

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4 September 2019

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors:

K.V. Broom, I.W. Davies, B.W. Jones, D. Jones, G.R. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, E.G. Thomas, D.M. Cundy (In place of B. Thomas) and C. Jones (In place of D.T. Williams)

J. Davies - Parent Governor

M. Jones - Parent Governor

V. Kenny - Roman Catholic Church Representative

Also in attendance:

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

The following Officers were in attendance:

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services

S. Davies, Head of Access to Education

A. Rees, Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing

A. Thomas, Head of Education Services and Inclusion

J. Buck, Performance and Information Officer

L. Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP. 2.00 - 3.30 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from L. Bowen, J. Jenkins, B. Thomas and D.T Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. **CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19**

The Director of Education and Children's Services gave an overview of the report and drew Member's attention to the relevant Wellbeing Objectives.

Members raised the following matters/questions in relation to the report –

In relation to the formatting and content of the report, Members observed that data relating to the National Survey Results noted in the report as 'due in June/July 2019' was not included despite the relevant data being available online. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the referenced data would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

Concerns were raised in relation to the school attendance figures on Page 36 of the report, which noted that primary school attendance in Carmarthenshire was the lowest in Wales, having reduced from 94.4% to 93.9% and from 21st to 22nd position nationally. Members asked for clarification on the measures in place to improve attendance. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the figures relate to data from 2017/18 and the department has already identified patterns in 2018/19 that are being addressed, and a letter will be sent to all parents and guardians encouraging full attendance. He further noted that the difference between the best and worst performing authorities was less than 2%. Members were advised that the Education Welfare Service had been remodelled and linked with the Education Safeguarding Officer, with the intention that the change will provide better support and improve the attendance of hard to reach and vulnerable children. Increased and focused support was given to Schools to manage absenteeism. Also in relation to the data under review, the Director of Education and Children's Services informed Members that the coding of absences was inconsistent, and training and guidance on consistency would be provided; however this would not guarantee an improvement. In previous years, responsibility for consistency with coding fell within the remit of Welsh Government, however it was now the responsibility of each individual local authority. Members were in agreement that the low attendance figures did not correspond with good performance in other areas.

Members asked for clarification on the new scoring system referenced on Page 41, which measured exam results for Year 11 Pupils. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that this was a new measure in place of the old system of measuring 5 GCSE results, which included Language and Maths. The new measure would score the best nine results. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that comparative data from previous years was available and would be included in the report on Provisional Examination Results

due to be presented at the next meeting. Data on attainment in relation to gender would also be included in the report.

In response to a question on the increase in the number of Year 11 and 13 pupils Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and the Year 13 provision, the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that significant work was being undertaken across departments to support NEETS. Currently European funding was being utilised to support this work, and in light of the current political situation, there were contingency plans to be put in place to continue with this work in the long term. He further noted that Year 13 provision was non-statutory, however authorities were required to provide at least 30 post-16 subjects which allowed for a broad curriculum. A focus on developing pupils as citizens and employees has moved to a re-assessment of the curriculum with a strong move towards vocational courses and making better informed choices. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that Year 11 pupils have been encouraged to consider what their options were and to understand where their choices could lead, particularly in relation to vocational courses and apprenticeships. He also noted that a number of apprenticeships were offered by the authority each year, and Community Benefits from contractors of the 21st Century Schools Programme also provided a number of opportunities for young people.

In relation to the performance measures for the Education and Children's Services Department, the Director of Education and Children's Services advised that budget cuts over the last three years had resulted in a reduction in staff and resources. The department continued to work to improve on the measures within the report, under the noted circumstances.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF PROVISION AT YSGOL Y DDWYLAN, YSGOL GRIFFITH JONES, YSGOL LLANGYNNWR AND YSGOL LLYS HYWEL

The Committee considered a report which outlined the observations received, and the Local Authority's responses following the consultation period and the publication of a statutory notice to implement the proposal to change the nature of provision at Ysgol Y Ddwylan, Ysgol Griffith Jones, Ysgol Llangynwr and Ysgol Llys Hywel.

Members raised the following matters/questions in relation to the report –

In addressing observations on the low level of responses and the methods of consultation, the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that at least two consultation events were held at each school and support materials were made available throughout the consultation. The Head of Access to Education noted that the School Organisation Code did not require face to face consultation and the

authority could fulfil the obligations of the code by preparing a bilingual online survey.

Members noted that the responses highlighted the lack of choice for parents who preferred an English only education, and asked for clarification on the support available to those wishing to move schools, in light of the changes to provision. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that on a general point of policy, there is no obligation to offer a choice of language. The authority's aim was for as many pupils as possible to be fully bilingual by age 11, and for that to be sustained during secondary education. The change of provision would support this aim.

Members raised concerns in relation to the support available to non-Welsh speaking parents in relation to supporting their children with their homework, and were advised by the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing that this was a common concern and the department were aware of the potential difficulties. References were made to the level of homework during the Foundation Phase, and noting that homework was set for the pupil and not the parents. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing further advised that the Welsh in Education Forum would continue to review the matter and would be open to suggestions from members on developing support in this area.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse to the Executive Board the publication of a Statutory Notice to implement the proposal to change the nature of provision at Ysgol Y Ddwylan, Ysgol Griffith Jones, Ysgol Llangynnwr and Ysgol Llys Hywel.

7. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF PROVISION AT YSGOL RHYS PRICHARD

The Committee considered a report which outlined the observations received, and the Local Authority's responses following the consultation period and the publication of a statutory notice to implement the proposal to change the nature of provision at Ysgol Rhys Pritchard.

Members acknowledged that the responses reflected similar issues to the previous Agenda item.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse to the Executive Board the publication of a Statutory Notice to implement the proposal to change the nature of provision at Ysgol Rhys Pritchard.

8. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received an Annual Report detailing the work of the Committee during the 2018/19 municipal year. The report had been prepared in accordance

with Article 6.2 of the Council's Constitution which requires Scrutiny Committees to prepare an annual report giving an account of the Committee's activities over the previous year.

The report provided an overview of the Committee's work programme and the key issues considered during the year including those issues referred to/from the Executive Board and other Scrutiny Committees. The report also provided details of development sessions and site visits arranged for the Committee as well as attendance data.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018/19 be endorsed.

9. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DRAFT PLANNING AND SCOPING DOCUMENT - FEDERATING SCHOOLS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

Members were given an overview of the scoping document and considered the planning arrangements outlined in the document. Consideration was given to attendance and the outline purpose of the review.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

- 9.1 that the Scoping Document be received;**
- 9.2 that the aims and scope of the work be endorsed;**
- 9.3 that all Members of the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee should attend the One Day Scrutiny on the 6th November 2019**
- 9.4 that the membership of the review group be as follows:-**
 - Cllr Ieuan Davies**
 - Mrs Melanie Davies**
 - Cllr Dot Jones**
 - Cllr Shahana Najmi/John Jenkins**
 - Cllr Darren Price (Chair)**
 - Cllr Kim Broom**
 - Cllr Jean Lewis**

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Chair gave an overview of the forthcoming items and asked that the report on Mental Health Provision in Education, should also contain an overview of good practice and national overview.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting, be agreed.

11. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND REFERRALS UPDATE

The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that a report outlining a local and regional overview on the Pupil Development Grant would be circulated after the meeting.

UNANIMOULSLY RESOLVED that the report be received

12. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 6TH JUNE 2019

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 6th June 2019 be signed as a correct record.

13. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 4TH JULY 2019

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 4th July 2019 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE