

No.

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 10th March, 2022.

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

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor G.C. Kemp (Chair); Councillor R.M. Birch (Vice-Chair);
Councillors S.J. Griffiths, J.M. Norman, A. Parker, S.M. Perkes and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), L. Barrowclough
(Parent Governor – Primary Sector), G. Scott (Welsh Medium) and C. Williams
(Parent Governor – Secondary Sector)

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

950 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.”

Referring to the previous meeting which had taken place on 10th February, 2022, the Chair wished to tender an apology to the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration for the manner in which he had exchanged views with her in respect of Agenda Item 4. The Cabinet Member thanked the Chair and accepted his apology.

951 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor T.H. Jarvie.

952 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

953 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

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954 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL, 2021 TO 31ST JANUARY, 2022 (DLS) –

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st January 2022

With regard to revenue it was anticipated that the forecast for Learning and Skills at year end could be an outturn on target after a number of transfers to reserves totalling £735k. A savings target for the year had been set at £59k, and it was anticipated that these savings would be achieved in full by year end.

The currently approved capital budget had been set at £38.032m, and the report set out a number of changes which had been made to the Capital Programme since the last report to Committee.

In response to a query from Councillor N.C. Thomas regarding expected figures in Quarter 4, the Operational Manager for Accountancy advised as follows:

- The main fluctuation would likely be observed in Welsh Government grants, and it was unlikely that outcome figures would be dramatically different from those reported in Quarter 3.
- It was likely that the Capital spend would be lower than outlined in the report due to slippage as some schemes had been re-profiled into the Easter holidays.
- The Education outturn might also be amended for the receipt of late Welsh Government by schools resulting in increased year end transfers to reserves.

There being no further queries from Members 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.

955 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 (DLS) -

The report advised of the Council's progress at Quarter 3 (Q3) (1st April, 2021 to 31st December, 2021) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22) (ADP) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Appendix A to the report outlined the Council's performance for the period against its ADP commitments for 2021/22, while key achievements and challenges within the remit of the Committee were presented at Appendix B to the report, with performance exceptions detailed at Appendix C.

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The Council had made positive progress delivering its in-year commitments in relation to its ADP. This performance had contributed to an overall Green status for the Plan at Q3. Progress made against the 53 actions and 8 quarterly measures which were specifically within the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee could be summarised as follows:

- GREEN: 45 actions (85%) and 4 measures (50%).
- AMBER: 7 actions (13) and 0 measures.
- RED: 1 action (2%) and 4 measures (50%).

With regard to the 1 action and 4 measures attributed a Red performance status, the impact of COVID-19 was identified as a contributory factor for the action and 3 of the measures.

Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was also reported to Members with the presentation highlighting issues pertinent to the Committee's remit. Following the presentation of the report, the Directorate's Heads of Service responded to Members' queries as follows:

- A number of factors had resulted in some actions and measures being RAG rated red, and would affect progress in improving them to green. For instance, if any actions were measured by the number of participants, COVID restrictions had significantly impacted the Directorate's ability to meet targets.
- Some actions related to longer-term targets, for instance those connected with to Assisted Learning Needs (ALN) in Welsh-medium schools which was a part of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), a ten-year plan. Such actions would therefore be included in relevant Service Plans going forward to reflect where progress had been made and where further progress was needed.
- In some instances targets equated to very low numbers, for instance the target relating to the number of Year 13 pupils not in education, employment or training (NEET), and as such a small number of individuals could have a significant impact on an action's RAG rating. The NEET target had been set at that level as the service area was aspirational for young people and had not wanted to set a target that could easily be achieved and beaten.
- A Welsh Government pilot scheme relating to extending the school day was running until Easter, with five schools and nearly 1,000 pupils in the Barry area participating. As the pilot was still underway there was no formal feedback Officers could provide at present, however anecdotally they understood that it had been very well received by the schools and children involved, and welcomed by parents who recognised the need for the additional activities and opportunities provided. A formal report would be brought to Committee in due course, and it was suggested that it would be best presented by representatives of the schools involved.
- In addition to the above pilot scheme, Welsh Government were engaging with stakeholders about reforming both the school day and the school year in order to ensure that they met the needs of pupils. There was a greater focus on provision of a 'wraparound' care model, in that schools were aiming to provide support to young people beyond the school day.

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- The Barry schools involved in Welsh Government's pilot were working very closely together, with Pencoedre High School being used as a hub and there being a clear focus on community development.
- With regard to the Performance Indicator for Library visitation (as set by the Library Standards Framework), this was RAG rated red as physical attendance at libraries had been reduced, however this did not capture the contribution libraries had made in terms of online services and activities offered, activities that had been held in different venues to meet COVID requirements, or the click and collect service.
- The Directorate recognised that linking with Social Services was valuable in terms of identifying and targeting children who not only had additional needs but who might require additional support for other reasons, for instance opportunities to attend homework clubs or after school activities that could provide suitable working environments. It was key that pupils who perhaps found school difficult be engaged and encouraged to excel in areas where their skills were rewarded, so that school became a positive place to be and their self-esteem could increase.
- The Directorate was looking to develop further teams to support young people, and schools were trying to improve support by creating family liaison roles who would also link with services across the Council.
- Discussions were taking place between schools and Officers in Social Services regarding how schools could become hubs for support, not just for pupils but for their families, with it being suggested that Adult Community Learning could be incorporated into the model.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, wished to emphasise that schools were working collaboratively not only with each other but with the Council, and a whole family approach to support was becoming increasingly commonplace. She highlighted that St. Cyres School had recently become the Vale of Glamorgan's first 'School of Sanctuary', referring to pupils who were literally seeking refuge but also their approach to supporting young people with any challenges they faced. The Cabinet Member added that investment via the Big Fresh Catering Company could see funds made available for provision of food in schemes such as homework clubs, and concluded by adding her thanks to Officers for their phenomenal work in delivering the Directorate's outcomes.

With there being no further queries it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 commitments as aligned to our Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

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(3) T H A T the progress being made through the recovery strategy and Directorate Recovery plans in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

(4) T H A T Committee's thanks to Officers in the Directorate for their hard work in achieving the outcomes outlined in the report be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1-4) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

956 SERVICE PLANS AND TARGET SETTING TO DELIVER THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN (ADP) 2022/23 (DLS) –

The report presented the Council's service plans and targets, which set out the specific areas of focus associated with the delivery of the Council's Annual Delivery Plan (Improvement Plan Part 1) for 2022/2023 as aligned to its four Corporate Plan Well-being (Improvement). All Scrutiny Committees considered a draft ADP in December 2021 and their views alongside that of other key stakeholders had informed the final Plan, which had been approved by Cabinet on 28th February, 2022 and Full Council on 7th March, 2022.

The commitments in the ADP were reflected in the Service Plans, attached at Appendix A to the report, together with proposed service improvement targets, which were attached at Appendix B to the report, to show how individual service areas would contribute to their achievement and overall delivery of the Council's four Wellbeing Objectives.

Having fully considered the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Service Plans (attached at Appendix A to the report) and all planned activities as they relate to the remit of this Committee (as illustrated in Appendix C to the report) be endorsed.

(2) T H A T the proposed service improvement targets for 2022/2023 (attached at Appendix B to the report) relating to the remit of this Committee be endorsed.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure that the Service Plans aligned to this Committee's remit are accurate, up to date and relevant and become the main document through which performance against the Corporate Plan's Annual Delivery Plan is monitored and measured during 2022/2023.

(2) To ensure the Council's Corporate Plan Performance Measurement Framework identifies a relevant set of performance measures and targets against

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which the Annual Delivery Plan can be monitored and measured during 2022/2023.

957 RECOMMENDATION REPORT OF THE COST OF SCHOOLING TASK AND FINISH GROUP (CX) -

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the Group's findings and to seek approval for the drafted Good Practice Guidance (attached at Appendix A to the report) to be referred to Cabinet for their approval.

The Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group in January 2020 to review the costs to parents and carers of sending their children to school. The Group had subsequently heard evidence from pupils attending school in the Vale of Glamorgan, parents whose children attended a range of Vale of Glamorgan Schools, and Local Authority Officers who had been involved in tackling challenges around the affordability of schooling, digital exclusion and period dignity, particularly in light of the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The report summarised the work undertaken by the group and presented a draft of suggested Good Practice Guidance based on their findings. Subject to Committee and Cabinet's approval, the report recommended that the drafted Good Practice Guidance be circulated to the Governing Bodies and Head Teachers of all Vale of Glamorgan schools.

Following the Chair's presentation of the report, Members of the Group stated that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken, and that they felt the views of pupils, staff and parents as heard by the Group had been represented well in the Guidance. Members hoped the Guidance would offer alternative ideas to schools regarding how to mitigate the costs of schooling and discourage any policies which exacerbated the issue.

Councillor R.M. Birch suggested that the matter should be revisited on an annual basis in order that Committee could be informed whether governing bodies had taken heed of the Guidance issued, and offer them an opportunity to respond to it if they wished to. The Chair noted that a number of Committee Members sat on governing bodies at various schools, and it would be interesting for them to observe how the Guidance was received.

With permission to speak, the Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration thanked Committee for the in-depth, constructive report and advised that she would be delighted to take it to Cabinet should that be Committee's recommendation. She added that she met up frequently with a network of Secondary school councils and suggested that the report could be added to an agenda for the network's discussion in order that feedback could be obtained directly from pupils regarding whether the Guidance was being implemented or not.

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Having fully considered and discussed the report and Guidance, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted, and that the draft Good Practice Guidance (attached at Appendix A to the report) be endorsed subject to any amendments agreed by Committee.
- (2) T H A T the report and draft Good Practice Guidance, as endorsed by Committee, be referred to Cabinet for their consideration and approval.
- (3) T H A T the Good Practice Guidance, subject to approval by Cabinet, be circulated to all Governing Bodies and Head Teachers in Vale of Glamorgan schools and be made publicly available on the Council's website

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In order that Committee can consider the Group's findings and collectively agree the contents of any Guidance to be referred to Cabinet.
- (2) In order that Cabinet can consider the Good Practice Guidance agreed by Committee based on the Task and Finish Group's findings and determine whether the Guidance be approved for further circulation.
- (3) In order that Good Practice Guidance is made available to schools and residents of the Vale of Glamorgan, and families are assisted in mitigating the financial burden associated with the cost of schooling.