

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 14th October, 2021.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor G.C. Kemp (Chair); Councillor R.M. Birch (Vice-Chair); Councillors S.J. Griffiths, N.P. Hodges, S.D. Perkes, L.O. Rowlands and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church) and I. Cramb (Vale Youth Forum)

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

468 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 live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

469 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors T.H. Jarvie, J.M. Norman and A.C. Parker.

470 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 16th September, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

471 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

472 RECONFIGURING NURSERY PROVISION IN PENARTH (REF) –

Cabinet, on 13th September, 2021 had authorised the Director of Learning and Skills to undertake a consultation on a proposal to reconfigure nursery provision in Penarth by:

- amalgamating Bute Cottage Nursery School and Evenlode Primary School; and

- amalgamating Cogan Nursery School and Cogan Primary School.

Cabinet had also resolved that the matter be referred to Committee for consideration as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

The Operational Manager for Strategy and Resources advised that over the past 10 years the Council had sought to move towards a primary school model for 3 to 11 years education. Bute Cottage Nursery School and Cogan Nursery School were the only two standalone nursery schools within the Vale, while Evenlode Primary School and Cogan Primary School were the only two remaining primary schools in the Vale which did not provide, or had approved plans to provide, nursery provision. It was therefore proposed that Evenlode Primary School and Bute Cottage Nursery School be merged (resulting in 96 part time nursery places being provided at Evenlode Primary School on the Bute Cottage site), and that Cogan Primary School and Cogan Nursery School be merged (resulting in 96 part time nursery places being provided at Cogan Primary School on the Cogan Nursery site).

The Officer outlined the main benefits of the proposal to Members, and advised of the arrangements for the consultation exercise which would be undertaken in accordance with the School Organisation Code 2018.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, Members' queries were responded to as follows:

- Anecdotal reports from a member of staff at Cadoxton Primary School (which had amalgamated with its Nursery site five years previously) indicated that while the merge had initially been difficult, the benefits had outweighed any difficulties, with there being many more opportunities for professional development as part of a larger school.
- Data for pupils at the end of Year 2 pre and post-amalgamation at Cadoxton Primary School indicated there had been advances in all areas of pupil progress.
- Cadoxton Primary School's 2017 Estyn report had made specific reference to the impact of amalgamation on leadership at the school, noting that it had been re-aligned and strengthened, resulting in high quality early years provision. The report also indicated that the amalgamation had improved the transition process for pupils, which in turn was an anticipated benefit of the current proposal.
- The anticipated £70k saving would be achieved through a reduction in overhead costs, with there being no impact on or reduction to pupil-led funding. Moreover, the saving would not be taken out of the schools' budget but would be reallocated within.
- Separate sites for Nursery and Primary provision had a choice of reading schemes to follow, and while there was no question regarding the quality of teaching at any of the schools in question amalgamation would mean that there would be continuation of literacy programmes throughout the Nursery and Primary phases, and it was hoped that this would prevent any dip in performance as a result of transition.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, wished to respond to Members' comments regarding misinformation amongst the

community regarding the future use of the Bute Cottage site. The Cabinet Member confirmed that there was no plan to change the site of nursery provision, and while the report did refer briefly to feasibility work being undertaken in this area, a further statutory consultation would be required before any further action could be taken. The current consultation related strictly to the government and management of the proposed amalgamations.

With Committee having fully considered the proposal it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the resolutions as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 13th September, 2021 (Minute No. C662) be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

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

473 CONSULTATION ON WELSH GOVERNMENT'S LGBTQ+ ACTION PLAN FOR WALES (REF) –

Cabinet, on 11th October, 2021 had endorsed the Council's draft response to Welsh Government's draft LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales subject to the comments of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, and had therefore referred the report to Committee for their consideration before the end of the consultation period on 22nd October, 2021.

Welsh Government had issued a consultation document outlining draft proposals for an LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales with many actions relevant to Local Authorities. The plan had six overarching aims:

- Make equality and human rights for LGBTQ+ people stronger;
- Challenge assumptions when services identify people or collect information about LGBTQ+ so they can plan and build services better;
- Make the rights of LGBTQ+ people respected across all Government departments, local authorities and services;
- Collect information better so it can be used to stop discrimination and inequalities in service;
- Help services and their staff understand and support LGBTQ+ needs better; and
- Make the Independent Expert Panel permanent so it can check the plan is working and update it if needed.

The Plan also contained 58 actions across the overarching aims and seven policy themes: human rights and recognition; ensuring LGBTQ+ people's safety; home and communities; improving health outcomes; education; workplace; and Covid-19 response.

Comments had been sought from officers across Council Services, as well as GLAM, the Council's LGBTQ+ Network, and Diverse, its Ethnic Minority Staff

Network. Responses received had been incorporated in the draft response to the consultation which was attached at Appendix A to the report.

In response to a query from the Chair regarding whether he was confident that the Plan would work, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised that while the aims of the Action Plan were difficult to argue with, the success of delivery would rely on the Council being able to find and prioritise sufficient resource in the areas highlighted. Members agreed that while they looked forward to a time when such an Action Plan was no longer needed, until then it was necessary to protect members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The Vice-Chair wished to highlight that comments in the report indicated that the Action Plan was not wholeheartedly endorsed, and she advised that she had been approached by individuals and groups who felt that they had not been fully consulted with on this matter, and that the Plan had been written in something of a bubble without full consideration being given to the wider implications of some of its content for the rest of society. The Vice-Chair echoed these reservations and asked for them to be taken into account going forward. The Officer acknowledged the Vice-Chair's concerns regarding Welsh Government's Action Plan and noted that the Council's draft consultation response recognised the need to strengthen references to intersectionality and to understand the implications and complexity of treating people as individuals.

With Members having fully considered both the Action Plan and the Council's draft response to the consultation, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Vale of Glamorgan Council's draft response to the consultation on Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

To enable a response to be submitted to Welsh Government by the deadline of 22nd October, 2021.

474 GOVERNOR TRAINING REPORT FOR THE 2020/21 ACADEMIC YEAR (DLS) –

The Head of Governor Support presented the report which provided commentary and a statistical summary of the attendance and evaluations received for online governor training courses held during the 2020/21 academic year.

Despite Covid 19 and its restrictions, training opportunities for Vale governors were not adversely affected during the 2020/21 academic year. A record number of governors had attended a record number of training courses, with 51 virtual sessions having been held held, and 682 Vale governors having attended.

In terms of evaluations, 140 evaluations had been received from 283 governors attending 16 Vale run courses during the 2020/21 academic year, with over 90% of governors saying the courses were either good or very good.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report Dr. M. Price, as Chair of the Vale School Governors' Association (VSGA), advised that the VSGA's Management Committee had been very pleased to read the same report at its meeting the previous week, and he wished to endorse the good job that was being done in terms of the provision of training to governors in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Having fully considered the report it was subsequently

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

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

475 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST AUGUST 2021 (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 31st August 2021.

The revenue position for 2021/22 was challenging with the continuing pressure for the service both operationally and financially as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. This would impact both as a result of incurring additional expenditure but also from a loss of income. Funding had been provided by Welsh Government to cover some of the issues.

A savings target for the year has been set at £59k, and the currently approved capital budget had been set at £41.579m.

There being no queries from Members at this time it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

476 2ND QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2021/22 AND UPDATED COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2021/22 (MD) –

The report advised Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2021/22 for the Committee's consideration.

Appended to the report were:

- 2nd Quarter Recommendation Tracking July to September 2021 (Appendix A)
- 1st Quarter Recommendation Tracking April to June 2021 (Appendix B)
- Uncompleted Recommendations for the Municipal Year 2019-20 (Appendix C)
- Updated Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) Schedule for 2021/22 (Appendix D).

Since the publication of the meeting Agenda, Central South Consortium had advised of reports that they intended to bring to Committee in November and December 2021, and during the meeting the Principal Accountant confirmed that reports regarding Initial Budget Proposals would be ready for Committee's consideration in December rather than November. It was therefore proposed that these amendments be made to the FWP Schedule prior to it being uploaded to the Council's website.

Councillor N.C. Thomas enquired as to whether there was any scope for considering whether all FWP reports needed to be presented to Committee in-meeting or whether some could be circulated to Members for their information. The Chair noted that this matter had been considered previously but he was happy for the Committee to take another look at it, and the Assistant Democratic Services Officer advised she would address the question with Officers and the Chair before the next FWP update was brought to Committee.

With there being no further queries it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A, B and C to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the updated Committee Forward Work Programme Schedule attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website, subject to amendments as discussed and agreed during the meeting.

Reasons for recommendations

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