

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 March 2019

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors:

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

Co-opted Members

Mr J. Davies – Parent Governor
Mrs M. Jones – Parent Governor
Mrs G. Cornock-Evans – Parent Governor
Revd D. Richards – Church in Wales Representative

Also in attendance:

Councillor G. Davies (Executive Board Member – Education and Children)

The following Officers were in attendance:

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
A. Rees, Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing
S. Smith, Head of Children's Services
S. Davies, Head of Access to Education
A. Morgan, Head of Education Services
C. Griffiths, Welsh Language Development Manager
N. Thomas, Service Manager
C. Alban, Play Sufficiency Officer
J. Buck, Performance & Information Officer
L. Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP. 10.00 am - 12.15 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Edward Thomas and Mrs V. Kenny (Roman Catholic Church Representative).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
G. Jones	7	His wife works in the Education Department
D. Jones	8	Her sons are members of the Carmarthenshire Music Service

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. CHILDREN FIRST

In addition to the report, the committee received a presentation on the Children First approach and viewed a short film on the experiences of children in the Glanymor and Tyisha wards in Carmarthenshire. The approach seeks to initiate change at a local level, based on the needs of the specific place, identified by listening to children and young people and to the local community. The Children First approach will contribute to mitigating the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, exploring new and more effective ways of tackling poverty.

The following questions/observations were raised:

Members noted that the steering group did not include a representation from Dyfed Powys Police Force and other groups that were considered key to the approach, and also shared the same priorities as Children's Zones. The report highlighted the issue of crime and the fear of crime. The Service Manager advised that the Children's Zone was in its early stages and as it developed it was likely that membership of the steering group would expand to include Dyfed Powys Police Force.

It was noted that the Welsh Government had not attached any funding to the approach as this is considered a different way of working and not necessarily new work. A small amount of funding was made available in 2018/19 which funded 2 days per week of officer time.

Members asked for clarification on the commitment being sought in relation to Children First. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the report was submitted in order to share information with members. In the longer term local members would play a key part in the approach. The Head of Children Services advised that Children First was a strategic approach to working and not a Children Services only led project. It is an approach that in order to be successful and have impact on specific communities, requires a long term strategic commitment from all Local Authority departments as well as the commitment of external organisations to working together.

It was noted that children who shared their experiences in the short film shared negative experiences of living in the area and members asked for further information on the services currently available in the area. The Service Manager advised that St Paul's Family Centre, Morfa Integrated Children's Centre and other support services were available in the area. Most of the Tyisha ward falls within the area covered by Flying Start. The Service Manager advised that the Children

First approach will pull together the services already available and re-align provision with what local children want. It was noted that the approach was about looking at solutions within the community and work to overcome them, a 'doing with, not doing to' approach.

Members referred to the Wellness Village, which forms part of the Swansea Bay City Deal and asked whether funding would become available for training and development opportunities for local residents, and also to develop the local area. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that discussions between the Regeneration Department and headteachers were in the early stages but there was a shared vision to equip local people with the required skills to take advantage of the opportunities available.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Children First report be received.

5. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

The Committee received a written report and a verbal overview of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan from the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:

Members asked for clarification on the continuation of provision between Key Stages 3 and 4. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that there were challenges to securing provision in two languages and further discussions would be undertaken with the Welsh Government with regards to the financial implications of providing the education measure equitably in both languages in our 2B schools.

Members noted that the report contained a reference to establishing one Welsh Medium School by discontinuing four primary schools, clarification was sought on which schools were earmarked for closure under this phase. The Executive Board Member for Education and Children advised that the schools would not be named, however the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher at each school were aware of potential closure. The Executive Board Member had also approved the disclosure of the names of the earmarked schools to relevant local members.

Members raised concerns with regards to the two proposed Language Centres noted in the report. An assistance grant of £985,248 has been received by Welsh Government to establish two Language Centres to raise standards and support the criteria of one million Welsh Speakers by 2050. Concerns related to the long term sustainability of Language Centres, particularly in relation to securing on-going revenue funding. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that Language Centres form part of a broader national development strategy and was confident that long-term funding would continue to be pursued actively with Welsh Government.

Members asked for clarification on the term 'transitional schools', noted in Annex 2 of the report. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that 'transitional schools' were schools in the process of moving between dual stream to Welsh medium (Language Category). As there is no guidance on how long this transition should take, a school can remain within the transitional phase for some time. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that any changes in category follows a statutory process and the department were aware of the two schools.

The issue of bilingual provision in Further Education was discussed, members were concerned that Welsh medium education would not continue at University level for the majority of subjects including Veterinary Science and Medicine, and that students might be at a disadvantage as a result. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that the Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg continues to develop Welsh language medium opportunities for students and provision in Welsh Universities has increased significantly in recent years. He also advised that the Welsh medium education produces bilingual pupils and this was not a barrier or a detriment when continuing their education in English.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan be approved.

6. DRAFT EQUITY AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Committee received the Draft Equity and Wellbeing Strategy presented by the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing.

The following observations/questions were raised on the report:

Members noted references to 'Children at greater risk of difficulties' and asked whether the Pupil Deprivation Grant was used to support children in this category. It was noted that other Local Authorities used the grant to employ an individual; to directly support children and families in need. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that work was being done in this area and working with families with ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) was part of the strategy. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that he would report back to the Committee on the Pupil Deprivation Grant and the type of work undertaken. The Head of Education Services advised that he would include some examples of work relating to the PDG during forthcoming site visits.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

6.1 that the report be received;

6.2 that the Committee receive a report on the Pupil Deprivation Grant as soon as possible

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 3
[NOTE: Councillor G. Jones had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 was presented to the group

The following observations/questions were raised on the presentation:

It was noted that staff absence and vacancies were responsible for shortfalls in most areas and in particular to the measure on Child Assessments.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 be received.

8. ACTION AND REFERRALS FROM PREVIOUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEES
[NOTE: Councillor D. Jones had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee received a report detailing the progress achieved in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the reasons for the non-submission of the following report:-

- ALN Reform including SEN

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items and agreed that the items should be presented to the next meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on 24th April 2019, be agreed.

11. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH JANUARY 2019

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 24TH January 2019 be signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment –

Cllr D. Jones passed on apologies for the meeting and Cllr D. Cundy was present as a substitute.

CHAIR

DATE