



Minutes

Name of meeting	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS
Date and Time	THURSDAY 2 MARCH 2023 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs R Quigley (Chairman), J Lever (Vice-Chairman), R Downer, S Hendry, M Oliver and D Andre
Also Present	Steve Crocker, Brian Pope, Natalie Smith, Sarah Philipsborn, Paul Thistlewood, Andy Tickner and Melanie White
Apologies	Cllrs D Adams and S Ellis, Tig Outlaw and Rob Saunders

1. **Apologies and Changes in Membership (If Any)**

Apologies received from David Adams, Suzie Ellis, Tig Outlaw and Rob Saunders. Martin Oliver to substitute for David Adams.

2. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 be approved.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Stephen Hendry stated he was a School Governor for both Holy Cross and Queensgate Primary Schools. Cllr Martin Oliver stated he was a School Governor for St George's School.

4. **Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum**

Two written questions received PQ 09/23 and PQ 10/23

5. **Progress on outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings**

The Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Children's Education and skills for an update on school place planning. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the item was on the Forward Plan and that Cabinet would be reviewing strategic place planning at its meeting on 8 June 2023. Following this the Cabinet member stated she would report back to the committee.

Regarding the item on Young Carers, it was confirmed that the Carers Strategy 2023-28 had been circulated and there was nothing to be added.

6. **SEND Strategy and Safety Valve**

The Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion Hampshire County Council and Isle of Wight Council provided an introduction and suggested the committee should consider an annual update regarding the SEND strategy and Safety Valve Programme.

It was explained that during 2020/21 the Department of Education introduced the safety valve intervention programme for those local authorities with the very highest percentage Dedicated School Grant DSG deficits. The Isle of Wight Council had been invited to take part in the 2022/23 programme whereby the Council put in a safety valve bid into the DfE which would potentially deliver the additional finance needed for the future strategy for improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs.

The Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion gave a PowerPoint presentation on how children and young people with SEND on the Isle of Wight are getting an improving deal across education, health and care. It was affirmed that there was commitment across the sectors to drive improvements by working together to ensure that children's needs are identified early and that they receive the support they need.

It was highlighted that the Isle of Wight was doing well in this field and was consistently above the national performance indicators.

The Government Green Paper was warmly welcomed and the strategies the Island had chosen to follow had the objectives of supporting mainstream schools in their support children with special needs, as well as looking at the individual situations through the lens of the child. Strategies that were being developed by the local authority involved building capacity with SEN support guidance, tool kits, bespoke training, networks and termly meetings with advice givers.

There was also to be greater local authority involvement with a person-centred approach, making sure that EHCPs are reviewed annually and had tighter outcomes and sharply focused provision. All EHCPs were now electronic, though there needed to be a standardizing of EHCPs that would need to be addressed.

There was a commitment to continue with the EHCP process improvement with the roll out of the EHCP hub along with right sizing the financing of EHCPs through a banding system and increasing the number of SEN caseworkers.

There was the desire to reduce the number of Off Island placements and furthermore create a new special school funded under free school processes which would accommodate 75 places catering for both primary and secondary aged pupils. The Committee was told that a bid for the funding of this new school had just been granted by the DfE.

The presentation concluded with an overview of how children and young people with SEND are given provision for preparing for adulthood. This included an employability hub with supported internships and apprenticeships, and work with employers to broaden awareness.

Questions were asked regarding the amount of the deficit and write off, the shortage of SEN teachers and support staff, and the fact that the Government White Paper on education had been scrapped which had the effect of leaving the Green Paper to operate in isolation.

RESOLVED:

THAT the SEND Strategy and Safety Valve report be noted.

THAT the committee would monitor progress of the strategy and safety valve programme to ensure the different strands are being implemented.

7. Pathway into Further Education and Training

The County Education Manager (Interim) Participation and Lifelong Learning gave a presentation explaining the statutory position and the duties that the local authority had undertaken in the Post 16 Pathways to Education and training.

It was stated that it was the responsibility of the schools to provide a careers programme for their students across the full range of activities required by government guidance which was supported by the local authority.

The Isle of Wight performance in getting young people a guaranteed place in post 16 education was deemed as above the national average and ranked the highest within the South East Region. The transition of young people into education, employment and/or training was also deemed above the national average and SE average. All post 16 provision on the Island was rated Good by OFSTED, and it was stated all school and providers contributed significantly to the overall opportunities available.

With regards to the local economy, it was explained that the DfE had introduced Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPS) to provide new technical education and skills priorities agreed in local areas, and this was to be led by the IOW Chamber of Commerce. The LSIP process was deemed as focusing on what the Island young people were asking for, what the island needed and what was available on the Island. It was also hoped that the Island would be at the vanguard of opportunities for young people with special needs and disabilities.

Questions were asked regarding the balance of educational and vocational training offered.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Pathway into Further Education and Training report be noted.

8. **School Attainment**

The County Manager for Education, Secondary and Post 16 gave a PowerPoint presentation providing a broad summary and analysis of attainment across Isle of Wight Schools in 2022 at the key points in children's and young people's education and the context that framed the summary and results.

The context was deemed as very important given that the impact of the pandemic varied across schools and attendance figures were below the national average. It was highlighted that Year 11 pupils who were absent for more than 10% of the time had an average of 3 grades lower than those with an attendance rate above 90%.

There was an increase in pupils experiencing disadvantage on the Island and it was stated that mental health and wellbeing needs of children and young people on the Island had also risen as a result of the pandemic. It was also highlighted that performance data for 2022 should not be directly compared with 2019 without this caveat.

Primary Attainment remained broadly in line with the national average although attainment at Key Stage 2 was below the national average in the key measures of reading, writing and mathematics combined. When these figures were further examined, they showed that Key Stage 2 reading had remained steady, mirroring the national situation, but Key Stage 2 writing had maths showed the greatest decline both on the Island and nationally.

The situation was being addressed with the introduction of a package of improvement points with a focus on a linked Year 6 project with significant governor involvement, as well as networks and the sharing of good practice.

It was explained that secondary attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 had increased on the Island for English and Maths at grade 4+ with stronger progress in English than in maths.

Progress had been seen in attainment 8 at the end of Key Stage 4 and the Ebacc results showed significant improvement, but both still lagged behind the national figures.

An extra slide was shown to the committee which demonstrated the correlation between attainment and deprivation.

The next steps for improvement in Secondary were shared with the committee with a significant co-ordinated attendance focus across the inclusion and school improvement services, focused project work on exam preparation and the sharing of good practice.

The presentation concluded with a focus on children and young people experiencing vulnerability. It was stated that the impact of the pandemic had been to widen educational inequalities both locally and nationally.

In order to address these education inequalities, school improvement work involving raising attainment for all was being undertaken, with a focus on looking at the issues through the lens of the child.

RESOLVED:

THAT the School Attainment report be noted.

9. **Committee's Work Plan**

The Work Plan was shared with the committee for comment.

10. **Members' Question Time**

None were received.

CHAIRMAN