Harper and Debbie Wallice – Personal – Parent of child at a Wrexham school. The Councillor remained in the meeting taking part in the discussion and voting thereon.

Agenda Item 5 – Councillors R Alun Jenkins, Beverley Parry-Jones and Robert Walsh – Personal and Prejudicial. The Councillor remained in the meeting and claimed an exemption under Article 12(2) of the Members' Code of Conduct taking part in the discussion and voting thereon.

42 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

AGREED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 February 2018 be signed

as a correct record.

43 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Finance submitted a report (HF/46/17s) to assist the Committee in considering and agreeing its work programme.

The Scrutiny Facilitator presented the report drawing Members' attention to the following:

- Proposal to hold an All Member Workshop in September 2018 to ensure the wider involvement of all Members to consider how effective the Scrutiny Committee was in supporting improvement in education. Referring to the Centre for Public Scrutiny document 'Back to School', a Member requested that consideration be given in future to the scheduling of more than one item per meeting on the work programme to maximise the Committee's effectiveness. The Head of Education requested that where the Committee scheduled more than one item per meeting, Officer capacity to submit those reports was taken into account.
- Budget setting scrutiny – September meeting of the Committee allocated to consider budget items identified at the All Member Workshops and an additional meeting to be scheduled in December, if required, to consider any specific consultation responses.
- Topic Selection Form at Appendix 1 to the report in respect of Period Poverty. The Lead Member and Service Manager reported that work was currently being undertaken to explore how best to allocate the recent funding announced by Welsh Government for local authorities to help tackle the issue of period poverty. The Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group based on the outcomes and issues in the topic selection form to support the review and consider the funding allocation and future revenue funding issues.

AGREED –

- (i) **That the work programme be agreed.**
- (ii) **That a task and finish group comprising of the following Members be established to consider the issue of Period Poverty:**

**Councillor Dana Davies
Councillor Sonia Benbow-Jones
Councillor Carrie Harper
Councillor Frank Hemmings
Councillor Adrienne Jeorett
Councillor Gwenfair Jones**

44 **PERFORMANCE OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS PUPILS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS OF LEARNERS**

(Members declarations of interest in relation to this item are set out in Minute 41)

above)

The Lead Member for People (Education) submitted a report (HF/08/18s) to provide Members with information about the standards achieved by groups of vulnerable learners in Wrexham in 2017 and to provide Members with information about the verified GCSE results in 2017, focusing on the Level 2 inclusive indicator.

The Head of Education reported that owing to the small cohort size the outcomes for Looked After Children had not been included in today's report but would be shared with Members as a confidential information report.

The Chair welcomed representatives from GwE to the meeting. He then invited Committee members to comment and ask questions on the report. The following issues were highlighted in debate:

- The improvements in free school meals (FSM) performance across most key stages in 2016 were noted and welcomed by the Committee. The need for improvement at Key Stage 4 was identified.
- The inadequacy of the FSM indicator as an identifier of need in light of changes to the benefits system. Requested that representations be made to Welsh Government in this regard.
- Difficulties in identifying pupils not claiming FSM but who had similar needs. This impacted upon the support that schools could provide via the Pupil Development Grant.
- Changes to the indicator used by the Welsh Government to calculate the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) were reported to the Committee which could disadvantage schools with increasing FSM levels.
- Difficulties in sharing information to promote eligibility for FSM arising from GDPR requirements.
- The difficulties in measuring the impact of PDG on achievement. It was noted that PDG could be used to provide activities for groups of pupils requiring intervention, so long as it primarily targeted FSM learners before other vulnerable groups. The GwE Officer commented on the role of GwE in providing advice and guidance to schools on the effective use of the grant.
- Increase in the incidence of pupils with additional needs on early years entry and its impact on the Foundation Phase. The GwE Officer reported that this was a key priority for the regional early years intervention group in terms of the continual professional development offer from GwE.
- Further information sought in respect of support for speech and language development in early years. It was reported that the early years PDG in Wrexham was used to employ a speech and language outreach officer who worked with staff and parents with the early identification of issues and developing strategies of support.
- Members were informed of a programme of targeted support for schools at key stage 2 to support teachers in improving the outcomes of FSM learners.
- Members were reassured that the improved performance at key stage 2 was likely to continue, based on the tracking data provided to the local authority by schools.
- The difference in the targets set and level of achievement at key stage 4,

level 2 inclusive. It was reported that changes to the GCSE qualifications and criteria had had a greater impact on FSM learners than non FSM learners and there had been difficulty in setting meaningful targets at level 2 inclusive. The GwE Officer reassured the Committee that target discrepancies were challenged by GwE advisers. It was noted that there had been a reduction in targets for FSM pupils at the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 4 in order to allow changes to be embedded.

- The Committee acknowledged and welcomed the improvement in EAL (English as an additional language) performance.
- Noted that there was a high number of EAL pupils in Wrexham schools. The Head of Education provided further information on future funding proposals which may impact upon EAL pupil support and stated that he would report back to the next meeting regarding the outcome of ongoing discussions with Welsh Government regarding continued funding for these pupils.
- Noted that owing to cohort size it was not possible to compare Wrexham's EAL performance with that of other local authorities. The Head of Education assured the Committee that EAL performance in Wrexham was very good, highlighting that the performance of EAL pupils was near to or above the Wales average once language acquisition at level D was achieved.
- Noted that the complex needs of some SEN (Special Educational Needs) pupils resulted in difficulties in making realistic comparisons. Officers commented that it would be more useful to track the quality of provision. Members agreed that this should be submitted in a separate report.

AGREED –

- (i) That the Chair and Vice-Chair work with Officers to develop a separate report which focuses on the quality of SEN provision and demand.**
- (ii) That representations be made to Welsh Government regarding the inadequacy of the use of the FSM indicator as an identifier of poverty.**

45 THANKS

As this was the last meeting of the Committee prior to the Annual Meeting of the Council the Chair thanked Members for their hard work and support during the year.

Councillor Robert Walsh
Chair