



Minutes

Name of meeting	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SKILLS
Date and Time	THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2023 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs R Quigley (Chairman), R Downer, S Hendry, J Lever, T Outlaw, and N Stuart
Also Present	Cllrs D Andre, P Jordan, and L Peacey-Wilcox Stuart Ashley, Stephanie How, Ashley Jefferies, James Mackenzie, Natalie Smith, Suzanne Smith, Megan Tuckwell and Melanie White Benson Hardy and Oliver McClean (Youth Council)
Also Present (Virtual)	Catherine Hobbs (Co-opted), Wendy Perera
Apologies	Cllr D Adams

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

Cllr Tig Outlaw was in attendance as a substitute for Cllr Suzie Ellis. Apologies had been received from Cllr David Adams.

14. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 be approved.

15. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Stephen Hendry declared an interest in various matters on the agenda as the chair of governors at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School and as a governor at Queensgate Foundation Primary School.

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

Mrs Helen Downer of Wroxall submitted a written question in relation to whether vacant school spaces could be leased to childcare providers. A written response was provided (PQ36/23).

Mr Simon Richards asked an oral question regarding school place planning, and what the committee could do to ensure that progress was being made to address the surplus school places across the Island and the subsequent financial pressures on schools.

17. Progress on outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings

The chairman presented the report which provided an overview of the progress against outcomes and recommendations from previous meetings. No comments were made at this stage.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report and update be noted.

18. School Place Planning

The committee received a verbal update on the current position with regards to strategic school place planning to address surplus school places across the Island as a result of low pupil forecast numbers. The Leader recognised and apologised for the way the matter had been handled previously and confirmed that discussions would be held with headteachers in the coming days, and subsequently a process of engagement with all stakeholders would be announced, prior to taking forward any future formal processes. The committee sought a short-term management plan to be established at pace, alongside a long-term management plan that would take into account the partial recovery of children's numbers over the coming years. Questions were raised around whether leadership were pursuing the Government to change funding models which were leading to the closures of rural schools.

RESOLVED:

THAT the update be noted.

19. Youth Provision

The committee received a verbal presentation from representatives of the Isle of Wight Youth Council regarding the problems with accessing youth provisions on the Island. It was advised that the main barriers in accessing youth provisions were in relation to public transport (in respect of cost, frequency and time), and social anxieties as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was felt that the Island needed more versatile spaces and well-advertised targeted events for young people to socialise, ensuring disability access throughout. Discussion took place regarding a mobile youth bus to visit rural communities on the Island. The committee supported the Youth Council in contacting IWALC to present a case to representatives of town, parish and community councils across the Island which may be able to provide funding for meaningful, high-quality services for young people. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills agreed to circulate a link to the film which had been produced by the Sandown and Lake Youth Forum about young people's experiences living in the Bay area.

RESOLVED:

THAT the presentation be received and noted.

20. **School Transport**

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the trends in school transport activity and the plans underway to manage the associated costs. Questions were raised in relation to the changes that could reduce costs, including managing parental expectations. The committee were asked to support the savings proposals, and to seek support from the Government in recognising the increasing number of children with special education needs (and the additional funding required for those transport costs). The chairman agreed to write to the Minister in seeking support from the Government to delegate responsibility for setting school transport policies to local authorities.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report and update be received and noted.

21. **Annual Complaints Report**

The committee received the annual report on compliments, complaints, and representations for 2022/23, and sought assurance that service improvements were being driven through the lessons learnt. Discussion took place regarding the strengths-based approach to resolving complaints (which emphasised contacting complainants to seek a resolution via telephone or an in-person meeting), which had improved outcomes and reduced the escalation of complaints.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report and update be received and noted.

22. **Isle of Wight Start for Life and Family Hub Programme**

Consideration was given to the report on the development of the Isle of Wight Family Hub offer and its delivery plan. Questions were raised around the locations of future family hub sites, and it was suggested that town, parish, and community councils be engaged with in identifying appropriate community spaces for both family centres and youth services. Discussion took place regarding the long-term sustainability of the programme when the funding ceases in 2025, and while there would be no direct grant funding for the supporting families programme, investments could be sought from a variety of contributors including the business sector, public health, and the voluntary sector.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report and update be received and noted.

23. **Workplan**

Consideration was given to the future workplan, and the committee were invited to identify any key issues that should be included. No comments or questions were made at this stage.

RESOLVED:

THAT the workplan be received and noted.

24. **Members' Question Time**

No questions were received.

CHAIRMAN