

Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 4 March 2016

Present: Simon Tagg (Chairman)

Attendance

Len Bloomer	David Loades (Vice-Chairman)
Maureen Compton	Geoff Martin
Tim Corbett	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Carol Dean	Sheree Peuple
Ian Hollinshead	Mike Worthington

Also in attendance: Ben Adams

Apologies: Paul Woodhead and Candice Yeomans

PART ONE

59. Declarations of Interest

There were none at this meeting.

60. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 22 January 2015

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 22 January 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

61. Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

The Council's Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Service contributed to the County Council's outcomes through the commissioning of community learning programmes providing courses that contribute to better health and well-being, employment and social inclusion for all adults. ACL worked with adults aged 19+ and families. Targeted courses were provided for those learners below level 2, i.e. those having not achieved 5 GCSE qualifications including English and Maths. There was a mix of direct and contracted delivery through Further Education Colleges and the third sector with funding coming through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the County Council.

Accredited courses were provided through apprenticeships and the adult skills budget, with non accredited courses provided through community learning, including: leisure courses; bespoke provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or enduring mental ill health; family learning; employability; and functional skills, i.e. English and Maths.

During 2014/15 there were 1,500 courses county wide with 9,549 learners. Members received a breakdown of learner figures. A progression survey was undertaken in

October 2015 and the findings were shared with Members. Overall learners reported a high level of satisfaction with the courses provided.

Members asked how effective the promotion of adult literacy and numeracy courses was within ACL. These courses were promoted in a range of ways, however the challenge was often getting learners to take part. Efforts were made to make access as easy as possible, with, for example, courses held in local schools where children were seen to be underachieving in these areas. This initiative aimed to target support at parents, enabling them to improve their skills and in turn support their children in developing their English and Maths.

Members asked whether links were made with Public Health to support healthy living and promote good multi-agency working, with an example given of a successful healthy living project in Glasgote. Members felt this would help target resources more effectively. There were no formal links at present, although informally work was undertaken with public health colleagues.

Through analysis of district data sets, district priorities had been established that underpinned the broader strategic priorities of the service. These included targeted services for specific wards identified as key areas of deprivation for targeted service provision. Members queried how these areas had been identified, feeling that a number of deprivation areas were not included. These areas had been identified through consultation with District Councils, the District Commissioning Leads (DCLs), and engagement with the community, however provision was not restricted to these areas, with courses offered where need was identified. Members were not aware of discussions with DCLs on this issue and felt they themselves would have been well placed to advise where the most appropriate areas of deprivation were within the area they represent. Members requested that they be included in consultation on any review of the local priority areas. The Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, also suggested that data would be used more intelligently to identify local families needing support through the Building Resilient Families and Communities data.

Members noted that the Apprenticeship Funding would cease in March 2017 due to the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy. There was no information currently available from the Skills Funding Agency and Members asked that they receive details of the funding allocation as soon as this was available.

Members also highlighted the difficulties within Rural Communities in accessing and promoting ACL, and asked how individuals were made aware for courses offered. Information was available in local libraries and community venues, however those families and individuals who would benefit from targeted service may require a more direct approach.

Members queried the percentage of learners who had started a new job following their ACL course. Whilst the 15% was a small part of the ACL participation numbers Members were reminded that the vast majority of ACL courses were leisure based and that learners didn't access these with a view to influencing future employment.

Members noted that 31% of learners were male and asked what work was being undertaken to encourage more male participants in ACL. The Staffordshire figure was

better than the national average of 26-28% male participation in ACL, however there was still work to be done to try and increase this. The range of courses offered was one way being developed to increase male participation.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) County Councillor local members are included in any review of identifying local priority areas;
- b) details of the new Apprenticeship Levy be shared with the Select Committee as soon as this is available;
- c) the use of Building Resilient Families and Communities data be promoted to prioritise those families needing targeting support;
- d) that further work be undertaken to increase the number of male participants in ACL; and
- e) links are improved with Public Health to help ensure courses are offered and support targeting appropriately.

62. Progress of the Attendance Working Group

At their meeting of 4 September 2015 the Select Committee had received details of an officer attendance working group established to consider the range of issues around school attendance. Good attendance was critically important to successful attainment, achievement and progression into adult life. The working group had reviewed and analysed detail of participation and attendance in Staffordshire, producing a draft document “Improving Participation and Attendance at our schools and settings” which promoted a new approach to securing collective action to drive further improvement and to help support reaching the new national target of 90% attendance for all children and young people.

Members received the 2014/15 Autumn and Spring terms attendance report and heard details of the Working Group’s progress.

Permanent exclusion rates had increased above the national average during 2013/14. This was being closely monitored. More up to date un-validated exclusion data had been received by officers and this would be shared with Members once the validated figures were available in May. There was some anecdotal evidence that increased exclusion were linked to the increase in academisation, however where trends were identified work would be undertaken with schools to ensure any exclusion was legal and address concerns.

Priorities to be achieved by summer 2017 had been shared with schools, settings and partners, and were around: participation in Early Years; primary and secondary school attendance; special school attendance; attendance of vulnerable groups; schools performing below national expectations for attendance; post-16 participation,; attendance at Pupil Referral Units (PRUs); Children Missing Education (CME) and Children Missing Out On Education (CMOOE); permanent exclusions; and fixed term exclusions. The Select Committee heard that a pilot data collection project was being run in the Cannock area around CMOOE to identify those young people not receiving a full time education and the reasons for this. It was intended that this data be used as a starting point to work around combatting CMOOE.

Members noted the work being undertaken to address attendance issues at PRUs. Difficulties had been highlighted through dual registration pupils and how this reflected attendance figures. Registration status of pupils at a PRU influenced attendance figures and work was being undertaken on the admission pathway across all six PRUs.

The accuracy and consistency of absence recording was queried, with the Select Committee being informed that this was an area for further work. This had been discussed at a recent Headteacher conference, particularly considering where a young person was absent for medical and/or health reasons. There was a need to work more closely with governing bodies and information would be included in the Governors e-bag.

The issue of unaccompanied asylum seekers was raised, with this group not currently identified in the report as a “vulnerable group”. Work was undertaken to get unaccompanied asylum seekers a school place as soon as possible, where their age could be verified.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) progress on the implementation of the “Staffordshire Attendance Priorities – Improving Participation and Attendance in our Schools and Settings: Our Principles and Priorities for 2015-2017” be endorsed;
- b) the Autumn and Spring Terms Attendance Report 2014/2015 be endorsed;
- c) detail on the work with unaccompanied young asylum seekers be included in future reports;
- d) the verified figures on exclusions be forwarded to Members as soon as these were available;
- e) names of those participating in the Officer Attendance Working Group be forwarded to Members for information;
- f) progress of the Working Group be reported to a future Select Committee.

63. Strategy on Commemorations for the Great War Centennial

In 2012 the Archives and Heritage Service received £80,000 funding from Arts Council England to develop plans for Staffordshire to commemorate the Great War Centennial. Staffordshire was one of the first authorities to attract significant funding for the Centennial. One of the outcomes from this funding was the development of a strategy for the commemoration which would reach communities within Staffordshire and beyond, and the Select Committee received a copy of the Strategy. Members received details of events and work already delivered, and the reach and impact of these, as well as details of future work.

Members heard that in autumn 2016 Archives and Heritage were planning to bid to the heritage Lottery Fund’s “Our Heritage” Fund for a project based around the Archive Service collections relating to the county’s asylums. This project would look at the impact of war on the mental health of combatants and how treatment developed in the post-war period. It would aim to raise awareness of mental health issues both then and now.

Members heard that all projects around the Centennial had been self funding through a range of grants.

Members were recommended to view “Staffs 14” on the web site. This was a series of pieces commemorating the Centennial.

RESOLVED – That Members endorse the work programme going forward to 2019 and congratulate officers on the excellent work so far.

64. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services Working Group - Final Report

The Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee had established a working group to consider the implementation of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Staffordshire “Mental Health is Everybody’s Business” (the adult strategy) and the Strategy for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of Children and Young People from Birth to 18 Years Integrated Commissioning Strategy 2014-2017 (the Children’s Strategy). Due to the cross cutting nature of this piece of work a representative from both the Prosperous Staffordshire and the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committees had been part of the working group.

The Group had now completed its work and produced its report, conclusions and recommendations. The Report had already been presented to the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee, who had endorsed its recommendations and agreed its submission to the appropriate Cabinet Members.

Members felt this was a good report and were happy to endorse its recommendations. In particular they supported the recommendation that children’s mental health services should be extended from 0-18 to 0-25 years to ensure a service that takes account of the immense changes impacting on young people today.

Members also supported the recommendation that the Tamworth Multi-Agency Centres (MACs) project be included on the Select Committee’s work programme, to receive details of how the project developed during 18 months and evidence the outcomes achieved to determine the success of this project.

The Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, welcomed the report and suggested that it should be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Police and Crime Commissioner. He felt that Room 21 had already proved how effective MACs can be. He also suggested that the report be shared with education colleagues. He explained to Members that the proposed extension of age range for children’s mental health services would require legislative changes.

The Select Committee felt all schools should have their own mental health strategy which set out how they recognised and dealt with this issue. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the local authority could not require all schools to produce such a strategy, however they could encourage schools to do so.

Whilst supporting the working group recommendations Members wished to include a further recommendation when the report was forwarded to the appropriate Cabinet Members, this being:

“ That schools are encouraged to develop their own mental health strategy.”

RESOLVED – That the Select Committee:

- a) endorse the recommendations and agree the report’s submission to the appropriate Cabinet Members,
- b) propose the report’s circulation be extended to include the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Police and Crime Commissioner and education colleagues;
- c) include a progress report on the Tamworth MACs on their work programme; and,
- d) propose a further recommendation be made to the Cabinet Member that “schools be encouraged to develop their own mental health strategy”.

65. Work Programme

The Select Committee received a copy of their work programme. Members noted that the Infrastructure+ working group report and recommendations had been submitted to the Cabinet Member, Economy, Environment and Transport, for his response.

Members also asked that the Annual SACRE Report be included on the Select Committees work programme under the briefing note section.

RESOLVED – That the amendments to the work programme be noted.

66. Relocation of Lichfield Library Report

[The following Local Members were present for this item: Mrs Janet Eagland (Lichfield Rural North) and Mr Terry Finn (Lichfield City South)]

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 gave the County Council a statutory duty to provide “a comprehensive and efficient library service”. The way people use libraries had changed and the Library Service had recently completed a review which resulted in transforming the service across Staffordshire. The proposal for Lichfield Library was therefore considered in the context of transforming libraries in Staffordshire to ensure a sustainable library service for the future.

The focus for the Lichfield Library was to concentrate the library service in one open plan space that reflected the changing service requirements. Key drivers for change included: an ambition to have a more central location; a modernised and relevant service; a reduction in the cost of the backlog of maintenance on the existing building; efficiency savings achieved through a reduced footprint; and cost effective facilities. The proposal was to move the library location from the Friary site to St Mary’s Heritage Centre. This new site offered:

- a) lower cost than commercially available space
- b) no repair and maintenance liability for St Mary’s Centre and removes the county council from the maintenance back log at the Friary
- c) reduced running costs for Staffordshire County Council
- d) potential access to third party funding

- e) a town centre location
- f) added value in terms of social and community benefit
- g) preservation of a Grade 2* listed building
- h) best value

The Chairman read out an email from Local Member Ms Caroline Wood (Lichfield City North) seeking clarification on the size of the new library space in relation to the new Stafford library and the number of PCs available for users. Members were informed that the size of the open library space at the new Stafford library was very similar to that of the proposed new site for the Lichfield Library. There were 24 PCs in the new Stafford library and 4 tablets available for library visitors and whilst the layout of the new Lichfield library had not been designed as yet, it was anticipated that the facilities would be similar to those of the Stafford Library. As with Stafford the intention was for the whole of the new Lichfield Library to have free wifi and therefore visitors would be able to use their own tablets within the library space.

Those local members present were on the whole happy to support this proposal, in particular as it brought the library into the centre of the City. However the St Mary's Heritage Centre was used for a number of civic ceremonies and they wished to clarify whether this would still be possible if the library was on the site. Feasibility plans had been undertaken and no definite layout had as yet been agreed, however it was intended that the Organ would be unchanged and the Pews would remain in the area therefore space could be available for civic ceremonies. The Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, informed members that this would be checked and confirmation forwarded to both Select Committee and Local Members.

Members requested that the inclusion of a break clause in the lease form part of negotiations with Lichfield Diocese.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) Clarification be forwarded to the Select Committee and Local Members on whether the chapel space would remain available for use on civic ceremonies; and
- b) The proposal to relocate Lichfield Library be supported.

67. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED - That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below

The Committee then proceeded to consider reports on the following issues:

68. Relocation of Lichfield Library Appendices

(exception paragraph 3)

Chairman