

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GUILDHALL ON
THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY 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

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Sonia Benbow Jones, Frank Hemmings, Tina Mannering, Rondo Roberts and Robert Walsh and co-opted member, Mrs Alison Fisher.

30 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Correction to Minute 26

That recommendation (i) be amended to include the wording "library review"

AGREED – That, subject to the aforementioned amendment, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2019 be signed as a correct record.

31 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Finance submitted a report (HF/03/19s) to assist the Committee in considering and agreeing its work programme.

The Scrutiny Facilitator reported that the changes agreed at the last meeting had been incorporated into the work programme.

It was requested that the report on Behaviour and Schools include information on how decisions regarding school exclusions are challenged by the local authority.

AGREED – That the work programme outlined in report HF/03/19s be agreed.

32

LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLANNING PROCESSES

The Lead Member for People – Education submitted a report (HEd/03/19s) to provide Members with an overview of the Education Department’s self-evaluation, performance management and business planning processes and the draft improvement priorities for 2019-20.

The Chair welcomed representatives from the Wrexham Association of Secondary Head Teachers (WASH) and the Primary Head Teachers Federation (PHF) to the meeting.

Members considered the report and asked questions of the Lead Member and Head of Education. In debate the following issues were highlighted:

- Support for the high level priorities and accountability framework outlined in the report.
- Request for the Committee to receive the Level 1 – 4 plans for the Education Department. The Head of Education suggested that the Committee consider the information as part of the relevant reports identified in it’s work programme.
- Clarification sought in respect of the definition of self-evaluation principle ‘Robust’ which referred to performance data ‘where relevant’. The Head of Education reported that this reflected the use of both quantifiable and qualitative data. It was suggested the definition be amended to read ‘where available’.
- Reported that governor membership of the Education Steering Group included one governor from Primary, Secondary and Special schools, with the term of membership lasting for 2 years to ensure continuity.
- Noted that the priorities for improvement would be shared with Councillors.
- Clarification sought regarding the target and performance data to be available to enable the Committee to evaluate performance in the future. The Head of Education reported that whilst schools would hold performance data, aggregated data would not be publically available from next year. Discussions were ongoing with Welsh Government in respect of the data that would be available to Committees going forward. Concern was expressed regarding the lack of clarity regarding the future role of scrutiny in respect of Education services.
- Suggested that consideration be given to inviting individual schools to future meetings to enable Members to consider their targets and to gain assurance that sufficient progress was being made.
- The role of the Committee’s School Performance Monitoring Working Group would also provide Members with a level of assurance regarding individual school performance.

The Chair invited the representatives from WASH and PHF to address the

Committee. They assured Members that Primary and Secondary Head Teachers were very familiar with the business plan, with these priorities reflected down to school plan level. Head Teachers, along with GwE colleagues, challenged performance and schools were able to evidence pupil progress using tracking data. Some of the Committee's concerns regarding the move from a high level of accountability were shared by Head Teachers, but Members were assured that core subject focus would remain, but the change would also enable schools to recognise pupils' progress outside of level 2+.

AGREED –

- (i) That the committee support the high level priorities identified in paragraph 2.10 of the report.**
- (ii) That work be undertaken to marry up the plans contained in the accountability framework with relevant items currently contained on the committee's work programme.**
- (iii) That where principles of self-evaluation are listed in 4.14 of the report the definition of Robust be amended to read "data where available."**
- (iv) That a summary of the self-evaluation report undertaken by the Lead Member for Education and Lead Member for Youth Services and Anti-Poverty of Level 1 and 2 plans be provided to all Members.**
- (v) That the Chair be delegated to work with the Lead Member of Education to forward correspondence to the WLGA Education Sub-Committee highlighting concerns at the lack of clarity around the revised role scrutiny is being asked to undertake of the Education service.**

33

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES

The Lead Member for People – Education submitted a report (HEd/02/19s) to advise the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee about the revised methodology for Estyn inspections of Local Government Education Services (LGES) and to enable the committee to consider the approach to evaluating its own effectiveness against lines of enquiry in the LGES framework.

During discussion of the report the following matters were highlighted:

- Noted that the Estyn framework for inspecting local authority education services had been revised and was now branded as Local Government Education Services.
- The role of Members and the Scrutiny function would form part of Inspection Area 3 and the Council would receive 10 weeks notice of a forthcoming Estyn inspection.
- The Chair reported that she and the Vice-Chair were considering the focus of the Committee's work programme in order to maximise its effectiveness.
- The Committee's initial self-evaluation would feed into the local authority's

self evaluation documents.

- The Head of Education reminded the Committee that annual self-evaluation was good practice.
- Suggested that areas for consideration, when considering previous effectiveness, could include the Scrutiny Annual Report, the work of the Period Poverty Task and Finish Group, the Committee's support for the financial position of schools and the on-going work of the School Performance Monitoring Working Group.
- To ensure that the comments of all Committee members were incorporated into the self-evaluation response, the Scrutiny Facilitator would provide Committee members with an information pack for Members to feed back their comments for consideration by the Chair and Vice-Chair in advance of the February meeting.
- Requested that following an inspection recommendations from Estyn for Scrutiny be fed back so that the Committee could develop an action plan.

AGREED – That consideration of this issue be deferred to the February meeting with a view to developing a full response to be submitted to the Head of Education by 31 March 2019.

Councillor Carrie Harper
Chair