

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING, SKILLS AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD
WELLS, POWYS ON WEDNESDAY, 22 AUGUST 2018**

PRESENT

County Councillor B Davies (Chair)

County Councillors G Breeze, K W Curry, S C Davies, D O Evans, E M Jones,
G Jones, D Jones-Poston, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, J Pugh, L Roberts, E Roderick,
D Selby, R G Thomas, Mrs S. Davies and Mrs M Evitts

Officers: Marianne Evans, Senior Manager, Schools Transformation, Iain McDonald,
Passenger Transport Operations, Anne Wozencraft, Principal Officer, Admissions and
Transport and Simon Anderson, ALN Manager

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, County Councillor B Davies was elected
Chair for the meeting

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors M Barnes, L
George, D Jones, K Lauren-Parry and P Roberts, Parent Governor
Representatives N Bufton and A Davies.

County Councillors M Alexander (Portfolio Holder for Education) and A Davies
(Portfolio Holder for Finance)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following County Councillors declared personal interests in having children
or grandchildren in schools in Powys or as LEA Governors:

County Councillors G Breeze, S C Davies, D O Evans, G Jones, D Jones-
Poston, S McNicholas E Roderick, D Selby and R G Thomas

3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of party whips.

4. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

Documents:

- Home to School Transport Policy
 - Appendix A – Consultation Summary Report
 - Appendix B - Home to School Transport Policy – Consultation
 - Appendix C - Home to School Transport Policy – post consultation
version
 - Appendix D – Impact Assessment
- ESG Scrutiny Observations on Home to School Transport Policy – March
2018

Discussion:

- Pre consultation scrutiny observations had been considered by Cabinet on 13 March 2018
- The Policy under consideration had been prepared post consultation and would be considered by Cabinet on 18 September 2018
- The existing Policy had been in place since 2011 and was subject to legislative changes
- The key changes related to qualifying distances, suitable schools, catchment schools, ALN and a proposal to charge for Post 16 education
- It was acknowledged that further work would need to be undertaken in relation to charging for Post 16 and transport to Welsh medium schools. A further report on these issues would be available during the spring term for consideration.
- 300 responses to the consultation plus a further 15 emails had been received
- Members had thought that the consultation was not significantly robust either in terms of numbers of responses or geographical spread
- Further clarity was needed regarding definitions of suitable school or catchment school
- The method by which the distance to the nearest school was calculated was not clear – was this by way of a bus route, main road, footpath etc
- The Committee were of the opinion that the Policy failed to clarify points and could confuse rather than assist parents
- It was not possible to judge the impact on either parents or the Authority as no financial analysis had been provided
- Members discussed whether there should be further consultation on the amended Policy - if Cabinet approve the Policy at their meeting in September, it is proposed that implementation will take place on 1 September 2019. Further reports relating to language provision and Post 16 will be considered in the New Year.
- Whilst acknowledging that further reports would be forthcoming consideration must be given to definitions of schools in terms of language provision. It was noted that the Welsh Language Commission had commented on the contradiction between the Authority's ambition and the transport policy. Equality was essential and this was not currently happening.
- Further information was requested regarding patterns of journey times
- Comment was made that uncertainty in transport contracts did not allow contractors to invest in appropriate vehicles which may impact upon health and safety standards. New contracts were being let on a 5 – 7 year basis with a 12 week notice period. A further report on contracts was requested.
- Provision of Post 16 was under review and this should be considered holistically with the transport review. Many Powys students study outside of the county and a wider view should be taken to retain young people within the county.
- Although the Policy states that journey times will be a maximum of 1 hour for secondary pupils and 45 minutes for primary students it was not possible to guarantee these journey times

- It was clarified that the Authority pays for journeys between different classes but the Committee questioned whether charging for these journeys should also be considered
- Passenger assistance had been reviewed but this may need further review once the ALN Policy has been finalised
- Transition arrangements were in place with the details included within the documents
- Members were concerned that when maps were issued the detail was incorrect and questioned when new maps could be expected. The maps had been prepared by another service within the Authority and some catchments had overlapped. It was hoped that a catchment map would be prepared for each school but no date had been identified.
- Further concern was expressed that there were still some overlaps within the new policy which would give some parents a choice of schools. Although it was acknowledged that a parent can apply for a place at any school they would be liable for transport costs to one outside their catchment area. Members were of the opinion that a child should attend the nearest school and that a choice should not be available to a few families. Further consideration should be given to the reason for choices made. The Committee suggested that further discussion was needed on this issue.

Outcome:

- **A report would be prepared detailing the Committee's observations on the new Policy – this would be circulated for Member's comments prior to it being submitted to Cabinet on 18th September 2018**

5.	EDUCATION UPDATES
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Documents:

- Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme 2018-2021
- Digital Learning Project – Scope Brief

Discussion:

- An overview of the Transformation Programme was given
- A Programme Manager and Programme Officer have been appointed and are expected to take up post in late September 2018
- Two stakeholder events took place in May which had been well attended by professionals. Members asked what officers had learned from these events. Although nothing new had been brought to officers' attention, the events had been appreciated as an opportunity to engage.
- The programme was moving into Phase 4 which had 8 work streams – the first six of which are aligned to the Welsh Government:
 - Individual Development Plans (IDP)
 - Avoiding disagreements
 - 0-5 years of age
 - 16-25 years of age
 - Parental Engagement
 - Workforce Development
 - Specialist Centres

- Pupil Referral Units/Alternative Learning
- The Welsh Government Advisor has commented favourably on progress to date and the Powys model will be used as a model of good practice
- The Committee questioned what changes would be visible in schools – the biggest change was in the age range which would be extended from 0 – 25 years of age from the current 5 to 16 years of age. The Welsh Government's new Code of Practice will be statutory. Within schools there will be a move away from statements to Individual Development Plans. School Action and School Action+ will no longer exist. The Welsh Government have still to issue guidance on how this will be implemented and further action is pending awaiting receipt of this guidance.
- Schools were to be responsible for working with Health Authorities which had raised some concerns – Members were informed that the Welsh Government are to ensure that each Health Authority will employ a Designated Education Officer who would have oversight. The most appropriate professional working with a young person will lead on their IDP but it is still unclear how this will be implemented
- It had been reported that money had been allocated to progress the review and Members sought clarity on how much had been allocated to Powys. No money had been allocated to date.
- Would there be one ALN Co-ordinator per authority or cluster or region? Each school currently has an ALN Co-ordinator but they do not have to be a qualified teacher. The role will become statutory under the new Code of Practice and will have to be a qualified teacher. There will be further discussions on age ranges and whether there may be a consortium or cluster ALNCo for 3yr+ settings. These costs will be met from schools delegated budgets and not central support services. This element is being addressed through the Fair Funding Formula Review that is currently taking place.
- The ALN Manager confirmed that IDPs were on track and that Powys was further ahead in the process than other authorities
- Members questioned how effective collaboration was – the Welsh Government have made it clear that all bodies taking part must collaborate and are implementing compliance arrangements on health authorities
- It was acknowledged that other health authorities had children in Powys and that some Powys children came under the jurisdiction of other Health Authorities – different systems were in place and England was subject to a different set of standards. However, despite the challenges, it worked well.
- There were difficulties in recruiting Welsh speaking educational psychologists. Members were disappointed to learn that a recent successful applicant had withdrawn following a job offer
- The officer was commended for the production of a fact sheet and it was suggested that this should also be made available in braille etc as well as in pictorial form for younger children to access
- It was noted that two new appointments had been made and whether these were additional staff. These were additional appointments and funded by money allocated by Cabinet.
- In considering the two new work streams relating to 0-5 years and 16-25 years Members asked for further information:

- 0-5 – this will be led by the Challenge Adviser and will cover settings, provision for all, work with Health Visitors etc
- 16-25 – this will be led by the Principal Educational Psychologist and will include digital learning, virtual learning but will only be for further education students and not higher education students
- Both streams will be considered in detail as the programmes are new
- It was suggested that digital technology should be embraced by the authority to enhance a range of services the Council can offer across a number of services

6.	CHAIR'S BRIEFING
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There was no Chair's briefing in the absence of the Chair.

7.	WORK PROGRAMME
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It was noted that there would be an additional meeting on Wednesday 29 August 2018 at 10 am to consider the Fair Funding Formula.

Further meetings would be held on 14 September and 1 October 2018.

Briefing meetings will be held on 19 and 25 September 2018 at 10am – it is hoped that these will be run via Skype

County Councillor