

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 12th November, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor S.J. Griffiths (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice—Chairman); Councillors T.H. Jarvie, G.C Kemp, Mrs.J.M. Norman, A.C. Parker, Mrs. S.D. Perkes, L.O. Rowlands and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church) and Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector)

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration) and Councillor K.F. McCaffer (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts and Culture)

180 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

181 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education).

182 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September, 2020 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that Councillor T.H. Jarvie’s name had been spelled incorrectly under ‘Declarations of Interest’.

183 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

184 SPORTS AND PLAY: UPDATE (REF)

The Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, on 11th February, 2020 had considered the report which advised on the current activities and operations of the Council’s Sport and Play section, and recommended that pages 3 through to 23 of

the Vale Sport and Physical Activity Snapshot report be referred to Committee in order that the following concerns could be considered by the most appropriate Scrutiny Committee:

- the decrease in female pupil participation rates as part of the Women and Girls on the Move programme; and
- feedback received from primary school staff over a lack of confidence in delivering a physical education curriculum (page 18).

The Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services, Healthy Living and Performance presented the report, and began by advising that with regard to the concern relating to female participation rates, this had been based upon statistics which had been gathered approximately two years ago, and he wished to highlight that Women and Girls remained a very important target group and that through funding provided by Sports Wales a comprehensive sports development programme had been delivered within the Vale of Glamorgan, and as such he hoped that statistics for subsequent years would show an improvement in this area

With regard to the second listed concern, the Officer advised Committee that assistance had been delivered in schools and funding provided, as detailed in the report. Moreover, the Officer was delighted to report that seven schools had taken up the offer of training to be delivered to all of their teachers. The Officer therefore suggested that while there was something of a negative focus in the concerns which had brought this report to the Committee, he felt there were a lot of positives to note with regard to the work of the Sport Development Team over recent years. The Officer, having concluded his presentation of the report, invited questions from Members.

A Member who had been present at the February meeting of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee recalled there had been particular concern regarding a 50% drop in female participation rates in sport at Pencoedtre High School, which had in recent years changed from a single-sex to a co-educational learning environment, and asked what steps had been taken to address this issue and to identify why the change had come about. The Member also recalled there had been concern regarding the number of Primary school teachers who said they did not feel confident delivering PE lessons, as this could in turn mean that pupils were not getting necessary PE experiences.

In response, the Officer suggested that rather than indicating a lack of confidence amongst Primary school teachers, the report highlighted that there was an increase in their confidence with additional training which the team was working hard to deliver in schools, with further funding having been secured in order to facilitate this. With regard to the Member's concerns relating to the effect on female pupils of moving away from a single-sex environment, the Officer advised that this was being continually monitored and research would be carried out with Women and Girls to identify the barriers in terms of their participation levels, with the intention being to bring a further report on the matter to both this Scrutiny Committee and Healthy Living and Social Care in due course.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts and Culture, with permission to speak, wished to give credit and extend thanks to the Principal Healthy Living Officer (who was also present at the meeting) and her team for their incredibly hard work, and wished to highlight the importance of Play for all children. The Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing wished to echo the Cabinet Member's comment, referencing his own positive experience of having worked on a joint project with the team. The Officer also wished to highlight that he and his colleagues would be working with the Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services, Healthy Living and Performance's team to investigate whether there was an impact of a co-educational setting on female participation in sport.

There being no further queries or comments from Members it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the information contained within pages 3 through to 23 of the Vale Sport and Physical Activity Snapshot report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To note the concerns referred to Committee for their consideration by the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, and to note the work of the Council's Sport and Play Development Team.

185 UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND SUSTAINABILITY OUTCOMES OF BAND B OF THE 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME (REF)

Cabinet, on 19th October, 2020, had noted the contents of the report and resolved that it be referred to Committee for their consideration with regard to the delivery of community benefits for existing and future 21st Century Schools schemes.

The 21st Century Schools Project Manager presented the report, which provided an update on high level targets and examples of community benefits delivery by the 21st Century Schools team and the appointed contractors and consultants of the Barry Secondary Learning Communities (BSLC) and Western Vale Primaries (WVP) projects.

The Officer wished to highlight that when undertaking the appointment of a contractor, part of the procurement process involved evaluating bids on the basis of the contractor's approach to community benefits so that the 21st Century Schools team could ensure that value for money was maximised and that schemes had a positive impact on the community throughout the construction process. The contractors who had therefore been engaged were Bouygues, ISG and Morgan Sindall, with AECOM appointed as construction consultants.

An overview was provided in terms of what the achievements which had been delivered by the 21st Century Schools Team, the appointed contractors and the consultants across both projects between January 2019 and September 2020 in terms of:

- Work experience, training and upskilling;
- School engagements;
- Supply chain engagements and supporting social enterprises;
- Community projects and engagements;
- Environmental and well-being enhancement; and
- Wider sustainability.

In response to a query from a Member regarding the potential impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the 21st Century Schools Programme's aim of moving towards zero carbon schools, the Officer acknowledged that the need to keep public buildings well ventilated did pose challenges to the project's aims in terms of energy consumption due to the need for open windows, and while guidance had been sought from Welsh Government on this matter the current advice was still to maintain this approach. The Officer emphasised that the 21st Century Schools team was taking a long-term view of the matter, with the aim to get schools to be as sustainable and as close to 'net zero' as possible with the understanding that current necessary measures in place were temporary. It was also noted that the team had observed when attending school sites in preparation for the re-opening of schools following lockdown that social distancing measures were a lot easier to facilitate in newer school builds.

In response to another Member's query regarding The School of Hard Knocks (an organization which worked towards putting people on the road to employment), the 21st Century Schools Programme Manager confirmed that they had, shortly before the onset of the pandemic, run a course within the Vale of Glamorgan. Moreover, two individuals were now working on current school projects following the course which demonstrated its effectiveness. The Officer also highlighted that the School of Hard Knocks had delivered training on other topics such as mental health and testicular cancer.

With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration wished to thank and congratulate the 21st Century Schools team, noting that their performance in delivering the level of community benefit as outlined in the report had been phenomenal. The Cabinet Member noted that the team had trebled Welsh Government targets in their delivery of Band A of the programme, and therefore anticipated the figures for Band B with interest. The team was also commended for the fact that their work had continued safely throughout the initial pandemic lockdown, and the Cabinet Member also wished to draw Members' attention to the involvement of the Council's Communities for Work and Housing teams who had, alongside multiple agencies, assisted in delivering a number of community benefits.

Following full consideration of the report by the Committee, the Chairman thanked Officers for their work and it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Cabinet reference and appended report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure Committee are updated on progress made to date and for further consideration of future schemes, and to acknowledge the work carried out by the contractors on achieving those goals outlined within the report.

186 YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE (DLS)

The Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing presented the report which sought to update Committee of the progress made by the Youth Service during the preceding 12 month period, highlighting the developments made and increase to provision despite the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact its restrictions may have on those most vulnerable.

The Officer began by highlighting that the Youth Service was continuing to perform well, noting that while there had been a slight reduction to the numbers accessing the service, there had been a high delivery of accredited outcomes. Committee was also advised that publicity regarding the service had been maximised through improved usage of ICT and media, and that the use of ICT had been essential to continued distance delivery of the service during the pandemic.

The Officer continued by informing Members of some of the effective partnership working arrangements formed by the Youth Service with other bodies which allowed them to avoid duplication of services and more effectively meet the needs of learners across the Vale of Glamorgan. The report also noted that two European Social Fund programmes, Inspire to Achieve (I2A) and Inspire to Work (I2W), were both continuing to deliver services across the Vale, with I2W having already exceeded its targets for the remaining 2 years of the project. In addition, the Youth Engagement Project had continued to deliver the Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum as part of Y Daith's wellbeing provision, which had been key in supporting more vulnerable students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Officer advised that due to an additional £254,499 of grant funding having been provided by Welsh Government, five additional staff members had been able to join the service during 2020/21 in order to deliver extra provision, sessions and support. It was noted, however, that while the additional funding had enabled a rise in provision, this was potentially precarious with future planning in mind, and so was being utilised to top up provision rather than creating projects which were not sustainable.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, the Head of Standards and Provision wished to endorse what had already been said by the Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing, noting that he had evidenced the fantastic work of the service and the impact it had on young people in the Vale. Moreover, the Head of Service wished to highlight that two members of the Youth Service team had been shortlisted as finalists for 'Youth Worker of the Year' in the National Professional Teaching Awards, with only three finalists shortlisted in the category. With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts and Culture wished to

extend her congratulations the two Youth Workers in question, and to acknowledge the hard work of the Youth Service during the period of the pandemic, thanking them for the difference they had made to so many people.

Having considered the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report updating Committee of the progress made by the Youth Service be noted.
- (2) T H A T Committee receive a further progress update report in 12 months about on-going delivery, alongside awareness of grants and European funding and the risks this poses.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In order that Committee Members are aware of progress made by the Youth Service.
- (2) To ensure that Committee Members continue to have oversight of the Youth Service.

187 SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CARERS IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN (DLS)

The Vulnerable Groups Manager presented the report, which provided an update regarding how schools were supporting young carers in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Officer began by clarifying that Secondary schools had shared a formal and informal figure for the number of young carers in attendance, while figures for Primary schools were in the process of being collated.

Through work with the Young Carers Trust, 130 young carers had been identified in Vale of Glamorgan Secondary schools and 10 in Primary schools, and the Officer advised that these were classed as formal young carers in that they had undergone a relevant assessment and their parents had provided consent for them to be deemed young carers. The Officer also, however, wished to highlight that schools were identifying a significant number of informal young carers (i.e. young carers whose parents did not want them to be identified as such).

The Officer advised Committee that in terms of the number of young carers, data gathered and held by the Local Authority was being revisited as a discrepancy had been identified in how the data was being collected, and the team was therefore working with the Young Carers Trust and Social Services to ensure that the data collected was cleaner by way of mechanisms such as a Data Disclosure Agreement. The Officer also wished to highlight that schools had been very clear that significant support was being provided both to formal and informal young carers.

A Member queried whether all schools were now engaged with this issue actively, although of course with the understanding that circumstances had been difficult due to the ongoing pandemic. The Officer replied that there had certainly been a move in the right direction, that it had become apparent during lockdown that schools were very much aware of who their young carers were and they had been going the extra mile during the initial lockdown period by carrying out additional door knocks and delivering additional packages, and by ensuring that some of the older children who were young carers had access to the Hub provision to facilitate some respite from taking care of younger siblings.

Another Member expressed concern that the figure provided for the number of children identified as young carers was lower than it was in reality, and asked if there was an estimate of how many informal young carers there were in the Vale. The Officer replied by providing an example of one Secondary school where Young Carers had identified ten pupils as official young carers, whereas the school itself had identified 20 unofficial and five official young carers. There was therefore work ongoing with Welsh Government to raise awareness both in schools and amongst families of the benefits of formally declaring a child as a young carer, in the hope of reducing the discrepancy between recorded and actual figures.

Following consideration of the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Committee note the support provided by the Local Authority and schools for young carers.

Reason for decision

In order that Committee consider further support required for young carers.

188 PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A SPECIALIST RESOURCE BASE AT WHITMORE HIGH SCHOOL FROM SEPTEMBER 2021 (DLS)

The 21st Century Schools Project Manager presented the report, which advised Committee of the Council's proposal to establish a specialist resource base to support learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at Whitmore High School from September 2021, and to receive Committee's feedback to form part of a consultation report which would in turn be considered by Cabinet following the completion of the consultation exercise.

The Officer advised that on 5th October, 2020 the Director of Learning and Skills launched the consultation on the above proposal. The consultation document, which was contained with its appendices at Appendix A to the report, had been issued to prescribed consultees as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018.

The Officer continued by highlighting that the proposed resource base would be available to pupils who spent the majority of their time in mainstream education but could use the base for support, pre-teaching of lessons and as a safe space if required. A suitable space for the resource base had been identified on the ground

floor of the new build for Whitmore High School (should the proposal be endorsed), with additional funding having been requested from Welsh Government to assist with Additional Learning Needs, and the Officer advised that the proposed space had therefore already been funded by the 21st Century Schools Programme.

As yet, there had not been a considerable response to the proposal with 11 responses having been received to date, however the Officer noted that all responses received had been in favour of the proposal and as such there were no areas of concern to further elaborate upon as part of the report. Committee were advised that the governing body of Whitmore High School had submitted a formal response to the consultation indicating that they were in favour of the proposal and had been supportive when meeting with the Officer some days previously. A formal response from Estyn had also been received which indicated that the proposal would at least maintain standards within the school and therefore no issues were raised.

The Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing provided some more information regarding the nature of the pupils who would be accessing the resource base, and a video created by the National Autism Team, 'What is Autism?', was played to Committee which explored the many facets of ASD through the words of young people with autism.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, wished to credit the Head of Service and his team for having championed this proposal and the ambition that every child in the Vale of Glamorgan should have an educational setting appropriate to their needs. The Cabinet Member continued by highlighting the importance of supporting young people with autism so that they could remain in mainstream education while also experiencing a specialist supportive environment when needed.

The Vice-Chairman wished to express that this was very much a welcome development and she was pleased that there was recognition of the different aspects of the autism spectrum. The Vice-Chairman referred to a family member's first-hand experience of an unsupportive educational environment as a learner with ASD, and reiterated that it was welcome for the Council to be looking to support those who were outside of the mainstream and to be addressing the needs of this smaller group of pupils.

Following consideration of the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T Committee note the consultation document and the relevant appendices on the proposal to establish a specialist resource base at Whitmore High School from September 2021.
- (2) T H A T Committee endorse the proposal and their feedback be considered by Cabinet as part of the consultation report which will be developed following the completion of the consultation exercise.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure that Committee is consulted on the proposal.
- (2) To ensure feedback received from Committee is considered by Cabinet as part of the consultation report.

189 SUMMARY OF SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORTS FOR SPRING TERM 2020 (DLS)

The Principal Improvement Partner for Vale of Glamorgan Schools at Central South Consortium (CSC) presented the report which provided a summary of school inspection reports for Spring Term 2020.

The Principal Improvement Partner advised that only one school, St. Cyres School, had undergone an inspection during the Spring term, and while another had been due for inspection circumstances had changed drastically due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, and Estyn had therefore suspended inspections.

A summary of the inspection findings for St. Cyres School was appended to the report at Appendix B, and the overall judgements achieved were as follows:

School	Inspection Area 1: Standards	Inspection Area 2: wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Inspection Area 3: teaching and learning experiences	Inspection Area 4: care, support and guidance	Inspection A rea 5: leadership and management
St Cyres	Adequate and needs improvement	Good	Adequate and needs improvement	Good	Adequate and needs improvement

Follow up work had been identified by Estyn in relation to the above inspection and Estyn would review the school's progress.

The Principal Improvement Partner also explained that it had been planned for Estyn to partially suspend inspections during 2020-21, and to instead undertake visits to maintained schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to discuss plans for the new curriculum. In light of the current circumstances these plans had been adapted, with engagement phone calls to a broad sample of primary, secondary, all age, special schools and PRUs having been undertaken during Autumn term 2020 to discuss supporting vulnerable learners and pupils' learning.

In response to concerns raised by Members, the Principal Improvement Partner clarified the following:

- CSC were working alongside the school to provide significant levels of support, with additional time with the improvement partner having been allocated in order for the school to be supported and challenged in terms of their progress, and key members of the CSC Strategic Team supporting the school with Literacy, Mathematics, Digital Support and Welsh. The school had also been signposted to other departments across the Consortium in order that they could observe and learn best practice.
- Additional funding had been allocated to the Mathematics department to develop their own resources, and to assist the school in finding resources which would help with developing informal aspects of Welsh, which was an issue which had been raised by Estyn.
- Following the recategorization of the school in September 2019 from Yellow to Amber, they had been able to access and receive more intensive support, and CSC had been working with the school since they became aware of the challenges. There had also been school-to-school support available through CSC's School Improvement Groups, which allowed schools across the region to share best practice, identify strengths and develop any areas for improvement.
- There was a close correlation between the quality of teaching and the standards in the inspection report, with many areas for development in the standards of pupils' Literacy, Numeracy and Welsh language skills being reflected in the section of the report which analysed quality of teaching and curriculum experiences.
- With regard to whether the loss of a Head teacher had impacted leadership at the school, an acting Head teacher had been in situ at the time of the inspection and three members of the leadership team had been in temporary positions, however the acting Head teacher had now been offered a permanent role and there were plans to appoint a deputy Head teacher for September 2021.

In response to Members' concerns regarding the change in leadership at the school, the Director for Learning and Skills wished to comment that issues regarding leadership as identified in Estyn's report had been picked up under the previous Head teacher's tenure and therefore the outcome of the inspection was unlikely to have been different had they still been in post. The Director was hopeful that a more positive relationship could be built with the school going forward, and wished to emphasise that the school would be receiving a substantial amount of support. The Director also acknowledged Members' concerns regarding the length of time until a deputy Head teacher would be in post, and advised that the school was projecting a budgetary deficit which it believed could be addressed by delaying the appointment of a deputy, and there was an acting deputy in situ at present.

The Chairman commented that under the new inspection framework he would be interested to see how other schools which had been categorized as 'Adequate' in some inspection areas would improve, and that it would be good for those schools to share best practice with one another.

The Head of Standards and Provision wished to clarify to the Chairman and Committee Members that due to the current circumstances it was unclear when a follow-up report would be brought to Committee.

There being no further comment it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Members note the inspection judgements about the school inspected during the spring term.

Reason for Decision

In order that Members are aware of Estyn judgements about local schools.