

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, GUILDHALL ON
THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2019**

MEMBERS

Councillor Carrie Harper, Chair
*Councillor Michael Dixon, Vice-Chair

Councillor	Sonia Benbow-Jones	Councillor	* John McCusker
"	* Dana Davies	"	Beverley Parry-Jones
"	Frank Hemmings	"	Rondo Roberts
"	R Alun Jenkins	"	Debbie Wallice
"	Paul Jones	"	* Robert Walsh
"	Tina Mannering		

Mr Brendan McDonald - Church Representative

Mrs Alison Fisher - Parent Governor Representative

Mr Brent Evans - Co-optee*

*Absent

Also Present – Councillor Phil Wynn

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dana Davies, Michael Dixon, John McCusker and Robert Walsh and co-opted member Mr Brent Evans.

35 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS, IF ANY

Members were reminded of their responsibility, under Paragraph 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:

Item 5 – Councillors Tina Mannering and Beverley Parry-Jones – Personal and Prejudicial – School Governor. The Councillors 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.

36 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

AGREED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 January 2019 be signed as a correct record.

37 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Finance submitted a report (HF/17/19s) to assist the Committee in considering and agreeing its work programme. Members considered the report and referred to the following:

- The draft response to questions posed under the Local Government Education Services framework would be considered as and when required.
- The scope of the Groves School Building Task and Finish Group was noted.

AGREED – That the work programme be agreed.

38 **LEVELS OF FIXED TERM/PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS AND YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT**

(Members declarations of interest in relation to this item are set out in Minute 35 above)

The Lead Member for People – Education submitted and introduced a report (HEd/04/19s) to provide scrutiny with a monitoring report on the levels of fixed term and permanent exclusions in Wrexham and how this compared to the all Wales data summary provided by Welsh Government. The report also provided data in respect of the education, training and employment (ETE) indicator for the Youth Justice Service. A revised Fig 3 – Number of Exclusions for over 5 days 2012/23 – 2017/18 was tabled.

Members noted that the level of fixed term exclusions had increased and that this had been highlighted as a priority area in the department's 2019-20 Business Plan. It was also highlighted that a proportion of excluded pupils also had additional learning needs and further work was being undertaken in relation to this which would be reported back to Committee at a future meeting. It was recognised that very often outside of school influences were linked to disruptive behaviour in school.

Members considered the report and referred to the following matters in debate:

- Assurance was provided that the system for reporting exclusions was robust.
- The importance of leadership in schools. The Head of Education reported that there was evidence to suggest a short term increase in exclusion following a new Headship as a result of increased aspirations and new systems and procedures.
- Queried whether increased waiting times for referrals to CAMHs were impacting on behaviour in schools. The Head of Education acknowledged that waiting lists for CAMHS were high but stressed that the local authority had an excellent operational relationship with both the Health Board and CAMHS. It was important to ensure that counselling services and interventions provided by the local authority were maintained. A CAMHS pilot for in-school training to help teachers identify possible issues and sign-post to appropriate services was being rolled out.
- The role of parents in ensuring that pupil behaviour boundaries, as set by

- schools, were adhered to.
- The importance of consistency of approach in classrooms in respect of levels of acceptable behaviour.
 - Noted that it was not possible to compare school fixed term exclusion levels owing to their differing demographics and behaviour policies.
 - There was no evidence that an underperforming school would have high exclusion rates.
 - Further information was provided regarding the guidance provided to schools by the local authority regarding cyberbullying. It was noted that often incidents of cyberbullying occurred outside of school times. The Head of Education informed the Committee of the project undertaken by Senedd yr Ifanc in respect of bullying and advised he would circulate this to members of the Committee.
 - The Lead Member reported that further work was required to identify whether there was a correlation between schools that may have reduced staffing levels as a result of budget management and incidents of exclusion.
 - Noted that the Education department provided support and advice to schools in order to try to keep exclusion rates as low as possible.
 - The importance of training school Governors to ensure clear and consistent application of behaviour policies.
 - Noted that capital had been provided to two Secondary schools to open behaviour centres and to one Primary school to open a nurture centre.
 - Revised policies issued to schools aimed to reduce the level of school to school movement.
 - The Youth Justice Service multi agency approach was welcomed.
 - Noted that the level of young people not in employment, education or training in Wrexham were one of the lowest in Wales.
 - The importance of ensuring that young people of statutory school age were offered 25 hours of education.

AGREED –

- (i) That the Lead Member and Officers be thanked for their report and presentation.**
- (ii) That actions identified in the report to address related issues be supported.**
- (iii) That the next update report on this issue include information regarding:**
 - a) Details of the CAMHS pilot for in school provision training and its impact.**
 - b) Provide information to correlate, if possible, rates of funding and levels of exclusions.**

Councillor Carrie Harper
Chair