

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE IMPROVEMENT AND ASSURANCE BOARD -
EDUCATION HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD
WELLS, POWYS ON THURSDAY, 9 JANUARY 2020**

PRESENT

Jack Straw (Chair)	JS	Independent Member
Cllr Rosemarie Harris	RH	Executive Leader
Cllr Aled Davies	AD	Deputy Leader
Cllr James Gibson-Watt	JGW	Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group
Phil Hodgson	PH	Independent Member
Gwynne Jones	GJ	Independent Member

In Attendance – PCC Representatives

			Present for Item:
Caroline Turner	CT	Chief Executive	All
Cllr Graham Breeze	GB	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance	All
Cllr Phyl Davies	PD	Portfolio Holder for Education	All
Cllr Rachel Powell	RP	Portfolio Holder for Young People	All
Debbie Lewis	DL	Education Advisor	All
Emma Palmer	EP	Head of Transformation & Communications	All
Francesca Sandwell	FS	PA to Senior Leadership Team (secretariat)	All
Geraint Rees	GR	Education Advisor	All
Lisa Williams	LW	WAO	
Lynette Lovell	LL	Interim Chief Education Officer	All
Ness Young	NY	Corporate Director (Transformation & Resources)	All
Phil Hodgson	PH	WLGA Adviser	All
Sarah Quibell	SQ	Strategic Improvement Manager (Schools)	All

Apologies

Alison Bulman	AB	Director of Social Services
Caroline Rees	CR	Education Advisor
Jane Thomas	JT	Head of Financial Services

Absent

Cllr Matthew Dorrance	MD	Leader of the Labour Group
Cllr Myfanwy Alexander	MA	Portfolio Holder for Adult Services

1. MINUTES FROM THE MEETING ON 27TH NOVEMBER 2019 AND 19TH DECEMBER 2019

The minutes of 27th November 2019 were agreed as a true record.

The Chair asked for the wording on page 5 under Recommendation 3 to be re-considered. It was important that that cultural change across the service required

commitment and visibility from the people sitting around the table, but this though necessary was not sufficient.

Action: FS to amend the minutes from 27th November 2019 (page 5 under Recommendation 3)

The minutes from 19th December 2019 were agreed as a true record.

2.	RESPONSE TO ACTIONS FROM THE MEETING ON 27TH NOVEMBER AND 19TH DECEMBER 2019
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Update on actions from 27th November 2019

Action 3: Development of a broader programme of engagement for Elected Members in regard to Education. It was agreed that workshops needed to fit in with the corporate decision-making cycle and that there may be times where 2 workshops need to be held in one month.

Action: NY to liaise with GJ and amend the workshop schedule accordingly.

Update on action from 19th December 2019

A1: LL to circulate Estyn improvement Conference letter to IA Board members ASAP..

A2: Council officers to request funding for improvement support for schools from Welsh Government. A meeting with Steve Davies has been confirmed. The Chair asked Officers to update the board before the next meeting.

3.	REVISED PIAP
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LL advised that on Friday 20th December she had received a call from from Karen Newby Jones from Estyn where a verbal update had been provided. LL reported that Estyn is satisfied that the Local Authority understands the concerns and has put appropriate plans in place which are fit for purpose.

While the School Service awaits the outcome letter form Estyn, LL provided assurances that the Service had been busy implementing the plan. The PIAP had been amended prior to the call with Estyn and is now a more strategic, high level document with key actions. Team plans have been put in place which go in to the high level detail.

4.	IMPLEMENTATION OF PIAP - HIGHLIGHT REPORT
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Recommendation 1 – Lynette Lovell

LL highlighted that progress had been made within secondary schools over the past year with the number in improvement being reduced from 7 schools to 3 schools. This work was ongoing in light of the Estyn review.

Challenge Advisors were currently undertaking work to identify the effectiveness of Governing Bodies and where more support and training was required. GJ noted that there was correlation between standards and effectiveness of Governing Bodies and this was often linked with the leadership of the school.

LL informed that Board that health and wellbeing has been included in the PIAP and this had been questioned by Estyn. LL stated that she and the team were adamant that this was required.

PH asked if there was benchmarking data available for Governing Bodies in Wales. LL reported that there was no benchmark, but effectiveness formed part of the matrix which is used within national categorisation.

As part of the national categorisation programme, focus on more able and talented students has been a line of enquiry for Challenge Advisors. 90% of schools have a policy for more able and talented and this needs to be monitored.

GR raised that Governors Wales had been abolished a few years ago and it was clear that a strategy was required to ensure the right advice and training was in place for 90 plus Governing Bodies in Powys as well as headteachers and senior staff. The Local Authority needs to ensure that new governors understand their roles and responsibilities.

The Chair indicated that with so many different elements forming part of this recommendation, it needs to be anchored in the broader school reorganisation work.

It was agreed that future board reports on the PIAP will be preceded by an update on the broader vision.

Recommendation 2 – Lynette Lovell

LL reported that Caroline Rees had carried out a review of the ALN service whereby further issues had been found and recommendations made. In December, DL and CR with officers had been out to review Powys' 23 special resource units to assess their effectiveness. The review had identified gaps in Powys' provision. For example, the Service currently has no specialist advice on dyslexia, dyspraxia and ASD and a restructure of ALN provision is currently being designed. LL stated that this review will be brought to a future I&A Board.

The Chair raised that the Local Authority needed to ensure that the breadth of the review was sufficient and linked with Recommendation 4. This will be discussed during the workshop in February.

Cllr RP indicated that she was still concerned to see the use of '*school refusers*' and '*school phobics*' in the document as this language had been discussed before. It was agreed that the words did not set the right tone, but that it was terminology used by both Estyn and Welsh Government. GR assured the Board that the document would only be used with school leaders and not parents and young people. Asterisks could

be used in reports to reiterate that this is not language Powys would normally use. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to Estyn and Welsh Government to highlight concern over the use of certain words and phrases.

Action: LL and GR to draft a letter to Welsh Government and Estyn about their use of language on behalf of the I&AB

Recommendation 3 – Debbie Lewis

A workforce development action plan is now in place for the Service which links clearly with Powys County Council's workforce strategy, vision and policies.

The Chair raised that having read the paper he was uncertain whether it referred to the development of school leaders as well as School Service staff. DL indicated that the Estyn recommendation referred to developing leadership within the Service rather than school leaders. While leadership in schools had been positive in the Estyn review, this contrasted with what had been said about the Service. GR stated that the plan was to make the Council more effective body so that schools could engage more effectively with it.

The Chair stated that he felt one of the Board's key priorities should be leadership across both the corporate and school elements of the service.

A discussion took place in regards to how future meetings should be structured and the focus of the Board. It was agreed that the Board should monitor the Estyn recommendations, but also focus on key strategic areas and priorities. The role of the Directors report will be to advise the Board of what is happening in key areas so that the Authority does not lose sight of the bigger picture.

GJ raised that Estyn would measure the Local Authorities progress by looking at whether the relationship between schools and LA changed.

PH noted that he felt reassured to hear that significant change was already taking place between officers and Schools and that the team was committed to the process.

Recommendation 4 – Geraint Rees

Since the last I&A Board, Officers have run a number of engagement events. This has involved honest and positive discussions with schools, governors and Members. The School Service will take a paper to Cabinet at the end of January to seek permission to formalise this engagement with the public. This will then mean the Service can return to Cabinet before the summer term with a set of guiding principles to underpin a move to a sustainable school community.

The Chair noted that it would be beneficial for the Board to have sight of the Cabinet report for comment.

Action: GR to provide cabinet paper on school reorganisation engagement to JS, PH and GJ

A discussion took place regarding the use of language in the report and whether certain words and phrases would be understood by people outside of education. EP confirmed that the report had been sent to plainenglish.com.

Recommendation 5 – Geraint Rees

Officers have had numerous meetings with all of the schools who had received warning notices before the summer. A clearer financial position will be available at the end of the financial year. Governor development evenings have been held in regards to finance, and training has been undertaken with school business managers. .

A paper has been taken to Cabinet recently to tweak the school funding formula. GR stated that the formula would always be subject to review. The Formula Review Group, which is made up of key stakeholders, will become key in how the Local Authority will fund the agreed vision for schools going forward, but the Local Authority also needs to focus on how it provides for the young people who are being educated today.

5. ERW CURRENT ISSUES

During the meeting on 19th December changes at ERW had been raised and LL had been asked to bring a paper outlining her concerns.

LL highlighted that Powys had benefited greatly from the support that ERW provided. 2 years ago, 17 schools (both primary and secondary) were in some form of categorisation. This has now been reduced to 4 schools with the help of Challenge Advisors and ERW. Currently 6 secondary schools in Powys benefit from 1 day a week of support. However, a decision has been made to end this support after April 2020. This presents a challenge for Powys.

A discussion took place. ERW is funded by contributions from Local Authorities and Welsh Government grants. It is hoped that by meeting with the other Local Authorities who form part of the consortium that the support could remain. Otherwise Powys will need to find additional provision to support its schools and this could have a detrimental effect on its improvement journey.

The Chair offered his support and indicated that he would be available to attend any future meeting. It was agreed that this would be helpful.

6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR NEXT SIX MONTHS
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The following 3 areas were confirmed:

- The vision for schools in Powys & Standards
- ALN
- Leadership (both corporately and in schools)

The Board will also need to review progress on the PIAP at every meeting.

The workshops were discussed. The Chair stated that their purpose was to run ideas and information etc. past the Board before they went to Cabinet.

Clarification was sought regarding attendance at the workshops. It was agreed that workshops should be open to all Board members, but that there was no expectation that everyone needed to attend. FS will ensure that invitations are sent to everyone.

The meeting came to a close at 11:53

Jack Straw
Chair