

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2018

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 19<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018

**“C492 PROVISION OF SANITARY PRODUCTS IN SCHOOLS IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN (REF) –**

The Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee considered the above report of the Director of Learning and Skills on 13th November, 2018.

Before presenting this item, the Chairman gave thanks to Councillor Mrs. J.M. Norman for calling on the Scrutiny Committee to support in principle the provision of free sanitary products in all schools in the County. Since the Committee had considered this item on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018 the work on this issue had progressed quickly. The Committee was informed that the Council had now received the £31,512 capital funding allocation from Welsh Government for the 2017/18 financial year, and revenue funding of £8,666 for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years. A £1,170 donation was also received from Unison to tackle period poverty in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Chairman noted that an overview of the work undertaken by the Delivery Working Group established from Members of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee was detailed in paragraph 9 to 17 of the report, with the Chairman noting that there had been no delay in sending out relief packs of £100 worth of sanitary products for each secondary school in the Vale of Glamorgan, and £30 worth of sanitary products for each primary school, which had been recommended at the last Scrutiny meeting where this item was discussed and subsequently endorsed by Cabinet. At this stage of the meeting, a Member expressed disappointment that the Vale of Glamorgan Cabinet had not used any additional Council funds to augment the funding for sanitary products.

The Chairman then gave a brief overview of the work undertaken by the Delivery Working Group stating that a survey had been undertaken, the matter had been discussed with schools and at the Vale Youth Forum, and it became apparent that there was a lack of parity of provision from schools, in particular whether products were made available for all learners, or only those who were eligible for free school meals. The Chairman stated that the Delivery Working Group was clear in its intention that sanitary products should be made available to all learners in the Vale of Glamorgan who required them.

The Chairman wished to give thanks to the schools who hosted the Delivery Working Group for their time and allowing the Councillors to visit the school sites. She informed the Committee that the Delivery Working Group found that some schools were very forward thinking in their approach, providing a range of products from multiple sources, including confidential pick up points, and offered a range of clothing

and additional school uniforms and publicised the services available in an open and welcoming environment. The Chairman added that the Delivery Working Group also observed that the issues of dignity and privacy surrounding learners accessing and using sanitary products was also important. The final feedback received from the site visits was that communication with learners was very important, and this was not just a “girl” issue as all students wished to be involved in conversations on this matter.

In agreement with this sentiment, a Vale Youth Forum member confirmed that pupils were in desperate need of sanitary products and some found it hard to know how to access emergency provision in schools, adding that if he as a Vale Youth Forum representative did not know what provision was available, then he could not inform other learners. In support of his colleague, another Vale Youth Forum member stated that learners had skipped lessons due to period poverty and a lack of sanitary products, and many pupils were embarrassed so did not wish to ask male teachers for emergency supplies. He also noted that as part of the UK Youth Parliament “Make Your Mark” Campaign, a significant number of young people had voted for this issue as a pressing matter to be tackled.

A Member of the Committee stated that she had addressed the Llantwit Major Youth Forum to discuss the work of the Delivery Working Group to provide sanitary products in schools in the Vale of Glamorgan and was dismayed to learn that subsequently, one learner was unable to access sanitary products at her school as she was not classed as a learner in need, which the Member felt was a very different attitude from that of the best practice found in other schools, and the wishes of the Delivery Working Group. She confirmed that in other schools there were numerous points where pupils could access products and even help themselves without having to ask teachers, and the issue was treated openly. Finally, the Member stated she would like to visit schools and discuss this item at the Vale Youth Forum in future to see if provision had improved.

The Chairman continued, stating that the Delivery Working Group had considered various options ranging from do nothing, to school level provision, to service level provision. The Delivery Working Group felt that certain schools in the Vale of Glamorgan already had successful procedures in place and subsequently recommended that the funding from Welsh Government be delegated to schools in line with the best practice observed, codified in terms and conditions drawn up by the Delivery Working Group which were detailed in paragraph 22 of the report. The overall allocations to schools in the Vale of Glamorgan were based upon the number of learners on roll for all Year 5 and above learners, and a breakdown was detailed at Appendix A attached to the report. To complement the provision at schools, the Delivery Working Group also wished to purchase a selection of sanitary products for foodbanks in the Vale of Glamorgan, to the value of £100 each.

With regards to the capital funding from Welsh Government, the Chairman noted that the Delivery Working Group considered static distribution methods, such as vending machines, cupboards and baskets as an inappropriate use of the capital funding as they did not synergise with existing solutions that could fulfil a similar job, would be difficult to incorporate within modern facilities and restricted the products available to learners. Instead, mindful of the need to increase privacy and dignity for pupils who

might be affected by their period, the Group requested the funding be used to enhance cubicles in schools. The Delivery Working Group had been impressed with the facilities available in new secondary school buildings, however were concerned with the facilities available at some older primary schools within the Vale of Glamorgan. Based on responses received and analysis undertaken by the Council's Property Section, the Delivery Working Group visited a couple of primary schools within the Vale of Glamorgan and noted that the toilet facilities available in one school were in a piteous state and did not afford learners any privacy and dignity with none of the cubicles being wide enough to house any sanitary hygiene facilities. The Committee noted that refurbishment of the toilets at the school as part of the Education Capital Programme was not imminent. In addition, the Chairman wished it to be noted that the Delivery Working Group would like issues of dignity and privacy to be considered alongside hygiene concerns when looking at toilet refurbishments under the Education Capital Programme, especially in Victorian schools.

In conclusion, the Chairman wished to thank the Delivery Working Group for bringing this item to the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee and for their hard work.

A Member also requested that she would like contact to be made with local charities which provided sanitary products in schools to explore options for future provision once the funding from Welsh Government had expired. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Culture also wished it to be added that he and the rest of the Cabinet had supported and endorsed the previous recommendations of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, noting that at its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018, the Committee had been advised that no exact timescale for the grant from Welsh Government had been given, however Cabinet endorsed procuring sanitary products before the funding was received to ensure there was no delay.

It was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the following be urgently recommended to Cabinet:

(1) **T H A T** the remaining £209.05 from Unison be augmented with £490.95 from the Welsh Government 2018/19 revenue grant to purchase and donate a selection of sanitary products to the value of £100 for each Vale foodbank in the Vale of Glamorgan and the foodbank operated by the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Penarth.

(2) **T H A T** the remaining £8,175.05 revenue grant from Welsh Government for the 2018/19 financial year be distributed to schools through the allocations detailed in Appendix A, as part of a ring-fenced fund, the terms and conditions of which are:

- That resources, including sanitary products and emergency clothing, are made freely available to all students;
- That a selection of resources are made available based on the needs of the students;
- That access to free sanitary resources is widely advertised and all students are aware of how these can be accessed;
- That a named individual has lead responsibility in ensuring a good selection of stocks are maintained;

- The students can access enough items to support more than their immediate needs;
- That resources are easily accessible at identified / highlighted venues.
- That at the end of the financial year, any unspent funding is returned to the Learning and Skills Directorate Finance Manager for reallocation in line with the above terms and conditions.

(3) T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Commercial and Consultancy Manager, in consultation with the Director of Learning and Skills, to utilise the capital funding of £31,512 from Welsh Government to improve the toilet facilities in Holton Road Primary school to ensure dignity and privacy for pupils.

(4) T H A T the use of article 14.14 of the Council's Constitution (urgent decision procedure) be authorised in respect of recommendation 3 above, to effectively use the capital funding from Welsh Government before the end of the financial year.

(5) T H A T the Wellbeing Lead at St. Cyres Secondary School be invited to address the Wellbeing Group to share the best practice found at that school.

(6) T H A T the £8,666 revenue grant from Welsh Government for the 2019/20 financial year be distributed to schools using the same allocation method detailed in Appendix A, updated with the next academic year numbers on roll, as part of a ring-fenced fund, the terms of conditions of which as are recommendation 2 above.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1) To provide emergency relief to citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan who might not be able to access sanitary provision in schools.

(2) To provide schools with flexible access to the revenue grant from Welsh Government in line with the wishes of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee Delivery Working Group: that all learners can easily access sanitary provision with dignity.

(3) To improve the toilet facilities at the Primary School to improve privacy and dignity for learners and ensure the Capital funding from Welsh Government was utilised within timescales.

(4) To effectively use the capital funding from Welsh Government before the end of the financial year.

(5) To share the best practice found at that school.

(6) To provide schools with flexible access to the revenue grant for the 2019/20 financial year.

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At the Cabinet meeting, the Cabinet Member for Learning and Culture thanked the Chairman and Members of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee for their hard work in investigating this issue.

Cabinet, having considered the recommendations of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee,

RESOLVED –

(1) .....

(2) .....

(3) T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Commercial and Consultancy Manager, in consultation with the Director of Learning and Skills, to utilise the capital funding of £31,512 from Welsh Government to improve the toilet facilities in Holton Road Primary school to ensure dignity and privacy for pupils.

(4) T H A T the use of article 14.14 of the Council's Constitution (urgent decision procedure) be authorised in respect of resolution 3 above, to effectively use the capital funding from Welsh Government before the end of the financial year.

(5) .....

(6) .....

Reasons for Decisions

(1) .....

(2) .....

(3) To improve the toilet facilities at the Primary School to improve privacy and dignity for learners and ensure the Capital funding from Welsh Government was utilised within timescales.

(4) To effectively use the capital funding from Welsh Government before the end of the financial year.

(5) .....

(6) .....”