

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 16 April 2015 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Peter Owen, Dewi Owens, Arwel Roberts (Vice-Chair), Gareth Sandilands and David Simmons (Chair).

Co-opted Members: - D. Houghton and G. Williams.

Lead Member attendance requested by the Committee: - Councillor E.W. Williams.

ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (MM), Head of Education (KE), Head of Business, Improvement and Modernisation (AS), Strategic Team Manager (LG), Scrutiny Co-ordinator (RE) and Administrative Officer (CIW).

The Chair thanked Councillor R.J. Davies for chairing the previous meeting of the Committee in his and the Vice Chair's absence.

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors C. Hughes, G. Lloyd-Williams, Co-opted Members G. Greenland, Dr D. Marjoram, and Lead Member J. Thompson-Hill.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Members declared any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at the meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 26th February, 2015 were submitted.

Matters arising:-

4. Minutes of Last Meeting – In response to a question from Councillor M.LI. Davies, the Scrutiny Coordinator agreed to circulate a copy of the e-mail sent to

Members from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the style of minutes to be produced.

RESOLVED – *that, subject to the above, the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.*

5 SUCCESSFUL FUTURES - THE DONALDSON REPORT

A copy of a report by the Head of Education (HE) had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

In March 2014 the Minister for Education commissioned Professor Graham Donaldson to conduct a independent review of Curriculum and Assessment arrangements in Wales from foundation Phase to Key Stage 4. The review's findings were included in Appendix 1 to the report - Successful Futures, Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales. The report detailed scope of the Review, and considered the implications for education and education related services in Denbighshire if the recommendations emanating from the review were adopted by the Welsh Government (WG).

The report identified the shortcomings of current curriculum arrangements and made a series of recommendations to address these and improve how children in Wales were taught and assessed. The proposals were radical and wide-ranging, and the main areas of focus had been outlined in the report, with the recommendations being listed in Appendix 2.

It was explained that the review, currently out for consultation, would introduce radical changes to the way education was delivered in Wales. It would be the biggest change since the introduction of the national curriculum, and would see education delivered through six areas of learning and experience - expressive arts; health and wellbeing; humanities; languages, literacy and communication; maths and numeracy; and science and technology.

The review would introduce three cross-curriculum responsibilities of literacy, numeracy and digital competence, for which all teachers would be responsible, and would be more focused on the outcomes for learners, to equip and skill them for the 21st Century work market. The assessment process would be less bureaucratic than for the current curriculum and there would be greater autonomy with the curriculum's delivery.

Confirmation was provided that if the vision outlined in the report was adopted either in its entirety, or elements of it, there would be challenges in maintaining and delivering the current curriculum while planning and implementing the introduction of the new curriculum.

The Head of Education (HE) was in favour of the proposed changes and was keen for them to be adopted in their entirety, not a hybrid version of the current model and new model. In response to Members' questions she:-

- agreed to enquire why no primary headteacher had been part of the Review's external advisers team and how many industry, business and private sector advisers had been involved with the development of the Review's conclusions;
- emphasised that the report presented to Members outlined the vision for the future education curriculum in Wales. Details of financial support and how it would be implemented would follow once the WG had agreed on the final policy;
- confirmed that there were no plans to do away with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, as they were an internationally recognised measure. However, if introduced the new curriculum should prepare students to perform better in the PISA tests;
- plans on how to train and upskill teachers ready for the new curriculum would be drawn up once the final policy had been agreed. Teaching unions etc. would be consulted on this and all other aspects of the policy's implementation at that time;
- confirmed, in response to written observations submitted by Co-opted Member Dr Dawn Marjoram who was unable to be present, that she had spoken to WG officials twice about special schools and they had confirmed that practices in special schools would be taken forward as part of the implementation plan for the Donaldson report.

Officers advised that there was a need to progress the continual development of Welsh Language skills between school based education and the workplace through improving community based use of the language. A debate needed to take place nationally on the economic definition and benefits of language skills, options for fast-tracking talented Welsh speakers, and the matter of the current rankings of Welsh universities and the potential loss of home grown talent to universities outside Wales.

Members asked that the Review report be circulated to all County Councillors emphasising its importance and seeking their input into it. The Committee agreed that it would also be useful if a session on it could be presented at a future meeting of Council Briefing.

The Lead Member for Education (LME) advised that the proposed model had been based on the current tried and tested Scottish model, and the Head of Education confirmed that models from elsewhere across the world had also been examined by the Review Team.

Following an in-depth discussion it was:-

RESOLVED – that Performance Scrutiny Committee:-

- (a) receive the report and recommends that the Council makes representations to the Welsh Government's consultation on the Donaldson Report, emphasising the need and importance of adopting the recommendations in their entirety in order to influence the future education agenda in Wales,
- (b) requests that the report be circulated to all County Councillors emphasising its importance in a bid to improve pupil outcomes, seeking them to engage with the consultation, and that a Council Briefing session be arranged for all County Councillors on the report's contents; and

(c) agrees that scrutiny should monitor the progress and implementation of the Review's recommendations in due course once the Welsh Government had approved its final policy.

6 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER REVIEW - APRIL 2015

A copy of a report by the Strategic Planning Manager (SPM), on the April 2015 formal revision to the Corporate Risk Register (CRR), had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The formally updated version of the CRR had been agreed at Cabinet Briefing. It enabled the Council to manage the likelihood and impact of risks that it faced by evaluating the effect of any current mitigating actions, and recording deadlines and responsibilities for further action that should enable tighter control. The purpose of the Corporate Risk Register was to identify the potential future events which may have a detrimental impact on the Council's ability to deliver its objectives, including its Corporate Priorities. The identified controls and actions were crucial to the delivery of the Corporate Priorities.

The Strategic Planning Manager (SPM) introduced the report and advised that there were some minor changes to the wording of some of the risks listed in Appendix 1, following the Cabinet Briefing meeting earlier in the week. Responding to Members questions officers advised that:-

- with respect to risk DCC007 the remaining 9% of the workforce who were yet to undertake data protection e-learning modules would do so this year. In the main these were staff who did not readily have access to computers, therefore classroom sessions etc. would be offered to them;
- the wording of DCC013 had now been amended and extended from arm's length organisations to include those services which the Council commissioned from other providers or outsourced to others to deliver on their behalf e.g Civica. This would be important going forward as more services were likely to be outsourced;
- the likelihood of risk DCC017 had now reduced following the reduction in posts within the ICT Department, and the refocussing of the Department's work to be more outward focussed. The roll-out of the Microsoft Outlook e-mail system to replace the current Lotus Notes system would also contribute towards the reduction in the risk score;
- the risk posed by DCC019 should be reduced by the next revision of the Risk Register as more information should be available by then on the availability of the WG 21st Century Schools match-funding;
- responding to Members' concerns on the reduction of the residual risk score of DCC021 from 'probable' to 'possible', officers advised that this decision had been taken based on the knowledge that a new management structure had now been established within Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) for the county area, and the fact that Denbighshire's Lead Member for Social Care (Adults and Children's Services) and its Director of Social Services served on the BCUHB. Therefore the risk of the Council not being able to assess and plan for the potential impact of the Health Board's decisions on the County had reduced;

- it may be beneficial for the 'Cutting Our Cloth Task and Finish Group' as part of its work to consider the impact on services of the loss of skills due to the budget cuts.

The Chief Executive had recently asked that the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) examine Cabinet forward work programmes in detail to adequately inform their Committees on the important matters that would be coming up in forthcoming months. Responding to Members' queries he requested that the minutes of the SCVCG be made readily available in an easy accessible location for all Elected Members.

RESOLVED – that Performance Scrutiny Committee:-

- (a) subject to the above observations, notes the deletions, additions and amendments to the Corporate Risk Register; and
- (b) requests the 'Cutting Our Cloth' Task and Finish Group to assess the impact of the budget related service reconfigurations on services' employee profiles, including their skills base.

7 LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013/14

A copy of a report by the Strategic Planning Officer (SPO), which invited consideration of the national report on Local Authorities' (LAs) performance and Denbighshire's performance in relation to other LAs 2013/14, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

It was explained that the Local Authority Service Performance Report 2013/2014, Appendix 1, was an annual publication which merged the performance of key LA services in Wales. It drew upon existing sources of information to highlight and add context to performance variation throughout Wales and set out what citizens could expect from key LA services. The service areas included in the report were Social Care, Education, Leisure and Culture, Housing, Environment, Transport, Community Safety and Wellbeing.

The monitoring process of the Council's performance was outlined, and an Annual Performance Report to evaluate progress was provided. The published report related to all LA Service Performance in 2013/2014. It utilised Welsh Government National Strategic Indicators, the Programme for Government indicators and other official statistical sources as suggested by policy and statistical specialists. Denbighshire's comparative position regarding the National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) for 2013/14 had been included in Appendix 2.

In 2013/14 Denbighshire maintained its position as the best performing Council in Wales for a fourth year, and a summary of the indicators had been provided in the report, together with, the current position as at the end of Quarter 3.

Members were advised that they may wish to use the historical document as a basis for their future performance monitoring work, and they were asked for their opinion on the usefulness of Appendix 2 as a tool to summarise the Council's performance journey against various performance indicators (PIs).

Members found this to be a useful easy to follow illustration for future use.
Responding to Members' questions officers:-

- confirmed that the Council did measure itself against other Authorities beyond Wales in certain areas i.e. sickness absence and educational attainment. Nevertheless, the majority of PIs were compared on an all-Wales basis;
- the percentage of affordable housing units in Denbighshire was low in comparison to other Local Authorities. However, there were measures in place in a bid to improve the Authority's performance;
- the importance of collecting and recording the right indicators was also emphasised i.e. there was a mandatory national indicator on the 'rate of older people supported in the community per 1000 head of population' - Denbighshire registered very poor performance against this particular PI for the reason that it followed the WG's own vision and policy of supporting people to live as independently as possible and not to be dependent on social care support

Having considered the national report on Local Authorities' performance, and Denbighshire's performance in relation to other Local Authorities in 2013/14, it was:-

RESOLVED –

- (a) to receive the report and use it as a basis when considering future Corporate Plan performance reports; and*
- (b) that the Direction of Travel Tool in Appendix 2 be supplied in future to accompany all Corporate Plan performance reports.*

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of a report by the Scrutiny Coordinator (SC), which requested the Committee to review and agree its Forward Work Programme and provided an update on relevant issues, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Committee considered its draft Forward Work Programme for future meetings, Appendix 1, and the following amendments and additions were agreed:-

11th June, 2015:- Members agreed that the business item, Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report be re scheduled to the 16th July, 2015, and the Lead Member, Councillor J. Thompson-Hill, be invited to attend.

It was agreed that the respective Lead Members be invited to attend for the following business items on 11 June:-

- Councillor R.L. Feeley for Draft Director of Social Services Annual Report 2014/15.
- Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill for Corporate Plan (Q4) 2014/15.

The Cabinet Forward Work Programme had been included as Appendix 3. Members agreed that the business item on The Future of In-house Care scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on the 28th July, 2015 be included in the Performance Scrutiny Committee forward work programme for consideration on the 16th July, 2015. The Committee was informed that the Cabinet meeting listed for the 26th May, 2015 had now been re-scheduled for the afternoon of the 2nd June, 2015.

A table summarising recent Committee resolutions and advising on progress with their implementation, had been attached at Appendix 4. The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group had met on the 2nd April, 2015 and no items had been referred to the Committee for consideration.

In response to a question from Councillor G. Sandilands, the SC explained that the Head of Service had advised that regular updates would be provided on the issue of CCTV as part of the on-going discussions on the service's future. A report on the options available would be presented to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on the 25th June, 2015.

Councillor A. Roberts explained that he would be liaising with the Public Protection Manager regarding concerns relating to pest control provision. The SC requested that Councillor Roberts complete and submit a Member's proposal form if he wished the matter to be considered by the Committee, following his deliberations with the respective officer. The Chief Executive explained that following consideration of the budget proposals, and as a result of financial constraints, the Council was no longer providing a pest control service. However, in an attempt to assist customers one of the telephone numbers provided directed customers to the National Centre for pest control which was based in Birmingham. He also confirmed that there was no budget provision to address the problems relating to seagulls.

Members agreed that a business item pertaining to the implementation of the Donaldson report be included in the Committee's forward work programme for a date to be confirmed.

The SC explained that as the next meeting of the Committee would be the first meeting after the Annual Council meeting, the Committee would be required to appoint a Vice Chair for the ensuing year. The role description for the Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair had been included in the Briefing Notes for the meeting. The SC explained that CV's would be sought from Members wishing to submit nominations for the posts, and these would be required by the 2nd June, 2015. The chair thanked the Members and officers for their help and assistance during the year.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above, the Work Programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

9 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor A. Roberts had attended a meeting of the Schools Standards Monitoring Group on the 24th February, 2015. He made reference to three schools which had

been discussed, and highlighted concerns relating to one of the schools in question.

Councillor M.LI. Davies had attended the Housing and Community Service Challenge meeting on the 4th March, 2015. He provided a brief outline of the proceedings and explained that matters considered included the Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing, and he felt the meeting had been very constructive and beneficial.

Councillor R.J. Davies had been unable to attend the meeting of the Customers and Education Support Service Challenge meeting. However, he had obtained notes of the proceedings which the SC agreed to circulate to Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED – *that the reports be received and the contents noted.*

Meeting ended at 12.45 p.m.