

Lancashire County Council

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 5th October, 2021 at 10.30 am in Committee Room 'A' - The Tudor Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Andrea Kay (Chair)

County Councillors

J Berry	J Mein
S Barnes	M Salter
A Cheetham	A Sutcliffe
S Clarke	R Swarbrick
S Hind	R Woollam
T Hurn	B Yates
S Malik	

County Councillor Azhar Ali replaced County Councillor Nweeda Khan for this meeting.

Also welcomed to the meeting were Ambarin Quadri and Matthew Truongm, representing the Youth Council.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillor Azhar Ali, County Councillor Stewart Jones, Daniel Ballard, Co-Optee Voting Member representing Church of England Schools, and Simon Smith, Co-Optee Voting Member representing Roman Catholic Schools.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2021

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on 1 September 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Maintained Nursery School Consultation Update

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Andrew Cadman, Interim Head of Early Years, and Julie Bell, Director of Education, Culture and Skills.

The report presented informed the committee that maintained nursery schools in Lancashire possessed a rich source of skills and knowledge. This was reflected in how they were graded in their inspections by Ofsted, with the quality of delivery being highlighted. The maintained nursery schools had served some of the most deprived communities in Lancashire for decades and were integral to the history and cultural make-up of those communities.

The current context was very different from when most of the maintained nursery schools were established, and to ensure their ongoing viability, adjustments needed to be considered, opportunities needed to be seized, with transparency and accountability being key.

The committee was also provided with a presentation on the Maintained Nursery School Consultation Update. Some of the points raised by the presentation were as follows:

- Maintained nursery schools were controlled by the local authority.
- They received their funding through the Early Years block. They also received a supplementary funding for the additional costs of deliverance.
- Lancashire had 24 maintained nursery schools which was the second largest after Birmingham.
- In January 2020 agreement was obtained from Cabinet to undertake a formal consultation. However, due to significant changes arising as a result of the pandemic, this was not carried out.
- However, a more comprehensive review was undertaken with responses from all 24 maintained nurseries.
- As part of the review the long-term financial forecasts of the maintained nurseries were looked at and what their challenges were.
- Regarding staffing, it was all about sharing information and knowledge to improve services.
- It was important that the maintained nurseries were providing an offer that worked for their communities.
- In terms of Ofsted inspections, it was vital that Ofsted had the right support if required.
- Maintained nurseries in Lancashire had a disproportionate number of children with SEND. The Early Years Team was working closely with the Inclusion Team around SEND.
- Many of the maintained nurseries had rentable spaces and some had been successful in renting these spaces out and some not so successful.
- Regarding next steps there would be a sector wide consultation on Early Years Funding Formula Allocation.
- Cabinet was to consider a further financial report for Maintained Nursery Schools in the new year.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- It was noted that out of the 24 maintained nursey schools in Lancashire, 19 of them were situated in East Lancashire. It was pointed out that Wyre was one of the areas with the largest housing increase in Lancashire. There was concern over the Fleetwood area not having a maintained nursery school. Members were informed that maintained nursery location was historical but it was important to ensure the quality of provision being delivered across the county as a whole.
- It was important for Lancashire County Council to look at what it could do differently so that costs did not affect the delivery of services which involved more holistic discussions with property services as well as finance.
- It was pointed out that funding from central government had been confirmed for the autumn and spring terms but as yet funding had not been confirmed for the summer term. The funding formula had been changed about four years ago so now it generally ran on a cycle of two terms, one term. This created a number of challenges but there was a general commitment to the future of maintained schools. However it was vital for head teachers to have timescales in place so they could start planning.
- There were general concerns raised about how long financial support would be in place for maintained nursery schools.
- Members enquired if it was possible for Lancashire County Council to write to Government asking for some early intervention in establishing a timeline around funding and addressing the gaps in provision. It was confirmed that as a local authority, this had been undertaken and continued to be challenged.
- Members had hoped for more data and information in the report provided so as they could do more analysis. It was pointed out that the report presented to the committee was a summary report of a report provided to the maintained nursery schools in the summer which had significantly more data. The data and information from the report could be shared with the committee.
- The committee enquired about when the analysis of maintained nursery schools' rates of progress and value added had been done, and whether the medium and long term impact of Covid had been taken into account. This was confirmed and information would be provided to members on what the Ofsted Inspection Framework looked like for the Early Years Sector and the Maintained Nursery Schools.
- It was noted that most of the maintained nursery schools had stayed open throughout the pandemic. Members were concerned about how many hours the professional staff were working due to this and expressed their appreciation for the amount of work they had done.
- The committee was pleased with the volume of work undertaken in supporting maintained nursey schools from the financial perspective.

Resolved: That;

- i. Information provided in the report and presentation be noted.
- ii. Future reports to Cabinet on the delivery of maintained nursery provision be included on the work programme.
- iii. Inclusion of future consultations on funding in the Early Years Sector on the work programme be agreed.

5. Work Programme 2021/2022

The Committee received a report which provided information on the work programme for the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

The topics included in the work programme were identified at the work planning workshop held on 5 July 2021.

Regarding the School place Provision Strategy 2021-26 set for the 5 November meeting the committee would like to discuss the perceived lack of Section 106 funding on planning applications and reviewing needs within new building developments and what the capacity was for every school within each committee member's district.

The committee also wanted to look at the costs around the decreased need for provision and also how Lancashire County Council could become a statutory consultee for planning applications. In addition to this, was the forward planning completed by the local planning authorities and how they work in tandem with health authorities.

Linking to the previous item on maintained nurseries was to consider maintained nursery schools/early years provision and how it sits within school place planning.

The impact of Covid was raised and its impact on attainment in schools across Lancashire. It was agreed that the catch up plans and funding could be included as part of the attainment report due to come to the committee in February.

Another issue raised was about what Lancashire County Council was doing to support children living in poverty and what it was doing to mitigate the situation. This was agreed to be included as part of the future work programme.

Consideration requested to be given around the PSHE curriculum and whether it remains fit for purpose around life planning for young people.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report presented be noted.
- ii. Additional topics identified be included in the work programme.

6. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 9 November 2021 at 10.30am at County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston