

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE B HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2017

PRESENT

County Councillor P Roberts (Chair)

County Councillors B Davies, J Gibson-Watt, H Hulme, A Jenner, K Laurie-Parry, S McNicholas, L Roberts, E Roderick,
Parent Governor Representative Mrs A Davies and Mrs S Davies
Church Representative Mrs M Evitts

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D R Jones, MC Mackenzie and D Rowlands
Parent Governor Representative N Bufton

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS

No disclosures of Party Whips were received.

4. MINUTES

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on the 14th June 2017 as a correct record.

5. JOINT CHAIRS MINUTES

The notes of the meetings of the Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group held on the 20th June 2017, 11th July 2017 and 19th September 2017 were noted.

The meeting on the 20th June 2017 had noted that Home to School Transport had been scrutinised. This matter was discussed under the Education Scrutiny Working Group update.

The meeting on the 19th September 2017 noted that the WAO would now be presenting their Risk Based Assessment of Corporate Arrangements by way of a seminar to all Members.

6. CHAIR'S BRIEFING

The Chair advised that he had attended a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Group as an Observer and had also attended a meeting of the Improvement Board as an Observer. It will be necessary for the Children's Scrutiny Group to make arrangements to ensure that substitutes are available to attend future

meetings in case of member unavailability. He also advised that he wished to strengthen the Membership of the Children's Services Scrutiny Group.

The Chair advised that he had received a request to scrutinise the Powys wide Careers Event that had been held at the Royal Welsh Showground in the summer. He had requested some information and was content that the Showground was the appropriate location to hold a Powys wide event and whilst it was some considerable distance for some of the High Schools to bring pupils there was no one single location that was better placed. No one High School would be able to host such an event and whilst there was a cost to hiring the venue this was not disproportionate to the size of event that was held. It may be appropriate to consider scrutiny of the Careers Service in the future but this was not proposed at present.

7. EDUCATION SCRUTINY GROUP

Home to School Transport Policy

It had been arranged to undertake scrutiny of this policy on the 3rd October but scrutiny were given late notice that the Policy was not ready for submission to Cabinet and would be postponed until after Christmas. It was confirmed that scrutiny had been undertaken on previous drafts of the Home to School Transport policy at both Joint Chairs and Place Scrutiny Committee during the last term of Council. The Home to School Transport Policy had not progressed to Cabinet before the elections and the current Portfolio Holder for Education was considering the Policy. The Education Scrutiny Group would have an opportunity to scrutinise this matter prior to a Cabinet decision.

ERW update

The ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group had met in September and the following update was given:

- Challenge advisor capacity across the region. ERW had expressed concern that the number of challenge advisors employed in each authority was below the level that ERW had calculated was appropriate. The ERW Joint Committee has set up a Programme Board to review and monitor capacity.
- Elective Home Education. The ERW Scrutiny Group continued to express concern that there were huge gaps in the legislation and guidance around Elective Home Education but acknowledged that it was outside the remit of the group and that individual authorities should pursue this. Committee Members echoed this concern and **requested that the Lead Member of Education Scrutiny consider inclusion of this item in the Education Scrutiny Work Programme.**
- ERW had commissioned research on the effect of rurality on educational attainment. It was expected that this report would be available for the next meeting of ERW Scrutiny Chairs in February 2018.
- Early entry at GCSE had been raised as a concern with the increase in early entry that had been experienced this year. It appeared that there may be lack of consistency across the county with some schools expecting parents to pay for resits.

8.	JOINT AUDIT/EDUCATION SCRUTINY GROUP
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The Joint Audit/Education Scrutiny Group had been considering the Financial Viability of Schools focussing initially on the Secondary Sector. The draft report had been circulated amongst members of the group and would be sent to Cabinet. The group also intended to consider the Funding Formula review and primary school budgets.

9.	CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY GROUP
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There had been problems arranging dates for this group to meet but a series of dates between now and Christmas had been agreed. The Chair of Scrutiny Committee B had attended two meetings in observer role and all Members would receive a briefing on Monday regarding the CSSIW Inspection report. The Chair and Lead Member would be look to put in place appropriate scrutiny arrangements to monitor implementation of the action plan. This is a serious issue and it will be necessary to ensure that as many Members as possible can contribute to this scrutiny.

It will also be necessary to undertake pre-Cabinet scrutiny of changes proposed in this area together with discrete pieces of work some of which are ongoing from the previous term. One of these is scrutiny of Powys People Direct and this will be undertaken jointly with the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Group. Other areas are likely to include Safeguarding, out of county placements and fostering.

The service were preparing a dashboard of indicators and the Chair had requested sight of these prior to signoff. The group would be asked if the dashboard covered all indicators considered appropriate.

Members heard that Children's Services had been in a similar position some 13 years ago. At that time all Members could access performance data and it was necessary for this to be available to Members. There needed to be close links with the Audit Committee to ensure the financial implications of the position had oversight.

10.	LEISURE/CULTURE SCRUTINY GROUP
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Staylitttle/Llanfair Caereinion Cabinet Report

This matter had been considered at Cabinet on 10th October 2017 with the following decision:

RESOLVED	Reason for Decision:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>To take Option 2 – To give Notice to Freedom to withdraw this centre from the Freedom Leisure Contract and close the Centre to current delivery.</i> 2. <i>To allow all service areas within the council to consider alternative uses for the buildings and to provide business cases in support by 31st December 2017.</i> 3. <i>Llanfair Leisure Centre to remain within</i> 	<p><i>This option will realise the necessary savings required and will also enable the new Cabinet to consider alternative uses and opportunities for the buildings.</i></p> <p><i>Most financially viable option for the</i></p>

<i>the Freedom Leisure Contract.</i>

<i>Council.</i>

Library Standards

Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs had considered this item for scrutiny and determined that this was not a priority in light of other commitments but that the Chair should consider the matter. The Chair advised that he intended to circulate the paper with a pro forma for comments. If this raised issues which needed further consideration he would meet with the service and would submit a note to the Portfolio Holder if appropriate.

11. WORK PROGRAMME

Committee were invited to submit suggestions for the Scrutiny work programme.

- How Property Plus arrangements for schools are working.
It was understood that problems had been experienced with services agreed under a Service Level Agreement not being delivered. The extent of the problems was not known and the Member who raised the issue was asked to collate comments from Members of the Committee, submit these to the Chair who would ask a question and from there decide if this should be submitted to Joint Chairs for inclusion on the Scrutiny Work Programme
- Community Governor representation on merged School Governing Bodies
It appeared this was a local issue rather than a Powys wide issue and was therefore not appropriate for scrutiny
- Review of Raising the Age of Admission
The change in age of admission had been implemented from September 2017 and Members expressed concern that this hadn't gone entirely to plan and wished to know if it had delivered the savings that had been claimed. Two Members were asked to prepare a brief to take to Joint Chairs for inclusion of this item on the Scrutiny Work Programme

Members discussed the opportunity to hold meetings in different locations. With Members from all parts of the county it is appropriate to hold Committee meetings centrally but there may be opportunities for the working groups to be held in other locations depending on the membership of each group and on the location of any officers which may be called to meetings. The potential for using skype, telephone conferencing and video conferencing was discussed. Poor broadband connection meant it was likely that Members may have to travel to booked rooms in Council offices to join a meeting and it would be necessary to trial this before it was more widely introduced.

County Councillor P Roberts (Chair)