

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors:

L.R. Bowen, K.V. Broom, I.W. Davies, R.E. Evans (In place of E.G. Thomas), J.P. Jenkins, D. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, S. Najmi, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, B. Thomas and D.T. Williams

Mrs V. Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative

Also in attendance:

Councillor G. Davies, Executive Board Member for Education & Children

Also present as an observer:

Councillor J. Prosser

The following Officers were in attendance:

Mr G. Morgans	-	Director of Education & Children's Services
Mr A. Morgan	-	Head of Education Services
Mr A. Rees	-	Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing
Mr D. Astins	-	Strategic Development Manager
Mr S. Davies	-	Modernisation Services Manager
Mr M. Morden	-	Learning Transformation Manager
Mrs M. Evans Thomas	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 10.00 am - 1.00 pm.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B. Jones, G. Jones and E.G. Thomas; Mrs Jean Voyle-Williams (Church in Wales representative) and Mrs Kate Hill and Mrs Alex Pickles (Parent Governor Members).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Councillor D. Price	Minute No. 10 – MEP Proposal to Increase the Capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School From 110 to 210	He is the Local Member and a member of Gorslas Community Council who are in discussions with the County Council regarding the site.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE & ACHIEVEMENT 2016/17.

The Committee considered the School Performance & Achievement Report for 2016/17 which provided an overview of the following key areas of school provision and pupil achievement:-

- Quantitative school performance and attendance data;
- External qualitative judgements (Estyn);
- Values and skills achievement in Carmarthenshire schools.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the fact that the data is very difficult to analyse and the Head of Education Services explained that there is further data available which may be of assistance in understanding the figures;
- Reference was made to the statement in the report indicating that the data demonstrates a significant increase in absence due to pupil illness and officers were asked whether this suggested that there is more illness in Wales than anywhere else? The Head of Education Services explained that caution was needed when reading the sickness absence data. A small percentage increase could impact quite heavily on the national picture. It can also be difficult to achieve good attendance for all children, however, our processes in partnership with the Education Welfare Service are gaining ground without having to resort to prosecutions every time. Headteachers are pleased with the approach being taken by the county and the Director of Education & Children pointed out that it was essential for all headteachers to be consistent in how they deal with requests for holidays during term time. He informed the Committee that he was pleased that progress is being made;
- It was pointed out that school registers are closed at 9.00 a.m. and if any pupil arrives after that they are marked as absent and concern was expressed that this was difficult in rural areas and more consistency is needed;
- Reference was made to the Key Stage 4 Level 2 Inclusive target of 65.2% for 2017/18 and officers were asked if this was realistic when taking account of our present position. The Head of Education Services agreed that the target of 65.2% was a challenge and agreed, based on revised national examination arrangements, that it should and will be reviewed;
- Officers were asked how the lack of progress in the Foundation Phase can be addressed and whether this can be attributed to the problems being experienced with filling primary posts. The Head of Education Services explained that there was no definitive answer. Recruitment to the profession remains a challenge nationally. He added that it was important to consider how and if teacher assessments are being implemented consistently across Wales. Much work has been undertaken to strengthen this. We are now facing a period of ensuring greater emphasis on measuring 'pupil progress' over time. The Foundation Phase Officer works directly with schools to support local needs and ensure our focus is placed in the right areas. Carmarthenshire also encourages high levels of 'school-to-school' collaboration in support of this and other areas of activity.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND DATA CONTEXTUAL PAPER - 2016/17.

The Committee considered the School Leadership and Contextual Paper 2016/17, which highlighted some of the current challenges facing our schools and the Education Service, and provided an overview of contextual school data and leadership arrangements as follows:-

(1) School statistics

- (a) Number of schools/pupils
- (b) Number of pupils (Wales)
- (c) Number of pupils in Welsh schools
- (d) Number of teachers/support staff (fte)
- (e) Free school meals (all pupils)
- (f) Free school meals (5-15 age range)
- (g) Additional Learning Needs
- (h) Absenteeism (primary)
- (i) Absenteeism (secondary)
- (j) Financial reserves
- (k) NEETS (not in education, employment or training)

(2) School Federation Footprint

(3) Acting HT/Leadership Footprint

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Officers were asked about delays in providing special educational needs to children once the need has been established. The Head of Education Services explained that the team responds swiftly to any flagged up need and if any delays do occur they tend to be of a specific nature. Each school's progress on this is monitored and there are Family Liaison Officers in place to support schools, families and children;
- Asked if there were any trends apparent from the data, the Director of Education & Children informed the Committee that one of the trends in Carmarthenshire over the past five years is the reduction in the number of children who are statemented. 500 less children have been statemented and that is due to the additional support provide to schools;
- Asked how needs and training are identified, the Head of Education Services explained that the Authority works very closely with the Cynnydd Programme and officers intervene where necessary. The Learning Transformation Manager added that the Local Authority has a responsibility to develop a programme of actions, the Youth Engagement Framework, in partnership with voluntary organisations. The Cymorth Project also offers a range of interventions whereby young people in KS3, KS4 and school leavers can be identified, tracked and engaged with;
- Concern was expressed that there may be too many schools in Carmarthenshire and the consequential effect on the budget this causes. With this in mind, officers were asked what the intention is with regards to federation as there are currently only four formal federations in the county. The Director of Education & Children explained that this is a concern for

officers as there are a number of challenges and pressures on staff in administering 98 primary schools, some of which cannot perform within their allocated budget. Officers were currently working on a report dealing with this challenge which will be presented to the Executive Board for consideration. He stressed that officers have to look at every possible option before the decision is made to close a school;

- Concern was expressed over the difficulties being encountered in recruiting headteachers which will be compounded by the number of headteachers who will be retiring over the next few years. The Head of Education Services informed the Committee that there are currently 16 teachers on the National Professional Qualification for Headship programme who will hopefully graduate at the end of February. This is an encouraging number for Carmarthenshire and bodes well for our succession planning processes. The NPQH programme has been refined and improved. From now on it was hoped and anticipated that two cohorts will graduate every year thus ensuring that we will have enough potential headteachers with the appropriate qualifications in our 'Carmarthenshire Headteacher resource bank. He conceded that there was still quite a challenge in recruiting secondary school headteachers. The Authority is participating in the WG pilot on School Business Managers which it is hoped will develop more efficient practices across our schools removing unnecessary workload from the Headteacher.

RESOLVED

6.1 that the report be received;

6.2 that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee on the steps being taken by the Authority to attract more people into teaching and to attract more teachers to progress to become headteachers.

7. CARMARTHENSHIRE 11-19 CURRICULUM REVIEW UPDATE.

The Committee was informed that the Carmarthenshire 11-19 Curriculum Review was undertaken during the 2015/16 academic year following extensive consultation with staff within the Local Authority, secondary schools, Coleg Sir Gâr and a range of external organisations including the Welsh Government.

Following consultation, the Carmarthenshire 11-19 Curriculum Review was considered by the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee on 17th June, 2016 and approved by the Executive Board on 17th October, 2017.

Since the approval of the review, officers have been progressing a range of actions linked to the recommendations within the document and the action plan provided an update on the work undertaken.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROGRESS REPORT TO DECEMBER 2017.

The Committee considered the Modernising Education Programme (MEP) progress report which provided an update to December 2017 for Band A and accelerated Band B 21st Century School schemes.

Currently, 69% (11 out of 16) projects have Welsh Government (WG) Full Business Case approval. Approximately 48% (£20.6m) of the Band A funding (£43.35m) was claimed and spent by the end of the 2016/17 financial year.

A couple of projects in development in Band A were causing concern as a result of some issues in relation to public objection to preferred sites and complex statutory processes. The WG's recent announcement regarding revising the School Organisation Code to include a presumption against closure for rural schools will make completing statutory processes more difficult and time consuming as Local Authorities will need to demonstrate that they have explored all federation options before proposing to reorganise. Some schools identified as rural in the consultation on the new School Organisation Code are included in a project currently in Band A.

In order to mitigate the risk of delay, projects identified in Band B of the MEP programme are being developed early for acceleration should it be concluded that Band A projects will not be in a position to claim WG grant by March 2019.

The following questions was raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the fact that there is funding in place for the programme for two more years and officers were asked if they are confident that money will be available in the budget after that. The Modernisation Services Manager explained that the Band A profile is fully funded in the capital programme and business cases are submitted to the Welsh Government for the grant of match funding. There is some match funding in the 5 year capital programme for Band B which, similar to Band A, will proceed on a business case approval basis.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE NURSERY PROVISION AT YSGOL PARC-Y-TYWYN BY INCREASING ITS AGE RANGE FROM 4-11 TO 3-11.

At the meeting held on 28th September, 2017 (minute 14 refers) the Committee considered a report detailing a proposal to standardise the Local Authority nursery provision in the areas of Burry Port and Pembrey.

From 6th November to 17th December, 2017 a consultation period had been undertaken on the proposal to provide nursery provision at Ysgol Parc-y-Tywyn by increasing the age range from 4-11 to 3-1, the results of which were presented to Committee for consideration.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the fact that some private providers will be affected by this proposal and Cylch Meithrin had asked if they could be relocated to the new school. The Director of Education & Children explained that the

school will have its own nursery provision, however, a bid has been submitted to pilot the 30 hour offer so there will be opportunities for providers to work with our schools to meet that need. The impact on private providers has been recognised and officers are working with them to ameliorate the situation.

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RESOLVED

- 9.1 that the observations received and the Local Authority's responses following the consultation period be noted;**
- 9.2 to endorse to the Executive Board the publication of a Statutory Notice to implement the proposal to provide nursery provision at Ysgol Parc-y-Tywyn by increasing its age range from 4-11 to 3-11.**

10. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF GORSLAS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL FROM 110 TO 210.

[NOTE: Councillor D. Price, Chair, had earlier declared an interest in this item, however, he did not intend to speak on the matter.]

At the meeting held on 28th September, 2017 (minute 13 refers) the Committee considered a report detailing a proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School from 110 to 210.

From 6th November to 17th December, 2017 a formal consultation exercise was undertaken on the proposal, the results of which were presented to Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED

- 9.1 that the observations received and the Local Authority's responses following the consultation period be noted;**
- 9.2 to endorse to the Executive Board the publication of a Statutory Notice to implement the proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School from 110 to 210.**

11. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTIONS & REFERRALS UPDATE.

The Committee received a report detailing the progress achieved in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from meetings since 28th September, 2017.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

12. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Chair advised that further to his request for members to recommend potential topics for a Task & Finish Group review, it had been suggested that Early Years Play and Education would be an ideal topic. A report would be presented to the next meeting on the establishment of the Task & Finish Group to include remit, scope, membership etc.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on Wednesday, 14th March, 2018, to include a report on the establishment of a Task & Finish Group, be noted.

13. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:-

13.1. 27TH NOVEMBER, 2017;

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 27th November, 2017 be signed as a correct record.

13.2. 21ST DECEMBER, 2017.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 21st December, 2017 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE