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LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 18th March, 2024.

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); Councillors A. Asbrey, W. Gilligan, R.E. Godfrey, E.J. Goodjohn, W.A. Hennessy, N.P. Hodges, J. Lynch-Wilson, J.M. Norman and E. Penn.

Co-Opted Members: R. Morteo (Church in Wales), M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector), G. van der Burgt (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector), R. Goodjohn (Vale Youth Forum); J. Clemett and T. Williams (Vale Youth Council).

Also present: Councillors J. Aviet, R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language), L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), C.P. Franks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, N.C. Thomas and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

944 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”.

945 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor N.B. Marshallsea.

946 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor R.R. Thomas declared a personal but not a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 9 – Annual Report for SACRE / SAC 2022-2023 (Standing Advisory Council For Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council). The nature of the personal interest being that he was a member of SACRE having been appointed by the Local Authority and the report was an annual overview.

Councillor E.J. Goodjohn declared a personal but not a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 9 – Annual Report for SACRE / SAC 2022-2023 (Standing Advisory Council For Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council). The nature

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of the personal interest being that a family member had been appointed to SACRE by the Local Authority and the report was an annual overview.

R. Goodjohn, declared a personal but not a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 9 - Annual Report For SACRE/SAC 2022-2023 (Standing Advisory Council For Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council). The nature of the personal interest being that a family member had been appointed to SACRE by the Local Authority and the report was an annual overview.

947 CURRICULUM FOR WALES UPDATE –

The Central South Consortium (CSC) representatives shared a PowerPoint presentation entitled “Support for Literacy, Languages and Communications in Welsh Medium Schools in the Vale of Glamorgan” highlighting the various aspects of the work and also detailing the shared understanding of progress in literacy skills in the Bro Morgannwg cluster. The Committee were further advised that the cluster would also receive the CSC’s support in raising learners literacy standards during the next term in respect of Welsh reading skills and Welsh writing skills, to continue facilitating school to school collaboration, ensure that there is a shared understanding of progress in developing literacy, languages and communication skills and provide professional learning on raising writing standards in all the Welsh medium schools.

A short video presentation developed by Wick and Marcross School in relation to Welsh learning was also shared with the Committee.

Crays Pritchard Principal Improvement Planner for the CSC, stated that Partnership and Collaborative Working was fundamentally important to the work of the CSC with the video and presentation detailing how such was progressing.

Councillor Asbrey, in referring to the reference to bespoke support available, sought further information as to what this would entail. In response the Principal Improvement Planner advised that the CSC would develop a model for each individual school on request that met the needs of the particular school.

Councillor Hodges commented that he welcomed all progress and the opportunities being afforded to gain fluency, however his concern was the different styles of teaching for progressing Welsh in English medium schools as opposed to Welsh medium schools, with his question also being how far could pupils in English medium schools actually take forward their Welsh. Mathias Maurer (Associate Advisor for Welsh in English and Welsh Medium Schools) said that this was an issue and the definition of fluency was difficult to determine. However, it was important that Welsh language was seen as a living language that pupils were confident with. Mr. Maurer who had himself learnt Welsh, further stated that he had been working with English medium schools on how to integrate Welsh into schools commenting that the new programme had been published in the summer term to try and address such concerns. It was important he said that practical opportunities existed but recognised that it would take time to embed, although he could advise Members that the feedback to date had been excellent.

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Having regard to the information provided to the Committee, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T all the Central South Consortium representatives be thanked for their presentation and that the good work outlined continue to be progressed.

Reason for recommendation

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

948 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM: ANNUAL LOCAL AUTHORITY SCRUTINY REPORT 2022-23 (DLS) –

The Principal Improvement Partner of the Central South Consortium (CSC) presented the report, advising that the purpose of which was to update Members on the work of CSC and its contribution to school improvement in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Appendix A to the report provided an overview of the work of the CSC and updated Members on the contributions of the CSC and the work being undertaken in partnership with the Local Authority (LA) to raise standards in schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. The work of the CSC, the officer stated, played a vital role in the delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to schools. Since 2012 the CSC had delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five Authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. The report detailed the work of the Consortium for the academic year September 2022 to 2023 and the financial year April 2022 to April 2023.

During the meeting reference was made to seven schools in the Vale which had received enhanced monitoring, it being noted that two out of the seven had now moved back to core support at the end of the last academic year.

Subsequently, Councillor Hodges acknowledged that the report was an overview of the work of the CSC and that it brought all aspects together in one place. The Chair then sought information from those presenting the report, regarding the advantages of the CSC's services to schools being provided by the CSC, as opposed to by the Local Authority itself. In response, it was noted that through sharing experience, and the efforts of the Improvement Partners in working collaboratively, the CSC was able to provide a comprehensive learning programme, and bespoke support where necessary. It was noted that their economies of scale assisted the work of the Consortium with Local Authorities and again, the Principal Improvement Planner for Curriculum advised that the CSC was the only region in Wales that could support all areas because of its economies of scale.

In referring to the report and the references at pages 7 and 8 relating to Pencoedre High School, Councillor Payne sought an update on the Committee's

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previous request to visit the school. The Chair stated that he would look to arrange a site visit to be undertaken after the Easter school holidays, with the Principal Improvement Partner also advising that Estyn outcomes and progress of schools would be reported to the April Scrutiny Committee. Committee was also advised that a new executive headteacher had been appointed for the school with the main focus for the school now being to consider the Post Inspection Action Plan and to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the school as well as opportunities identified to share and develop good practice.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Central South Consortium be thanked for a detailed report and that the report attached at Appendix A to the report outlining the Consortium's work be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

949 QUARTER 3 REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24 (DLS) –

The Finance Officer, in presenting the report, stated that the purpose of the report was for the Committee to consider the Quarter 3 revenue monitoring position for 2023/24. The revenue position for 2023/24 continued to reflect challenging demand and inflationary pressures, with increasing demand in respect of Children's and Adults Social Care and significant increases in the cost of placements and care packages and Support for Additional Learning Needs continued to be an area of significant pressure within Learning and Skills. The Council was also experiencing continued inflationary pressures in respect of School Transport. Across services inflationary pressures were also being experienced in respect of pay, most notably where market forces were being utilised and for the funding gap between provision for the 2023/24 pay award and the flat rate pay award for 2023/24.

The report outlined that the Council had identified a number of steps to be taken in year to help mitigate this emerging overspend and safeguard reserves, this included tighter controls on expenditure and recruitment and a review of the Capital Programme. The Corporate Resources Directorate had identified a potential underspend of £285k to be offset against emerging overspends and there was a projected underspend of £1m against Council Tax income due to the projected collection of arrears, new properties, changes in allowances and premiums on empty homes in addition to surpluses on investment income and borrowing costs.

Challenging savings and efficiency targets had been set for 2023/24; this included a target of £2.75m for schools and £4.628m of Corporate savings. The progress against these savings targets was reflected in the Appendix to the report.

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It being noted that 22 schools had submitted a deficit budget with 19 of those being non-recoverable budgets, Councillor Hodges referred to his concerns in relation to the fact that redundancies in his view were inevitable and sought further information on figures for redundancies for Members' information. The Director of Learning and Skills advised that the redundancy figures for the previous year had totalled 31, with only one of those being a compulsory redundancy. No figures for 2024/25 were yet available and as soon as the information was available this would be forwarded to Members.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the Authority's 2023/24 Revenue Budget be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Budget Virements for 2023/24 presented in the report be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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

950 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST DECEMBER 2023 (DLS) –

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the progress on the 2023/24 Capital Programme for the period 1st April to 31st December, 2023 within their remit. Details on a scheme by scheme basis were shown at Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate and the report also set out any requested changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme.

The report noted the current approved Programme of £103.677m, with it being noted that this was unlikely to be delivered with slippage being requested of £7.692m with a forecast outturn of £96.763m. Schemes would also be closely monitored over the coming months with officers continuing to work with project managers and sponsors to ensure value for money and that all possible funding opportunities were identified and fully explored.

The Chair, enquiring about the progress in relation to the £300k ringfenced monies for the centre at Pencoedtre which had been reported previously to Committee, was advised by the Finance Officer that feasibility studies were needed to be worked up with further information to be provided to the Committee in due course.

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RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2023/24 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee as contained in Appendix 1 attached to the report, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers within the remit of the Committee, detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the changes to the 2023/24 Capital Programme and future years' Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, summarised in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6 and detailed within the body of the report from paragraph 2.14 be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

951 SERVICE PLANS AND TARGET SETTING TO DELIVER THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2024/25 (DLS) –

The Director of Learning and Skills, in presenting the report, advised that Members' endorsement was sought in respect of the priority actions as reflected in the Service Plans and proposed service performance targets for the period 2024/2025 that would deliver the Council's Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) within the remit of the Committee.

The report presented the planned service activities (as outlined in Service Plans) and associated performance targets within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee. These were the Committee's specific areas of focus associated with the delivery of the Council's ADP for 2024/2025 as aligned to the four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. (attached at Appendices A and B to the report).

Progressing the ADP would help to meet statutory obligations under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Both pieces of legislation placed specific duties on the Council in relation to reviewing and setting objectives, keeping performance under review and reporting on performance, with a focus on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

In line with statutory duties the relevance of the Well-being Objectives were continually reviewed. As a result, going forward into 2024/2025, the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and the associated commitments outlined in the ADP 2024/2025 (contained in the background papers to the report) were assured as relevant in delivering improved outcomes for Vale of Glamorgan citizens and contributed to the national Well-being Goals.

All Scrutiny Committees had considered a draft ADP in December 2023 and their views, together with those of other key stakeholders, had informed the final Plan,

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which was endorsed by Cabinet on 22nd February, 2024 and approved by Full Council on 6th March, 2024.

The commitments in the ADP 2024/25 were reflected in 16 Service Plans which were provided for information in the background papers to the report. Those Plans showed how individual service areas would contribute to achievement and overall delivery of the four Well-being Objectives and how resources would be deployed to do so. In line with the Annual Performance Calendar, the report advised that Members had continued to help shape the way in which performance related activity and reports were presented to support them in their critical friend challenge role. Feedback from the recent workshop (relating to the Committee specific presentation of Service Plan activities and performance targets) in February 2024, had been reflected in the approach to this year's reports.

Scrutiny Committee Members were asked to review the contributions from services (through planned activities and proposed performance measures and associated targets) as relevant to this Committee's remit that would support achievement of the ADP commitments for the period 2024/25 which were set out in Appendices A and B to the report.

Upon review, Members were also requested to recommend to Cabinet the planned activities and associated service performance targets as relevant to the Committee's remit as the primary means against which performance for the ADP 2024/25 would be monitored, measured and reported quarterly as set out in Appendices A and B to the report.

In considering the report Councillor Goodjohn sought the detail in relation to ADP 19 with the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing advising that this appeared to be a clerical error and that the required information would be added and despatched to Committee Members and Cabinet for information. With regard to ADP 18 and 20, again following a request for further information, the officer advised that when the Committee would be considering the Service Plan progress during the year, it would be receiving the detail at that time.

Councillor Hodges, in recognising that the position was in its early days and that a lot of information was not as yet available he however considered that there various aspects of the document that although related to other Scrutiny Committees was actually relevant to this Committee, in particular place making and its cultural aspects, suggesting that such information be also considered by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee going forward. The Chair asked the Director to ensure that such information was available to the Scrutiny Committee going forward with the Director agreeing to take the request back for consideration.

Councillor Payne, in referring to ADP 21 – sustainable transport, sought an update on how progress was being made with the promotion of active travel around schools and potential solutions being considered due to the amount of cars present on school runs and it also being a safeguarding issue. The Director of Learning and Skills stated that she would forward the query to the Neighbourhood Services Directorate to ascertain what information could be brought back to the

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Committee as an update on the work that was currently being undertaken in regard to such matters.

Having regard to discussions at the meeting, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the planned service activities for 2024/25, relating to the remit of the Committee and set out in Appendix A to the report, be endorsed.
- (2) T H A T the proposed measures and service performance targets for 2024/2025, relating to the remit of the Committee and set out in Appendix B to the report, be endorsed.
- (3) T H A T Cabinet be informed going forward of the Scrutiny Committee's requests to receive information for consideration, as outlined above, relating to cultural aspects and sustainable travel options being considered in relation to schools.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report to ensure that the planned activities aligned to the 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 2024/2025.
- (2) To ensure the Council's Corporate Plan Performance Measurement Framework identifies a relevant set of performance measures and targets against which the Annual Delivery Plan can be monitored and measured during 2024/2025.
- (3) To inform Cabinet of the Committee's request for such information to be presented for its consideration.

952 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DLS) –

The report was presented the purpose of which being to advise in respect of Quarter 3 (Q3) performance results for the period 1st April to 31st December, 2023 in delivering the 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. The performance report also presented progress at Q3 (1st April to 31st December, 2023) towards achieving the ADP (2023/24) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Due to current capacity challenges within the Corporate Performance Team, the format for the Q3 ADP Monitoring Report had been revised temporarily, to enable continued information to be provided Elected Members with an overview of

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progress in delivering the ADP commitments as aligned to the remit of each Scrutiny Committee.

The presentation appended at Appendix A to the report provided a summary of progress against the ADP commitments for 2023/24 as aligned to the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Payne enquired as to statistics available on the usage of libraries, initiatives being undertaken in all libraries, and whether they differed, and requested that a future report in relation to the services provided by libraries be brought to a future meeting of the Committee and that this be added to the Committee's work programme.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Quarter 3 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 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.
- (3) T H A T a future report on the usage of libraries and initiatives that are being undertaken in libraries be presented to a future meeting of the Committee and that this request be added to the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report to ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.
- (2) To ensure the Council was effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements, as outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and reflecting the requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in that it maximised its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.
- (3) In order that a report can be provided to a future meeting.

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953 ANNUAL REPORT FOR SACRE/SAC 2022-2023 (STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION) / SAC (STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL) (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 22nd February, 2024 was presented to the Committee, which summarised the activities of SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council) as detailed in the draft SACRE / SAC Annual Report for 2022-23.

The Local Authority was required to agree and ratify a SACRE / SAC Annual Report and once ratified was required to be published.

Cabinet had considered the report at its meeting on 22nd February, 2024 and had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration, it being noted that if the Scrutiny Committee made no further comments the Annual Report was considered to be agreed and ratified for publication.

The Chair, in noting that there were four vacancies on the SACRE Committee, enquired as to what efforts were being made to fill such vacancies, with the Director of Learning and Skills advising that she would obtain such information and email Members accordingly.

There being no further comments, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Annual Report for SACRE / SAC 2022-2023 attached at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

There being no further comments to be reported to Cabinet and it being noted that if the report was accepted by the Scrutiny Committee it would be ratified for publication.