

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Russell House, Rhyl on Thursday, 17 July 2014 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Richard Davies, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Peter Owen, Arwel Roberts (Vice-Chair), Gareth Sandilands and David Simmons (Chair)

Co-opted Members – Gill Greenland, Dawn Marjoram and Gareth Williams attended for Agenda Item 5

Cabinet Members – Councillor Barbara Smith attended for Agenda Item 6

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM); Head of Education (KE); Partnerships and Communities Team Manager (LG); Lead Officer: Libraries, Arts and Young People (RE); Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (GW); HR Services Manager (CR); Audit Manager (BS); Corporate Information Manager (CB); Senior Corporate Health & Safety Adviser (GL); Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE), and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

POINT OF NOTICE

As the Chair – Councillor David Simmons would be arriving late for the meeting the Vice Chair – Councillor Arwel Roberts presided over the first part of the meeting.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors Meirick Davies, Colin Hughes and Dewi Owens together with Co-opted Members Debra Houghton and Nicola Lewis

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declaration of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2014 were submitted.

Matters Arising –

Page 8 – Item 8 Agricultural Estate Strategy – The Scrutiny Coordinator advised that a copy of the WLGA’s Rural Forum report ‘Welsh County Farms’, circulated to members ahead of the last meeting had been sent to Agricultural Estate Working Group members at the request of the Lead Member Councillor Huw Jones. A report on Agricultural Estate’s performance would be submitted to the committee in November and the draft long term strategy for the Agricultural Estate would be presented in January 2015.

Page 10 – Item 9 Director of Social Services annual report 2013/14 - The information requested by members on the New Work Connections Project had been included within the Committee’s information brief (previously circulated).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2014 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 POST INSPECTION ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THE ESTYN INSPECTION ON THE QUALITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DENBIGHSHIRE

The Partnership and Communities Manager (PCM) submitted a report (previously circulated) updating members on progress made in addressing Estyn’s recommendations arising from the 2012 inspection since the last report submitted to the scrutiny committee in January 2014.

Members were reminded of the positive outcome of the inspection with only two recommendations for further improvement –

- (1) Improve the accuracy of Teacher Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3
- (2) Identify all services for children and young people in Denbighshire and establish an effective system to measure the impact of these services to help the authority and its partners know whether these offer good value for money

The Head of Education (HE) reported upon the work carried out to address the first recommendation and members were pleased to note that the validated Key Stage 3 results indicated that this recommendation had been addressed. The Core Subject Indicator had risen for a seventh consecutive year – rising from 75% in 2013 to 83.3% in 2014. It was important for the Council to ensure that pupil outcomes at the end of primary and secondary education were sustained and improved. In light of the improved outcomes the Committee agreed that future monitoring of this recommendation could be undertaken through annual scrutiny of external examination results and teacher assessments which the Committee undertook in the autumn of every year. This year the report would be submitted to the Committee’s October meeting and a representative from GwE (Regional School Improvement Service) would also be attending to present an annual report on progress. In responding to issues raised by Co-opted Member Dawn Marjoram the HE confirmed that special schools were supported in the same way in terms of scrutiny and systems in place but data was not measured against mainstream schools. She accepted there were difficulties in terms of comparative data and acknowledged that special schools were working hard to track pupil progress.

The Committee accepted that the second recommendation was much more difficult to define and quantify. Officers advised that in an attempt to address this recommendation a mapping exercise was underway to draw up a database of services to children and young people in the county and identify any gaps in provision. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of provision in the Dee Valley area for those with special needs and officers agreed to consider the provision for special needs children and young people in that area, including options for inclusion in existing child and youth activities. Questionnaires would be completed by the organisations in the presence of Family Information Service officers who would emphasise the need for honest answers about services currently provided to ensure that any gaps identified could be considered for future provision. In responding to further questions officers elaborated upon the monitoring process in place, involvement of other partner organisations within the process and timescales for the collection and analysis of data. The importance of promoting the availability of services was highlighted and it was agreed to receive a further report once the mapping work had been completed.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) the information provided with regards to progress in addressing Estyn's recommendations be noted;*
- (b) as a result of the maintained improvement in the accuracy of teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, further stand-alone reports on this matter were not required. In future this aspect would be monitored through the annual report submitted to the Committee on external examination results and teacher assessments, and*
- (c) once the mapping work had been completed, a further report be presented to the Committee in early 2015 outlining the results of that work and proposals on how the impact and value for money of the services to children and young people across the county could be measured.*

6 HR FRAMEWORK

The HR Services Manager (HRM) submitted a report (previously circulated) relating to the risk that the HR Framework did not support the organisation's aims and provided an update on progress made in delivering the HR Improvement Plan and future plans to mitigate this risk.

The Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services (HLHRDS) provided some background and context to the report and the HRM informed the Committee of the measures taken by the HR Service during the past eighteen months to improve the core service and deliver a better service for the service user. Members noted that 90% of the approximately 360 actions in the HR Improvement Plan had now been delivered. The Audit Manager reported upon a recent follow-up review of the Service undertaken by Internal Audit soon to be published, which would give assurances that the Service had improved and there were no new areas of concern. The original restructure of the Service and its delivery model had been

too ambitious with expectation set too high as the relevant IT systems had not been in place to deliver the strategy. Nevertheless, HR staff were committed and ready to move to the next phase of the improvement plan which focused on managers and the support and tools they required. It was also acknowledged that, whilst the Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS) had meant a new way of working for all Service staff, it had resulted in a more secure method of holding personal information.

Officers responded to members' questions confirming the successful use of EDRMS and future plans to utilise existing capacity in other IT systems. In terms of training the Service had a total of 35 members of staff who were trained on a fortnightly basis, with staff who were on leave or sick absence benefiting from a 'buddying scheme' to catch-up on any missed training. With respect to potential savings within the Service to contribute towards the Council's corporate efficiencies agenda, officers advised that potential savings options would be put to members at one of the programmed budget meetings.

Whilst the improvements made within the Service had the potential to reduce the residual risk score on the Corporate Risk Register, the Chief Executive and the HLHRDS indicated that they were content for the HR Framework to remain on the Register for the foreseeable future as this would guard against complacency. Councillor Barbara Smith, Lead Member for Modernising and Performance also advised that the HR Service featured as one of her priorities in the Corporate Plan.

The Committee congratulated the Service and the HRM on the improvements achieved to date and it was –

RESOLVED that having considered the information provided on the progress made in addressing the risk identified in the Corporate Risk Register to ask that an information report be submitted to members in six months' time outlining the progress made in delivering the HR Improvement Plan and the actions identified and implemented following publication of the Internal Audit follow-up report.

At this juncture (10.45 a.m.) the committee adjourned for a refreshment break.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORTING

The Corporate Information Manager submitted a report (previously circulated) providing an overview of the issues associated with the reporting of health and safety incidents and the actions being undertaken to address them. The report had been requested by the scrutiny committee following consideration of the Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report in May 2014. Whilst the original intention had been to invite the software provider (Civica) to attend the meeting it was subsequently considered more appropriate to review and then resolve the issues internally.

Some background information was provided regarding the development of the reporting system for health and safety incidents together the involvement of the Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS) Team; Corporate ICT, and Civica within that process. The Committee was informed of the actions

taken with a view to addressing the problems encountered with the categorisation of accident types on the Health and Safety section of the EDRM System, which resulted in high numbers of accidents classed as 'Other' and 'Not Applicable' being reported on the Services' regular statistical reports. This resulted in officers having to manually look at each record in order to identify trends or problems before they could start addressing them. Officers advised that Health and Safety, EDRMS and IT officers had worked closely since the Committee had raised concerns about the problem in May. The root of the problem had since been identified as the webform. The 'Other' and 'Not Applicable' categories would be removed from the form and additional fields would be included to enable detailed and definitive reporting. There would be some instances of 'Other' or 'Not Applicable' reporting occurring until such time as the enhanced system was fully operational and the entire reporting period commenced after the enhancement's full implementation. Reference was also made to a number of other system related issues and agreed actions to address them for completion by October 2014.

In response to questions the Senior Corporate Health and Safety Adviser confirmed that planned action to address the issues had been swift following the Committee's involvement and he was confident that the identified problems would be resolved satisfactorily and in a timely manner ensuring a system fit for purpose. The additional costs for improving and enhancing the EDRMS system would be financed from within the current EDRMS budget. The Committee considered the information presented and actions to ensure the provision of meaningful data in terms of recording health and safety incidents following which it was –

RESOLVED to endorse the steps taken to date to identify the issues associated with the reporting of the health and safety incidents and the actions being undertaken to address them.

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator submitted a report (previously circulated) seeking members' review of the committee's work programme and providing an update on relevant issues.

Councillor Arwel Roberts requested that the School Transport Policy be an item for future scrutiny and the Chief Executive reported upon areas of the policy currently under review. It was agreed that the draft new policy be presented to scrutiny before submission to Cabinet for approval. Members also noted the proposal that all future education items be considered by this committee.

The Scrutiny Coordinator updated members on the Adult and Social Care Services Task and Finish Group and the development of an options appraisal for future delivery. The Group would be meeting for the last time the following week in order to finalise their report. Members were also reminded of the proposal to establish an Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group to explore various matters relating to affordable housing. The Committee was asked to appoint a representative and substitute on the Group.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved, and*
- (b) *Councillors Colin Hughes and Geraint Lloyd-Williams be appointed the Committee's representative and substitute representative respectively on the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group.*

9 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Committee representatives reported upon their attendance at meetings as follows –

Councillor Arwel Roberts reported upon a meeting with the Head of Children & Family Services and Lead Member for Social Care to discuss performance relating to holding child protection conferences which had been raised at the Committee's last meeting. He praised the work being carried out and was satisfied staff were doing an excellent job. The Scrutiny Coordinator drew members' attention to the Committee's information brief (previously circulated) which provided a statement from the Lead Member in which she explained that whilst striving to comply with performance indicators, there would be the odd occasion when it was more purposeful to delay slightly rather than proceed to conference without the participation of a key player. The Committee indicated they were satisfied with the explanation provided.

Councillor Gareth Sandilands reported that the Strategic Investment Group had met to discuss the Modernisation Education Programme with everything going according to plan.

Councillor Richard Davies confirmed his attendance at the Adult and Social Care Task and Finish Group (an update had been provided under the previous item).

RESOLVED *that the verbal reports from members attending meetings be noted.*

The meeting concluded at 11.25 a.m.