

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 17th October, 2019.

Present: Councillor G.C. Kemp (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice-Chairman); Councillors: A.R.T. Davies, S.J. Griffiths, N.P. Hodges, T.H. Jarvie, A.C. Parker, Mrs. S.D. Perkes and N.C. Thomas

Co-Opted Member: Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector),

Non-Voting Observers: Mr. I. Cramb (Vale Youth Forum).

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration).

389 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor Mrs. J.M. Norman, Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education) and Mr. T. Froud (Vale Youth Forum).

390 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 19th September, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

391 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

392 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES ANNUAL PLACEMENT REVIEW (REF) –

The Operational Manager (Children and Young People Services) presented the report which outlined actions taken within Children and Young People Services during 2018/19 and the 1st Quarter 2019/20 with regards to placement provision for Children Looked After (CLA) and the priority actions for 2019/20. The report had been referred by the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee on 17th September, 2019.

The Operational Manager referred Member's attention to the Children and Young People Services Annual Placement Review contained at Appendix 1 to the report. She advised that this was the fourth year in which the report had been produced and provided information regarding the Children Looked After population in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Pages 1 and 2 of the Annual Report provided context in which the Service was working which reflected the increasing complexity of cases and the associated rising costs to find appropriate placements which met the complex needs for children. For Court Ordered children this related both to those with challenging and complex behaviours and those with disabilities.

Pages 2, 3 and 4 outlined the Service's objectives, which were aligned to a Corporate Strategy that was being renewed and would be presented to Cabinet in the forthcoming months.

Page 5 provided a Placement Profile on a quarterly basis and this showed that the overall number of children looked after had increased from 244 in March 2018 to 280 in July 2019. The Operational Manager stated that what was prevalent was the increase in the number of kinship carers and placements with families. For kinship carers, 29 placements were made in 2015 and this had increased to 70 in July 2019. Placements with parents had increased from 13 in 2015 to 53 in July 2019. These were the areas where the greatest increases had taken place.

The Operational Manager stated that page 6 of the report set out comparative data with other local authorities, that had also experienced similar increases in their children looked after populations.

Page 7 provided the placement budgets which for 2018/19 there had been an adverse variance of £957,000. This was being closely scrutinised.

The remainder of the report provided information regarding activity undertaken to manage areas of concern which included an external placement audit that was aimed at increasing the availability of lower cost placements within Wales and the Vale of Glamorgan, and matching children to those placements where this was appropriate. In addition, the Internal Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy had progressed and from 1st April, 2018 to 31st March, 2019 four new main-stream foster carers had been approved and a further five were being assessed. In addition, 10 new kinship carers had been approved, therefore while the Council had not met its overall target of 8 new main-stream carers, it had significantly increased the number of kinship carers, supporting children to remain within their wider families.

With regard to the increase in the number of kinship carers, the Operational Manager advised that this was a specific objective of the Council's strategy, which aimed at increasing the number of placements with the immediate family.

In referring to the CAFCAS working model, which had been brought back in-house, a Committee Member queried whether this had assisted the situation. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that the Council had good working relationships with CAFCAS, with which quarterly meetings were held. In addition, the Council met with all guardians on an annual basis in order to advise them of the Council's objectives to reducing the children looked after population. The Operational Manager added that relationships were stronger now than they were in the past and this had improved following increase in the capacity of the CAFCAS service. Therefore, no issues were being reported and the situation was

fairly positive. It was important to recognise that not all local authorities held regular meetings with their guardians.

With regards to the Foster Care Recruitment Strategy, the Operational Manager advised that Welsh Government had initiated a number of work streams on a regional basis in order to meet the challenges. Therefore, the Vale was working with Cardiff Council, with a particular focus on marketing. The Operational Manager stated that the difficulty was competing with independent fostering agencies which could offer higher financial incentives. She added that a new Marketing Officer was now in place, who had made good progress in raising the profile of the Vale. It was recognised that there was a national shortage of foster carers so competition was a key challenge, as was the ageing profile of foster cares in the Vale. It was therefore important to recruit more foster carers than the Service lost. The Operational Manager also explained that there were multiple reasons why prospective foster carers chose independent fostering agencies, for example, their website was easier to access, and the application process was smoother. The key reason however appeared to be that they paid more. Despite this, the cost benefit would 'average out', as the Vale of Glamorgan could offer other benefits such as more training and opportunities for skills development. The Council was in the process of looking at its financial offer.

In terms of monitoring educational achievement of looked after children, the Operational Manager stated that regularly monitoring of attendance and exclusion rates was undertaken. The Committee agreed that information on performance of children looked after would be provided at a future meeting. In addition, the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing stated that improving the educational outcomes for children looked after was a huge challenge and it was recognised that their achievements did not match their school counterparts. This was linked to the challenges of meeting the range of complex needs that children looked after would have, which could usually lead to multiple placements. Therefore outcomes tended to be lower, which was why the Council was challenging itself to improve their outcomes.

A Committee Member made reference to support for looked after children continuing up to the age of 25. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that this was Welsh Government's 'When I am Ready' Strategy which allowed young people to remain living with their foster families past the age of 18 and up to 25.

Having considered the reference from the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To provide Members with an opportunity to exercise oversight of this key Strategy function.

393 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST AUGUST, 2019 (DLS) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report, which advised of progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April to 31st August, 2019.

The Learning and Skills Directorate was being requested to look at ways of mitigating a projected overspend of £538,000 this year. This was after a planned draw down from reserves of £136,000

Directorate/Service	2019/20 Original Budget £000	2019/20 Projected £000	Variance (+)Favourable (-) Adverse £000
Schools	87,806	87,806	0
Strategy, Culture, Community Learning & Resources	11,128	11,160	(32)
Directors Office	225	225	0
Additional Learning Needs & Wellbeing	2,380	2,948	(568)
Standards and Provision	4,070	4,008	+62
Additional Savings to be Found	0	(538)	+538
Total	105,609	105,609	0

Schools - The delegated budget relating to schools was expected to balance as any under/over spend was carried forward by schools.

Strategy, Culture, Community Learning and Resources - There was an adverse variance of £32,000 anticipated for this area after a transfer from reserves of £136,000. The Schools Non Delegated budget was projected to overspend by £147,000. £136,000 of this variance was due to the need to fund on going safeguarding and salary protection costs in relation to the transformation of secondary schools in Barry, however, it had been planned to transfer £136,000 from the Schools Rationalisation reserve for this purpose. There were other small adverse variances of £11,000. There was a projected overspend of £135,000 relating to School Transport. Local Education Authorities had a statutory duty to provide free school transport for pupils of statutory school age who resided beyond walking distance to the nearest appropriate school in addition to a statutory duty to provide transport for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) who required access to specialist provision. The Council also provided discretionary support towards pupils in further education above the age of 16. Currently there were projected overspends against ALN (£153,000), Secondary (£10,000) and further education (£7,000) and a projected underspend against primary of £35,000. Additional work needed to be carried out in relation to the ALN contracts and it was envisaged that further information would be available in October 2019. This was offset by the £114,000 net favourable variance projected by the Strategy and Resources section. The largest variance was due to the delay

in the new finance system for secondary schools being implemented which had resulted in savings this year of £77,000.

Directors Office - It was anticipated that this area would outturn on target.

Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing - A net adverse variance of £568,000 was currently projected for this service. The Non Delegated Resource Units were projecting an overspend of £249,000. The key emerging challenge for schools was the increasing number of children and young people who were displaying very complex social, emotional and mental health difficulties. In order to meet this need two specialist resource bases had been developed at Gladstone Primary School in partnership with Ysgol Y Deri. These resource bases were developing a trauma informed approach which recognised the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the development of young people. Current projections were that the costs would be in the region of £210,000. In addition, staffing overspends were projected at St Cyres, Palmerston and Cogan resource bases (£39,000). This was as a result of an increase in pupils requiring placements at these bases. The Children's Placements and Educational Needs of Looked After Children's budgets were currently projecting an overspend of £290k. It was difficult to predict the outturn on this budget as there could be changes in placements between now and the year end and costs for individual cases could be expensive. There was currently an adverse variance of £54,000 on the recoupment income budget and there were other small favourable variances of £25,000 projected.

Standards and Provision - A net favourable variance of £62,000 was projected for this service. There was a £66,000 favourable variance mainly relating to staffing in the Youth Engagement and Progression service. The EOTAS and Alternative Curriculum service was projecting an adverse variance of £106,000 due to a significant increase in the number of pupils accessing education provision other than at school. This had been partially offset by additional income of £38,000 from the Youth Support Homelessness grant and £10,000 from Cardiff Council CLA. Behaviour and Attendance had a projected favourable variance of £22,000 mainly against staffing budgets. There was also a favourable variance of £32,000 under School Improvements also related to the staffing budgets.

2019/20 Savings Targets

As part of the Final Revenue Budget Proposals for 2019/20, a savings target of £162,000 was set for this Directorate, excluding schools. Attached at Appendix 1 was a statement detailing the savings targets for 2019/20. It was anticipated that all savings would be achieved this year.

Capital

Appendix 2 detailed financial progress on the Capital Programme as at 31st August 2019. The following changes had been made to the Capital Programme since the last report to Committee.

St Andrews Primary New Demountable - Delegated authority had been used to increase the Capital programme by £230,000 in 2019/20 for this scheme, which was for the demolition and removal from the site of the existing very poor quality demountable classroom and the installation of a new demountable in the same location. Demolition had taken place and the new demountable would be installed during October. The scheme would be funded by s106 monies.

Jenner Park Primary Electrical Rewire - For ease of procuring and delivering the rewire, it had been requested that this £70,000 budget be vired to the Jenner Park Primary Rewire KS2 first floor scheme to create one budget of £160,000 in the 2019/20 Capital Programme.

Ysgol Bro Morgannwg Renew Sewage Pumps - For ease of procuring and delivering these works, it had been requested that this £91,000 budget be vired to the Band B Ysgol Bro Morgannwg scheme.

Holton Primary Boiler Renewal - An emergency power had been approved earlier this financial year where an assessment by the Property Section confirmed that the renewal of the boiler at Holton Primary School could be deferred until the Summer 2020. The funding that had been allocated to the Holton Primary project was being used to support the funding needs of the remaining boiler renewal projects which allowed them to proceed during this summer. There was a remaining balance of £10,000 for this scheme and it had been requested that it was vired to the Education Asset Renewal Contingency budget.

St. Josephs Primary Classroom Refurbishment - For ease of procuring and delivering the works, it had been requested that this £260,000 budget was amalgamated with the St. Josephs Nursery and EIB scheme. It was therefore requested that the scheme name be amended to 'St Josephs Nursery, EIB and KS1 Remodelling'.

Ysgol Pen Y Garth Pitched Roof Renewal - For ease of procuring and delivering these works, it had been requested that this £65,000 budget be vired to the Ysgol Pen Y Garth Roof Renewal P2 scheme to create one budget of £230,000 in the 2019/20 Capital Programme.

Disabled Access Improvement - For ease of procuring and delivering these works, it had been requested that this £17,000 budget be vired to the Disability Access scheme to create one budget of £37,000 in the 2019/20 Capital Programme.

Catering Trailer - It had been requested that the budget be increased by £24,000 to purchase a generator and a truck. This would be funded from the Catering reserve.

In respect of the adverse variance of £568,000 for Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing, the Director of Learning and Skills stated that there had been a change in how revenue was reported, and so the Council was now more realistic when it came to projecting the end of year budget position. The Director added that the Placement Budget was extremely volatile and was very difficult to predict and so a joint reserve had been established with Social Services. The Director stated that it

was anticipated that Welsh Government windfall funding would be forthcoming, which hopefully could also include an element to support education.

In respect of Ysgol y Deri, a Committee Member referred to the number of out of county placements, and an increase in the number of complex children looked after cases. This meant that the situation was becoming more volatile with an ever increasing pressure on the budget. The Member stated that this needed to be fully recognised. In reply, the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing stated that the Placement Budget was volatile as costs were unpredictable. He stated that the £249,000 overspend was because a new provision had been developed at Gladstone Primary School. The Council had spent £249,000 on a new in house provision that could accommodate 8 new placements. This should be compared to the £250,000 potential cost of one out of county placement. Therefore, it was important to reduce the number of out of county placements which were more costly, and because suitable out of county placements were not always available. The new provision in Gladstone Primary School represented a spend to save initiative in order to avoid greater costs.

A Committee Member queried the number of out of county placements at Ysgol Y Deri. In reply, the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing advised that currently 37 placements were out of county. This was out of a total number of placements of 276.

In respect of collaborative working with other authorities, the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing stated that there was some, for example, there was an agreement with Cardiff Council over the use of placements at Ysgol y Deri. Unfortunately, due to an increase in the number of Vale of Glamorgan placements, the Council had to refuse applications from Cardiff. Unless joint projects were developed and due to high costs, Councils had to prioritise meeting the needs of their own populations first.

A Committee Member queried the cost of demountable structures within schools. In reply, the Director of Learning and Skills stated that the cost of these had increased which was due to demountables no longer being temporary buildings and now built to last 30 to 40 years. They were therefore built more robustly and to a much better standard.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the 2019/20 Revenue and Capital Budget be noted.
- (2) T H A T the virements required in the Learning and Skills Directorate as a result of the management reorganisation be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) So that Members are aware of projected revenue outturn for 2019/20.

(2) To align the budget with the new management structure within the Learning and Skills Directorate.

394 QUARTER 1 2019/20 PERFORMANCE REPORT: AN ASPIRATIONAL AND CULTURALLY VIBRANT VALE (DLS) –

The Director of Learning and Skills presented the Quarter 1 performance results for the period 1st April, 2019 to 30th June, 2019 for the Corporate Plan Wellbeing Outcome 3 – An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale.

The performance report presented progress at Quarter 1 (1st April to 30th June 2019) towards achieving the Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes for year 4 of the Corporate Plan 2016-20 as aligned to Well-being Outcome 3, 'An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale'.

Overall, good progress had been made in delivering the Corporate Plan in relation to the Well-being Outcome 3 Objectives of, 'Raising overall standards of achievement' and 'Valuing culture and diversity'. This had contributed to an overall GREEN performance status for the Outcome at Quarter 1 (Q1).

100% (67) of planned activities aligned to an Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale had been attributed a Green performance status reflecting the exceptional progress made during the quarter.

Of the 40 performance measures aligned to this Well-being outcome, data was reported for 1 PI for which an Amber performance status was applicable. The majority of PIs contributing to this Well-being Outcome were annual indicators (19 related to school academic data and a further 20 were annual) and would be reported at end of year when the data became available.

Increasing visitor numbers to public libraries during the year (CPM/051) continued to be challenging and work continued in partnership with community libraries to increase opportunities. Whilst reported visitor numbers were up by 17,000 on the same period last year, performance still missed target by 12,000 visitors. It was anticipated that a range of activities planned over the summer would contribute towards increasing visitor numbers in the next quarter. The Director explained that the calculation of this PI did not include visits during unstaffed hours. This was due to the Welsh Government's definition of how the PI was calculated.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q1 performance results as aligned to Well-being Outcome 3 and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration

A Committee Member queried the future use of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Centre, citing the many educational visits that were arranged for schools. In reply, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration,

with permission to speak, advised that negotiation was ongoing with the landowner.

A Committee Member queried the performance of pupils eligible to free school meals (FSM), referring to the high number of percentages gaining grades A to C in Maths and English. This however, did not translate into a high percentage achieving the Level Two plus pass rate. In reply, the Head of Standards and Provision stated that the Level Two plus was an old measure for 2018. She added that the Directorate was very concerned with the performance of FSM pupils as the gap with non FSM pupils was too wide. The Head of Standards and Provision highlighted that most FSM pupils also had other additional learning needs so it was important to closely look at how data was used, including FSM, additional learning needs and looked after children. The Head of Standards commented that there was a need to closely consider the full range of needs on an individual pupil basis. The Director further advised that the Central South Consortium was currently drilling down on pupil data and soon there would be detailed information for secondary schools. Schools were being encouraged to look at progress of all pupils and the new Cap 9 scoring system would assist with tracking performance on an individual basis.

In relation to the sharing of best practice, the Head of Standards stated this was being undertaken by the Central South Consortium and Challenge Advisors, which were collating and sharing best practice. A key part in improving outcomes was not just about focusing on Year 11, but encouraging schools to focus more on pupils in Year 6 and Year 7. Therefore, transition from primary to secondary schools needed to be closely considered. As an example, the Head of Standards referred to good work being undertaken at Pencoedtre High School, which had received funding to work closely with primary schools to build consistency in the transition process by also looking at social aspects and not just simply the academic elements. In addition, the Central South Consortium had appointed a consultant to look at transition and a regional programme was ongoing which included 4 schools in the Vale.

Having considered the report, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving key outcomes in line with the Council's Year 4 priorities of Corporate Plan Wellbeing Outcome 3 – All Vale of Glamorgan Citizens have opportunities to achieve their full potential, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the remedial actions taken to address areas of under-performance and to tackle the key challenges identified be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure that the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its Corporate Plan Wellbeing Outcomes aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to secure continuous improvement as outlined in the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 and reflecting the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the wellbeing goals for Wales.