

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 11th November, 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, T.H. Jarvie, J.M. Norman, A.C. Parker, S.D. Perkes, L.O. Rowlands and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education), I. Cramb (Vale Youth Forum).

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), K.F. McCaffer (Cabinet Member for Leisure Arts and Culture) and Dr. I.J. Johnson.

536 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair 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”.

537 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 14th October, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

538 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

539 IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK (DLS) –

The Managing Director of Central South Consortium (CSC) introduced the report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the Improvement and Accountability Framework and how Central South Consortium supported all schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

In response to the suspension of the National School Categorisation System in September 2020, CSC had developed, used and refined a new model of support for schools which was closely linked to the emerging new guidance from the Welsh

Government: ‘School improvement guidance - framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability’, which was contained at Appendix 1 to the report.

This new model of working was following a ‘working alongside schools’ approach, where there was a strong focus on school priorities for improvement and more time allocated for all schools.

The Assistant Director for Partnerships and Improvement at CSC was subsequently invited to make a presentation to Committee which highlighted how the Consortium would be supporting school improvement as of September 2021 and beyond.

Following the presentation by CSC Members raised several queries, the responses to which could be summarised as follows:

- It was acknowledged there had been a spectrum of experiences for those learning from home during the pandemic, with some having been positive, some negative, and many in between. CSC were working on making sure resources were available for teachers, and that there was a community focus on ensuring access to resources for parents and guardians.
- While schools identified their own improvement priorities they were also required to ensure these linked with both the Local Authority and National priorities. The majority of schools were able to evidence that their priorities were needed, and where this was not the case schools were challenged by their Improvement Partners.
- CSC ensured awareness of Local Authority priorities through a meeting at the start of term between Improvement Partners and Local Authority Officers, with the information also being shared with head teachers to ensure messaging was clear.

With Members having fully considered the report and presentation, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the report and the hard work being carried out throughout the Vale of Glamorgan and by Central South Consortium be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

540 YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE (DLS) –

The Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing and the Engagement Manager presented the report which made Members aware of the progress made by the Youth Service during the past year.

The report highlighted achievements made by the service since the previous update in the autumn of 2020, which included:

- Renewal of the service's Bronze Youth Work Quality Mark;
- Adapting significantly in response to the Covid pandemic with a significant emphasis on innovation and responding to the needs of young people;
- Development of a new participation structure maintaining the Youth Cabinet but introducing a new youth led forum which underpinned the Cabinet, supporting more young people to participate;
- Ensuring that European Social Fund (ESF) programmes Inspire to Achieve (I2A) and Inspire to Work (I2W), would both continue to operate across the Vale, supporting young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET);
- Continued delivery of the Personal and Social Education (PSE) curriculum as part of the newly formed Centre of Learning and Wellbeing's (formerly Y Daith) wellbeing provision;
- Utilising an additional £516,422.00 of grant funding aimed at targeting youth homelessness and enhancing youth health and wellbeing;
- Performing well in terms of the delivery of accredited outcomes;
- Establishment of a new pupil engagement team following proposals being ratified; and
- Planning for the withdrawal of European Social Fund (ESF) and the impact of the developments for the Centre for Learning and Wellbeing (CLW) in December 2022.

Following their presentation, Members thanked Officers for the report and congratulated the service on their hard work and achievements throughout the year.

Councillor N.C. Thomas highlighted that since the onset of COVID-19, the need for increased support amongst young people had become apparent, and he emphasised the need to maintain the Youth Service at a level where it could actively support young people, not only for their own benefit but for the avoidance of the cost of more expensive alternative support at a later stage. The Councillor therefore wished to strongly advocate on behalf of the Youth Service and its potential to provide support to struggling individuals and families, and advocate that this should be taken into account during upcoming budgetary considerations, noting that the report advised that a grant funding allocation from Welsh Government (which currently accounted for 45% of the Youth Service's funding) was not guaranteed beyond the end of the current financial year. He hoped that the Youth Service would be seen as being worthy of strong support within the budget, given that providing necessary support to young people now could avoid larger cost pressures at a later date.

In response to further queries from Members, Officers advised:

- In terms of additional resource, an extra £85k had been drawn down in January/February of 2021 alongside supporting the Summer of Fun programme with Children's Services. An additional £100k had been taken from underspend within Welsh Government to specifically target wellbeing support for young people transitioning, specifically within the post-16 phase. The service was also currently working very closely with Sports and Play to

deliver the Winter of Wellbeing programme with an additional £270k having been secured.

- Officers wished to highlight the new Pupil Engagement Service which was supporting many learners during the early stages of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) process.
- The numbers of young people NEET for 2021 were not available yet, as destination data had been held up and the figures could not be verified as yet. The service was working to gather the information and the numbers were decreasing rapidly with destination data being confirmed.
- In respect of recent issues with youths in areas of Barry, the service had worked with the local policing team, having identified the problem early and external provision having been set to track the relevant areas. The service had worked with police and Barry Town Council to engage positively with the youths in a way that was productive rather than reactionary, for instance graffiti awareness sessions through the Summer of Fun programme.
- The Youth Club which was held at CF61 in Llantwit Major continued to take place two evenings a week, and Officers would provide Councillor Norman with figures relating to take-up following the meeting.

Mr. Cramb stated that from the perspective of the Youth Cabinet things were going well and he wished to extend thanks to the youth workers involved, acknowledging that it was a difficult process.

Having fully considered the contents of the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made by the Youth Service in the last 12 months and the ongoing developments and increase in provision made be noted.
- (2) T H A T a further progress update report about ongoing delivery, alongside awareness of grants and European funding and the risks this poses, be received in 12 months.
- (3) T H A T Committee's comments regarding the importance of the Youth Service being strongly advocated for and supported during upcoming budgetary discussions be forwarded to Cabinet for its consideration.

Reasons for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(3) To ensure the views of Committee are considered during budgetary considerations.

541 CONSULTATION ON THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL'S DRAFT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP) 2022-32 (DLS) –

The Operational Manager for Strategy and Resources presented the report which sought Committee's views on the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) as part of the consultation exercise.

There was a duty on all local authorities in Wales to increase the proportion of all school year groups that received their education through the medium of Welsh, with an emphasis on increasing the number of learners in Year 1 taught through the medium of Welsh. Aligned to this, the Council was required to prepare, consult on and submit a WESP which covered a ten-year period from 2022-2032, to be presented to Welsh Ministers for approval no later than 31 January 2022. The Council had therefore produced a draft ten-year WESP vision and strategy, with consultation taking place from Friday 15 October 2021 to Friday 10 December 2021.

The targets set in the Draft WESP were challenging and would require significant investment over the lifespan of the plan. The Council's WESP strategy would be a key component in developing Band C of the 21st Century Schools programme.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report the Chair invited Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson, not a Member of the Committee, to make a verbal representation to Members, which could be summarized as follows:

- The Welsh language was strongest in areas where there was clear progression between Primary and Secondary phases, and therefore the WESP needed to consider Secondary education outside of Barry.
- With catchment areas in Rhoose and Central Vale of Glamorgan having shifted it was important to ensure that Welsh medium education would be genuinely available throughout the county.
- While Welsh language provision of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) had been positive, only one Welsh-medium school had been eligible.
- A Welsh language immersion unit and Assisted Learning Needs (ALN) were important areas of focus, with there being no immersion programme currently centred in the Vale of Glamorgan, and Welsh-medium ALN support not being on the front foot.

Mr. H. Gapper, having also spoken with head teachers of Welsh-medium schools, agreed with many points made by Councillor Johnson, but wished to highlight that as the expansion of Ysgol Sant Baruc should have already taken place, additional Welsh-speaking five year olds gained by the expansion as of September 2022 shouldn't be included within the WESP. He added that having spoken with head teachers, they had advised they were not aware of the consultation and he therefore felt the Council needed to raise awareness.

In response to Councillor Johnson's representation and further comments from Members, the Officer provided responses which could be summarized as follows:

- A bid had been submitted to Welsh Government to establish an immersion unit within the Vale, to be based at Ysgol Gymraeg Gwaun y Nant, and

although there had been no formal acceptance as yet the Officer reported there had been positive indications in this regard.

- The Council had entered into a research project with Bridgend County Borough Council investigating local challenges linked with the WESP.
- It had been indicated that SHEP would be open to more schools this year, providing more opportunities to attend, and this included Welsh-medium schools.
- The Council was actively looking at and working to improve Welsh-medium ALN support, which was a difficult situation with there being a shortage of specialists across the board. There had previously been a resource base established at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg, however this had not been appropriate. The Directorate was well aware that the issue not only needed addressing but also required investment.
- While the target of 24% Welsh speakers by 2031 as set out in the report was not at the higher end of Welsh Government's suggestion of 22-26%, and was lower than targets set by some other Local Authorities, the Council had looked at what it could realistically achieve from its projections, and 24% would be a challenge. The Council intend to exceed this number, but setting a target of 26% would make it to be difficult to genuinely be held accountable for progress in this area.
- Officers had been in regular contact with the head teachers of Welsh-medium schools and they had been contacted regarding the consultation, however Officers would ensure reminders were sent as they acknowledged the importance of ensuring it was shared.

Having fully considered the draft Plan, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report and the draft Plan be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

To enable a comprehensive and well-informed Plan to be submitted to Welsh Government by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2022.