

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 14th January, 2021.

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

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

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector) and Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh-medium Education)

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

337 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor A.C. Parker.

338 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.”.

Members also wished to express their sincere condolences to Councillor A.C. Parker following a recent family bereavement.

339 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 10th December, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

340 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor N.P. Hodges declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 5 – School Admission Arrangements 2022/23. The nature of his interest was that the Councillor and his wife were both Local Authority appointed Governors for Ysgol Sant Baruc. The Councillor had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on such matters.

341 REVIEW OF STATUES, MONUMENTS, STREET NAMES AND BUILDING NAMES (REF) –

Cabinet, on 2nd November, 2020, had endorsed a proposed approach to establishing a review regarding statues, monuments, street names and building names in the Vale of Glamorgan, and had resolved that the matter be referred to Committee for consideration.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation presented the report which outlined the proposed review which was to be carried out in light of the Black Lives Matter movement which had prompted people to consider the appropriateness of commemoration or acknowledgment of people and events from history and their relevance to today. This was particularly the case where links to the intolerable slave trade existed. As well as reviewing the appropriateness of these commemorations or acknowledgments, the opportunity would be taken to consider the positive recognition of people from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds, as well as other underrepresented groups too.

It was proposed that all Town and Community Councils, as well as the public, be invited to make representations for commemorations that should be reviewed to ensure they were appropriate. It was also proposed that a panel be established to review the representations received, to be made up of Elected Members, an officer from the Council's Strategic Leadership Group and external representatives. The Officer advised that it was proposed that the review also invite consideration for future recognition of individuals and events from the Vale's more recent history.

With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration wished to address Committee, and expressed the view that while the topic was complex, it was right that it be addressed at this time, and that by not only considering the appropriateness of historical references but also giving recognition to the contribution of individuals who had lived in the Vale of Glamorgan, residents of the Vale would be encouraged to consider what they were able to achieve, and to feel welcomed and valued as a part of their community.

Discussion ensued with Members expressing their views which could be summarised as follows:

- The Council should not make knee-jerk reactions to outside pressure. Not every name that appeared to be historically inappropriate should be labelled as such, as many had roots and histories entirely unrelated to the slave trade, and such matters needed to be researched before decisions were made;
- Some thought needed to be given as to who would bear potential costs to residents and businesses should street and road names be changed, for instance through requirements to change bank details, or advertising literature;
- It was important to recognise the contributions of ordinary people in the Vale of Glamorgan, for instance those who had built the docks in Barry;
- An approach could be taken to inform, educate and provide context to residents regarding the history behind the names in their local area, rather

than to erase it by changing names of streets, statues etc. A possible way of achieving this could be to add information plaques and QR codes at relevant locations;

- Without wishing to distract from the implications for Black and Minority Ethnic communities, other members of the community were also neglected and should be taken into consideration as part of a review;
- In naming new streets, the Council could consider using names that were of local historical significance, and as the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee should be pushing to showcase local history.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding whether efforts could be directed into naming new streets rather than a separate review as proposed, the Officer responded that the review had a wide scope and its consideration of future recognition and commemoration could feed into the process described by the Chairman.

There was some discussion regarding whether the matter should be deferred until a later date, with Councillor Rowlands requesting that his concern be noted that it was not currently appropriate to be spending time on such a review given the ongoing pandemic, and the Chairman noting that the review may not receive sufficient exposure amongst the public in the current climate. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, replied that the work would be taken forward flexibly alongside the Council's other priorities, however there were members of the public who wished for the matter to be progressed.

With there being no further comments it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the resolutions as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 16th November (Minute No. C356) be approved, having regard to the comments made above.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to consider the proposed review and provide feedback.

342 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2022/23 (REF) –

Cabinet, on 16th November, 2020, had approved the consultation required in respect of the Council's admission arrangements for the academic year 2022/2023 and had resolved that the matter be referred to Committee for their consideration as part of the ongoing consultation process. The Council's proposed school admission policy for 2022/23 was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The key changes proposed would ensure a more even distribution of school places to meet future demand for pupils within defined catchment areas requiring a school place, and related to:

- Establishing a dual catchment area for St. Cyres for the three academic years from 2022/2023 to alleviate short term pressure for secondary school places in Barry; and
- A proposed change to the Rhoose area catchment from Ysgol Dewi Sant to Ysgol Sant Baruc.

The Operational Manager for Strategy and Resources advised that the consultation period would run until 8th February, 2021, and that 70% of responses received so far had been in favour of the proposed changes, with some concern having been expressed by Pencoedtre High School that the changes could result in children moving out of the Barry area.

Having fully considered the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the resolutions as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 16th November (Minute No. C376) be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee was consulted on the proposal as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

343 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2019/20 (REF) –

Cabinet, on 30th November, 2020, had considered the report and resolved that it be referred to all Scrutiny Committees for their consideration.

The Safeguarding Officer presented the report which provided an update on the work that had been undertaken in relation to Corporate arrangements for Safeguarding across the Council. There was corporate responsibility to ensure that there were effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults who required specific Council services.

The report provided an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding Group work plan and other safeguarding activities taking place across the Local Authority.

In response to a query from Councillor Thomas regarding schools' compliance with annual safeguarding training, the Officer confirmed that there were no schools who were not compliant at all, with all schools either being compliant in terms of Level Two training for Designated Safeguarding Persons or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Persons.

There being no further comments or queries, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference and relevant Cabinet Report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that Committee was aware of recent developments in corporate arrangements for safeguarding.

344 IMPACT OF WORK IN THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM'S BUSINESS PLAN ON THE REGION AND THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL AUTHORITY (DLS) –

The Chairman welcomed representatives from the Central South Consortium (CSC) who were in attendance to present the report, which outlined the impact of work in CSC's business plan on the region and the Vale of Glamorgan, and included information and evidence of challenge and support provided by the Consortium on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan.

The report provided numerous progress headlines in relation to CSC's objectives, and gave a comprehensive update regarding work which had been undertaken by the Consortium during the national lockdown between March 2020 and July 2020. The report also gave a summary of case studies which had been carried out in relation to the support of Improvement Partners in schools, and the Vale of Glamorgan Report on Distance Learning Summer 2020.

Following the presentation of the report, the CSC representatives addressed Members' queries as follows:

- Welsh Government and CSC were aware of issues regarding Welsh-medium pupils from non-Welsh speaking families losing confidence in their use of Welsh, and advised that considerable work was being undertaken to develop resources to support such pupils in developing their Welsh language skills, particularly in relation to oracy. Welsh in Education Officers were working closely with Welsh-medium schools to monitor the ongoing situation and ensure the right support was in place;
- Two months on from the report having been written there had been considerable progress made in relation to distance learning, with much reflection and consultation having been carried out in terms of provision, engagement, and what worked well for schools and parents. Support was also being provided to overcome barriers to distance learning, for instance issues with equipment;
- In looking at how to move forward, CSC were hopeful that where they had until now been providing support in terms of skills and engagement, they would now begin to support leadership teams at schools in assessing the quality of learning and monitoring of progress. Supporting materials were due to be with schools the week following the meeting and undergoing a consultation process with representative stakeholders and delegate Head Teachers.

There being no further comments it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report outlining the impact of Central South Consortium's work on the region and the Vale of Glamorgan be noted.

Reason for recommendation

In order that Members were aware of the impact of Central South Consortium's work on schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

345 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH NOVEMBER 2020 (DLS) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report which advised Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April to 30th November, 2020.

With regard to revenue, the Officer advised that the forecast for the Directorate was a breakeven position, and although it was possible that total school deficit balances may exceed total school positive balances this situation would be closely monitored and reported on further as the year progressed.

The report detailed that the main source of overspend related to education transport, with transport for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) pupils and Secondary transport being major contributors. A transfer of £125k from the School Rationalisation Reserves was planned to support 21st Century School implementation costs, and a transfer of £30k to the Libraries Reserve was planned due to the delayed implementation of Openplus. Efficiency targets as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report were on target to be achieved in full by year end.

Appendix 2 to the report detailed financial progress on the Capital Programme as at 30th November, 2020, and Members were advised of changes which had been made to the Programme since the last report to Committee. The Officer also noted that five of the 21st Century Schools schemes were now on site.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, noted the excellent level of outcome achieved by the 21st Century Schools team and the Property team with regard to new school builds and asset renewal funding, particularly given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Committee agreed with the Cabinet Member that thanks should be recorded and extended to the teams for their superb performance.

With the report having been fully considered it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the position with regard to the 2020/21 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

(2) T H A T the thanks of the Committee be passed on to the 21st Century Schools team and the Property team for their phenomenal work during difficult circumstances.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) In order that Members were aware of the projected revenue and capital outturn for 2020/21.

(2) To pass on the Committee's thanks and appreciation.

346 3RD QUARTER SCRUTINY DECISION TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2020/21 (MD) –

The Assistant Democratic Services Officer presented the report which advised Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and confirmed the updated Work Programme Schedule for 2020/21.

Appendices A to C to the report summarised progress made in relation to recommendations made during Quarters 2 and 3, and ongoing/uncompleted actions from the previous Municipal Year. An updated Work Programme Schedule for 2020/21 was also attached at Appendix D to the report. The Officer apprised Members of an error contained within Appendix D which, subject to Committee's approval, would be corrected prior to the approved version of the document being uploaded to the Council's website.

At the Vice-Chairman's request, Heads of Service provided the following updates to Committee:

- Approximately 4,000 devices had been procured over the summer to support families who required them in order to support pupils' distance learning, however new pressure had evolved in terms of a move to live lessons, meaning that sharing of devices within a household with multiple children was no longer appropriate where it had been previously. Approximately 250 MiFi devices had also been deployed in order to give homes the ability to connect to the internet;
- There was little to update Committee with regarding examinations and external assessments, as Qualifications Wales had announced that with the renewed closure of schools their planned assessment window would no longer take place, with no indication of alternative arrangements as yet. Information would be fed back to Committee as soon as it was available;
- It was likely that the implications of the pandemic were having a significant impact on children's mental health due to factors such as not being in school, being caught up in increased instances of domestic violence and the economic hardship being experienced by numerous families. As such, referrals to agencies for assistance in these matters was increasing.

The Vice-Chairman thanked the Heads of Service for their responses and indicated that updates regarding the above matters would be appreciated.

There being no further comment it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A to C to the report be approved.
- (2) T H A T, subject to the correction as summarised by the Assistant Democratic Services Officer, the updated Work Programme Schedule attached at Appendix D be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

Reasons for Recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.
- (2) For information.