

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 8th December, 2022.

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

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

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillor H.M. Payne (Vice-Chair in the Chair from Agenda Item No. 5); Councillors A. Asbrey, W. Gilligan, E.J. Goodjohn, W.A. Hennessy, N.P. Hodges, J. Lynch-Wilson, N. Marshallsea, J.M Norman and E. Penn.

Co-Opted Members: R. Morteo (Church in Wales); Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church) and R. Goodjohn (Vale Youth Forum).

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) and E. Goodjohn.

538 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.”

539 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor R. Godfrey and L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector).

540 MINUTES –

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

541 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor H.M. Payne declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 8 – Youth Service Update 2021-2022. The nature of the interest was Llamau was mentioned in the Youth Service Report page 5 point 2.10 in relation to the Emphasis Project. She did not manage this project and had declared previously as she was a Projects Manager in the Vale of Glamorgan.

542 CURRICULUM FOR WALES: JOURNEY 2022 – AUTUMN TERM 2022 UPDATE –

The presentation was provided by the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service's (CSCJES) Principal Improvement Partner; Associate Advisor for Welsh Language Professional Learning and Associate Advisor for Welsh Development and apprised the Committee on work of the service regarding promotion of the Welsh language.

A section focused on how bilingualism was promoted at Llantwit Major School and was presented by the School's Head of Welsh and Welsh Language Charter Lead who advised, in response to a query from the Vice-Chair, that bilingualism helped promote equality generally among pupils at the school. The Committee commended the approach taken to bilingualism at the school, and in response to Committee Members' requests the Head of Welsh and Welsh Language Charter Lead and the Principal Improvement Partner advised on ways in which such methods could be shared with other Vale of Glamorgan schools to enhance Welsh language provision.

After thanking the CSCJES and the school for the presentation, the Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Curriculum for Wales Welsh Language presentation and supplementary information be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the presentation and supplementary information.

543 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 17th November, 2022 and appended report were presented by the Director for Learning and Skills. Following the Director's presentation, the Vice-Chair asked whether the voices of vulnerable young people who were not engaging with any of the Council's services or education, would be captured. In response, the Director and Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing advised that this would be incorporated into forthcoming service plans which were currently in development, along with details around increasing mental health and wellbeing services within schools, with the aim of preventing young people from falling out of school provision.

With no further questions or comments, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Cabinet Reference and appended Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and report on the Council's Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24.

544 LEARNING AND SKILLS INVESTMENT STRATEGY (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 17th November, 2022 and appended report was presented by the Project Manager for Strategy.

Having fully considered the Cabinet reference and report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Cabinet Reference and appended Learning and Skills Investment Strategy report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and report on the Council's Learning and Skills Investment Strategy.

545 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING MID YEAR REPORT (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 17th November, 2022 and appended report were presented by the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing. Following the officer's presentation Councillor Marshallsea asked what action could be taken to address outstanding Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for Elected Members, and whether these could be made mandatory. In response, the officer advised that the vast majority of the Council's Elected Members had started the DBS check process, and that whilst making DBS checks legally mandatory was difficult, it was possible for the Council to take the view that they were required. The officer agreed to take the issue up with the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group.

The Vice-Chair commended the standard of safeguarding training that Elected Members of the Council had received. In addition, the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing advised that the expectation was that all designated safeguarding School Governors would undertake Level 2 safeguarding training, and conversations were underway with schools to arrange for the two such governors with outstanding training to receive theirs.

In response to a query from Councillor Norman, the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing confirmed that safeguarding training should be updated every two years by Elected Members of the Council, and that a shorter period than

other Councils had been adopted in the Vale of Glamorgan Council's policy to reflect the changing landscape of the topic.

Councillor Hennessy subsequently asked whether safeguarding training should also be mandatory and whether the Council could encourage Welsh Government to make it so. In response, the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing advised that they would welcome a move to mandating the training but again noted that making this a legal requirement was difficult to put in place. They added that for those whose work necessitated unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups, this was already the case.

Having considered the report, Scrutiny Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Cabinet Reference and appended Corporate Safeguarding Mid-Year Report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Mid-Year Report.

546 YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE 2021-2022 (DSS) –

The report was presented by the Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing and the Youth Service Engagement Manager to update Members of the progress made by the Youth Service during the year.

The Youth Service achieved the Silver Youth Work Quality Mark, a progression from achieving the renewal of Bronze award last year. The Youth Service adapted significantly in response to the Covid pandemic and implemented 'new ways of working' post COVID, focusing on new innovative approaches to service delivery. An emphasis had been placed on developing a new youth led forum.

The Youth Service ensured European Social Fund (ESF) programmes Inspire to Achieve (I2A) and Inspire to Work (I2W) both continued to operate across the Vale, supporting young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Closure plans were underway for December 2022.

The Vale of Glamorgan had performed well in terms of delivery of accredited outcomes to ensure young people engaged effectively with the Youth Service. The Pupil Engagement Team had been established to support schools with young people who were unable to maintain full time educational provision in a mainstream school setting. The functions relating to the Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) framework now resided within the remit of the Youth Service.

The Targeted team had undergone a reshaping as a consequence of the loss of ESF funding. This would ensure they were still able to deliver on the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) for NEET prevention.

Following the Officers' presentation the Leader of the Council thanked the team involved in undertaking such successful work to support so many young people to enjoy a positive and constructive future. In addition, they welcomed receiving the views of school pupil councils, and recognised the importance of ensuring young people's voices were heard when making policy.

In response to queries from Councillor Penn, the Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing advised that while accessing the views of young people from more vulnerable groups was challenging, school councils now represented a more diverse range of pupils that had previously been the case.

Regarding services available to young people who were homeless or in temporary accommodation, the Engagement Manager advised that the Council had provided a range of support to young people in such positions, including decorating homes, providing furnishings and assistance with food and support with access to employment, and that this illustrated the flexibility of funding used in tailoring services to individual needs.

In response to a query from Councillor Norman, the Senior Youth Manager for Universal Provision confirmed that following challenges due to the pandemic, Llantwit Major Youth Club had now reopened and work was ongoing to further increase awareness of this and to increase attendance. The officer confirmed that the Council's mobile youth provision was also back in operation and was attending multiple locations to engage with young people. Officers also notified Committee of a variety of recent events supporting youth throughout the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Vice-Chair subsequently commended the Youth Service on the progress made and invited them to approach the Committee, should there be any issues which Members could help with. Committee thanked officers for the successful work of the service throughout financial and other challenges, and subsequently:

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made by the Youth Service in the last 12 months and the ongoing developments and achievements of the service be noted.
- (2) T H A T a further progress update about ongoing delivery, alongside awareness of grants and potential risks, be received in 12 months (November 2023).

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report in relation to the Council's strategic responsibility for implementing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework to reduce the number of young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEETs).
- (2) To ensure that Members of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee continue to have oversight of the Youth Service.

547 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2022/23 (DSS) –

The purpose of the report, which was presented by the Director of Learning and Skills, was to present Quarter 2 performance results for the period 1st April to 30th September, 2022 in delivering the 2022/23 Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

All 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q2 to reflect the good progress made to date in meeting the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2022/23. 93% (353/380) of planned activities outlined in our Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance reflecting the positive progress made during the quarter, 2% (7) of planned activities were attributed an Amber status and 5% (20) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 128 performance measures aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 27 measures where a performance status was applicable. 59% (16) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 11% (3) Amber status and 30% (8), Red status. A performance status was not applicable for 101 measures with 22 of these relating to measures establishing baseline performance for 2022/23, a further 67 relating to measures which were monitored annually and for 12 measures no update was provided.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, 97% (68 out of 70) were attributed a Green performance status, and 3% (2) were attributed a Red status. Of the 5 measures reported, 40% (2) were attributed a Green performance status and 60% (3) were attributed Red status.

This quarter the performance exceptions had been revised to reflect the changes requested by Elected Members following a workshop in July 2022 on performance monitoring of the Annual Delivery Plan. For ease of reference, performance exceptions aligned to the Scrutiny Committee's remit now highlighted the current status of red performing actions identified in the previous quarter to show direction of travel, that was whether proposed remedial actions had been undertaken to progress these actions.

The report sought Members' consideration of Q2 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

Following the Director's presentation, the Vice-Chair together with Councillors Marshallsea and Penn, commended the valuable support for families offered by the Council's timely rollout of free school meals for all primary school aged children.

The Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing also highlighted work carried out during the pandemic to ensure children eligible for free school meals received food provision at home.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 commitments, as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing 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.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet our performance requirements as outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflecting the requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

548 AUDIT WALES NATIONAL STUDY: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (EIAS): MORE THAN A TICK BOX EXERCISE? (DCR) -

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Members of the findings of Audit Wales's national study which looked at the overall approach to undertaking EIAs in public bodies in Wales.

As part of the national audit work programme for 2021/22, the Auditor General for Wales looked at the approaches of 44 public bodies (subject to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) in undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), with a particular focus on identifying good or interesting practice and any common areas for improvement. The "Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs): More Than a Tick Box Exercise?", (attached at Appendix A to the report) highlighted the key findings of this work. The review concluded that positively, many public bodies use non-statutory guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Equality Impact Assessment in Wales Practice Hub to shape their approaches, however, EIAs were not being used to their full potential, especially in terms of promoting equality and cohesion. Key areas for improvement identified were:

- Greater clarity over which type of policies and practices must be impact assessed.
- Greater clarity about expectations to consider the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of an integrated impact assessment
- Better and more timely identification of the practical impacts of decisions on people and how different protected characteristics intersect.
- More engagement and involvement of people with protected characteristics.
- Better monitoring of the actual impacts of policies and practices on people.
- A shift in the mindsets and cultures that moves EIAs away from being seen as an add-on 'tick box' exercise.

Four recommendations were made, one specifically aimed at public bodies, to review their current approach for conducting EIAs:

- R4: Public bodies should review their overall approach to EIAs considering the findings of this report and the detailed guidance available from the EHRC and the Practice Hub. We recognise that developments in response to our other recommendations and the Welsh Government's review of the Public Sector Equality Duty Wales specific regulations may have implications for current guidance in due course.

In response to the above recommendation, the Director of Corporate Resources and the Corporate Equalities Officer would progress a review of the Council's EIA process within the next six months (by May 2013) and put in place a variety of actions to promote the process and its use within the organisation over the coming year (by December 2023). In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, progress against the regulatory improvement areas would be monitored via the Insight Tracker. All Scrutiny Committees would continue to be informed of progress against the regulatory improvement areas through quarterly performance monitoring arrangements. This would be supplemented with a six monthly and annual review of regulatory progress, which would be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet for final oversight. Progress would also be monitored by Audit Wales as part of the Council's annual audit work programme.

Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee members were being asked to consider the contents of the report including the Council's response, with any recommendations / comments being referred to Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter, onto Cabinet for their consideration and endorsement of the proposed actions to address the recommendation.

Following the Director's presentation and in light of issues previously highlighted to Committee around how anxiety had negatively impacted some pupils' reintegration into school settings post-pandemic, the Vice-Chair advised that they would welcome further emphasis on mental health-related disability, as an aspect of potential inequality.

With no further queries or comments, Scrutiny Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the contents of both the covering and appended Audit Wales report be noted.

(2) T H A T the following comment be referred to the Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter on to Cabinet for its consideration and endorsement of the Council's proposed actions to address the Audit Wales recommendation (R4):

- Committee consider that mental health inequality is under-reported and this issue has a significant impact on the population and workforce. Therefore, a focus on mental health-related disability is importantly needed in Equality Impact Assessments. This is particularly important in light of the post-pandemic world and the difficulty in re-engaging some young people and adults back into school or work.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the covering report on the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report to conduct a review of its Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) process within the next six months (by May 2023) and put in place a variety of actions to promote the process and its use within the organisation over the coming year (by December 2023).

(2) To ensure that both the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet are aware of the Committee's comment prior to their final oversight of the Council's six monthly and annual review of regulatory progress.