

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING, SKILLS AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD
WELLS, POWYS ON MONDAY, 18 JUNE 2018**

PRESENT

County Councillors M Barnes, G Breeze, K W Curry, B Davies, E Durrant, D O Evans, L George, D R Jones, E M Jones, G Jones, D Jones-Poston, K Laurie-Parry, I McIntosh, J Pugh, L Roberts, P Roberts, D Selby, R G Thomas
Parent Governor Representatives: N. Bufton, Mrs A Davies and Mrs S. Davies

In attendance:

C Pinney (Solicitor to the Council), R Waggett (Finance Manager), J Cassey (Interim Head of Schools Service), E Towns (Senior Challenge Advisor), M Gedrim (Additional Learning Needs Manager) and L Patterson (Scrutiny Officer)

1.	ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING
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RESOLVED that County Councillor P Roberts be elected as Chair for the meeting.

2.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Sandra Davies and Susan McNicholas and Church Representative Margaret Evitts.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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The following declarations of interest were made in respect of Members who are School Governors. Members who are Local Authority appointed School Governors are granted an exemption under the Members' Code of Conduct to take a full part in discussions excluding regulatory type matters. Members who are appointed as School Governors otherwise than through the Council have a similar dispensation to take a full part in discussions excluding regulatory type matters.

Mark Barnes	Penygloddfa Primary School, Newtown High School
Graham Breeze	Welshpool High School
Kelvyn Curry	Rhayader CIW Primary School
Bryn Davies	Ysgol Pennant
Emily Durrant	Llangorse Primary School, Gwernyfed High School
Diane Jones-Poston	Llanbrynmair Primary School, Llanidloes High School
David Jones	Castle Caereinion Primary School, Guilsfield Primary School
Gareth Jones	Llanfair Caereinion Primary School
Pete Roberts	Llandrindod Wells CP School - Cefnlllys
Lucy Roberts	Brynhafren Primary School, Llanfyllin High School Gwynfor
Thomas	Ysgol Llansantffraid, Llanfyllin High School
Nigel Bufton	Llanfihangel Rhydithon Primary
Angela Davies	Rhayader Primary School, Builth Wells High School and Interim Governing Body – Ysgol Calon Cymru

4.	DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIPS
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There were no disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

5.	REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA
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Documents:

- Draft Cabinet Paper for 10th July 2018 'School Funding Formula Review'

Discussions:

- The paper is intended to get Cabinet approval to move to consultation
- Officers and a Review Group of 25 people are working on the proposed formula
- Views from across the education sector are being sought before consultation
- The formula will be based around four blocks:
 - Core educational delivery and basic running costs
 - Additional educational need and social deprivation
 - Costs relating to site, facilities and establishment
 - Other factors and adjustments
- The group considered it will be necessary to identify the minimum cost of running a school (block 1)
- The following risks are identified:
 - Ensuring enough views sought before consultation
 - A mismatch between the cost of running schools and the finance available
 - Meeting timescales for consultation
- An experienced consultant is advising on the project (experience and appointment authority requested)
- The links between the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Review and the Funding Formula Review were explored. It was confirmed that pupils with additional learning needs would be funded according to their need and that the ALN Review and Funding Formula Review were working closely together. Further detail would be provided to Members as part of an update on the ALN Transformation Programme as this project progresses
- The content of the fourth block (other factors and adjustments) was discussed. It was noted that this would address funding issues in connection with all-though schools and multi-site schools and that the report considered these as exceptions. However, the move towards federation would increase the number of schools that this would cover. Officers confirmed the intention was for the policy to be future proofed as far as possible in line with Welsh Government guidance.
- Scrutiny noted that previous reviews of the funding formula had resulted in schools of between 135 and 160 pupil numbers being penalised. Officers

confirmed that there was insufficient information available at this stage of the process to identify if any particular sized school would be penalised by these changes but further discussions would be had by Schools Forum when further detail was available. The additional costs of Welsh education were raised and it was confirmed that the work identifying the costs of running a school would consider language provision to address the increase in Welsh medium education.

- Members noted that a majority of schools were forecasting a deficit position and queried that by calculating the cost of running a school and reviewing the funding formula may not necessarily improve this position. Officers confirmed that the Funding Formula Review and the actions taken to address the deficit positions of schools would run in parallel but holding schools to account for their financial management and setting a balanced budget is a statutory requirement which is monitored by Estyn. Scrutiny observed that the Schools Service had previously taken action to improve the forecast deficit position but the position had worsened. Officers assured Members that a more robust approach was being taken in line with the Scheme of Financing for Schools with additional financial surgeries (a total of 3 per year) being provided, with follow-up letters and action plans sent to all schools who have been met with and further work being undertaken with those schools forecasting the worst positions.

(Cllr Durrant left 14.30)

- Scrutiny noted that the timeframe for consultation was tight if a Funding Formula was to be worked up over the summer and queried if sufficient time was available. Officers assured the Committee that they were on track and that it was the intention to bring a report to Cabinet in November once consultation had closed to enable a phased introduction of the new Funding Formula for 2019/20.
- Members asked if there were other local authority funding formulas that could be used. It was confirmed that the consultant advising the project was a national expert but the consultation would allow for an appropriate approach to meet the needs of Powys.
- Scrutiny noted that much money was spent on consultations which could have been spent on providing frontline services. It was confirmed that consultation was a requirement when reviewing the Funding Formula.
- Members observed that one of the major issues was falling rolls. It was confirmed that the review would look at the minimum number of staff needed. Small schools needed to achieve economies of scale where possible for example by sharing costs.
- Scrutiny expressed concern that Powys has a comparatively high level of spending on education but low levels of delegation to schools. Officers noted that the decision for allocating the funding available was taken in the Schools Forum.
- Scrutiny noted that further information would be provided by way of a verbal report to Cabinet in July and that work on other blocks of the formula had begun and would be accelerated during July and August. Scrutiny felt that it had not been possible to provide scrutiny of the Formula Funding Review which was to go to Cabinet in July to 'approve the overall design of a revised funding formula to schools' and to 'delegate the decision to proceed to full consultation with all schools to the Portfolio Holder for Learning and Welsh Language and Finance'.

The information available at this stage (ie pre-consultation) was insufficient for scrutiny to be able to make informed observations in this regard and Officers gave a formal commitment that the Funding Formula would be made available for Scrutiny prior to its consultation in September 2018.

Outcome

- **That the following information be provided:**
 - **A pen portrait of the consultant appointed to undertake the Formula Funding Review**
 - **Links between the Funding Formula Review Group and ALN Transformation Board**
- **That Scrutiny receive a further report Funding Formula to include the verbal update being provided to Cabinet in July and the work proposed to be undertaken over the summer prior to the Portfolio Holder making a decision to proceed to consultation in September 2018 to give sufficient time for the Portfolio Holder to respond to any issues raised.**

6.	SCHOOLS SAFEGUARDING COMPLIANCE
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The Additional Learning Needs Manager presented the Safeguarding Audit report and draft Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (copy attached to signed minutes).

- A draft Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy had been produced to function at the level of the Schools Service and as an umbrella policy to cover both schools and other settings to which Powys has a degree of responsibility through the provision of funding (namely, pre-school provisions).
- The draft Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy also includes a model policy for use by schools and other settings.
- The first annual safeguarding audit of schools has been completed.
- Members who had been involved in completing the audit found it time consuming; it provided good focus although it was not clear what evidence was needed
- It was confirmed that the responses had been variable particularly around the ratings and when the audit is next undertaken the Challenge Advisors will provide support and challenge in respect of the audit
(Cllr M Barnes left 3.30pm)
- It was confirmed that the school staff member and Governor with Safeguarding responsibilities would have completed the report. Each Governing Body should have an Annual Safeguarding Report.

7.	SCHOOLS SERVICE WORKFORCE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018
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The Senior Challenge Advisor introduced the Workforce Strategic Plan (attached to the agenda).

- Organisational charts are published on an annual basis and can be provided for previous years
- The service has a Critical Incident Process which is regularly reviewed and after each Critical Incidence a debrief will take place
- The service work closely with Emergency Planning and the Police and it depends on what type of incident as to who takes the lead on any Critical Incident
- It was confirmed that Education Psychologists were hard to recruit and the service had appointed two trainees to help address this

8.	TIMING OF MEETINGS
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The Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Manager. It was noted that this suggestion had developed during the discussion prior to the last meeting of the Council regarding the new scrutiny committee structure. As there was a larger number of Councillors who worked than in previous terms of office, the Group Leaders had suggested that the scrutiny committees might consider alternating the times of meetings, including meetings in early evenings which might allow for a greater number of Members to attend the meetings. The Committee was therefore asked if it was prepared to trial some alternative times for meetings.

Members indicated that they were willing to attend meetings at the following times:

Option A – 10.00am to 1.00pm	19 votes
Option B – 2.00pm – 5.00pm	11 votes
Option C – 4.00pm – 7.00pm	1 vote
Option D – 5.00pm – 8.00pm	0 votes

Members agreed that morning meetings were preferable but afternoon meeting could be held if necessary due to Officer availability.

9.	WORK PROGRAMME
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The work programme for this Committee was being put together for consideration at Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs and would be circulated when available.

Meeting closed 4.00pm

County Councillor P Roberts