

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 22 September 2016

PRESENT: Councillor D.J.R. Bartlett (Chair)

Councillors: J.M. Charles, I.W. Davies, W.T. Evans (in place of J.E. Williams), W.G. Hopkins, P. Hughes-Griffiths, J.D. James, P.E.M. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, D.W.H. Richards, G. Thomas (in place of C.A. Campbell) and J. Williams

Mrs. E. Heyes – Parent Governor Member (Llanelli Area)
Mrs. K. Hill – Parent Governor Member (Dinefwr Member)
Mrs. V. Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative
Mrs. A. Pickles – Parent Governor Member (Carmarthen Area)

Also in attendance:

Councillor G.O. Jones – Executive Board Member for Education & Children

The following Officers were in attendance:

Mr. R. Sully – Director of Education and Children’s Services
Mr. G. Morgans – Chief Education Officer / Head of Education Services
Mr. A. Rees – Head of Learner Programmes
Mr. D. Astins – Strategic Development Manager
Ms. S. Nolan – Group Accountant
Ms. G. Adams – Principal Manager – Youth Support Service
Mr. K. Thomas – Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen – 10:00am - 12:30pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND OTHER MATTERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Campbell and J.E. Williams.

The Chair referred to the sad passing of Councillor T. Theophilus and paid tribute to his long standing service and contribution to the work of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Member	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Cllr. P. Hughes-Griffiths	7 – Provisional Examination and Teacher Assessment Results and Provisional School Attendance Data	Daughter is a teacher at Bancffosfelen CP School

Mrs. E. Heyes	6 – Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service Business Plan 2016-17	Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme – Husband works in Bryngwyn School
Cllr. M.J.A. Lewis	12.2 – Minutes of the Education and Children Scrutiny Committee held on the 14 th April 2016	Minute 7 – Youth Services Update Report – Is involved with the Young Farmers and the Urdd
Mrs. V. Kenny	7 – Provisional Examination and Teacher Assessment Results and Provisional School Attendance Data	Daughter-in-law is the Head teacher at Hendy CP School
Cllr. D.W.H. Richards	6 – Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service Business Plan 2016-17	Involvement with the Young Farmers Clubs

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

No public questions were received.

5. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received the list of forthcoming items for its next meeting to be held on the 10th October, 2016. It was noted that the proposed report on the MEP Proposal for Laugharne, Llanmiloe and Tremoilet had been deferred to enable further information to be obtained in relation to land ownership and other matters, and would now be scheduled for consideration at a future meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that, subject to the deferment of the report on the MEP Proposal for Laugharne, Llanmiloe and Tremoilet to a future date, the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on Monday 10th October, 2016 be noted.

6. YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN 2016/17

The Committee received for consideration the Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service's Business Plan 2016-17, being the first to be developed following the merger on the 1st January, 2016 of the Carmarthenshire Youth Service and the Carmarthenshire Youth Offending Service under one single management structure. That merger, allowed for the development of a more holistic approach to the delivery of youth support services across the County to provide a robust range of support from open access to specialised support to enable children, young

people and young adults (aged 8-25) to fulfil their full personal, social and educational potential.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:

- In response to a question on the provision of youth clubs, and to where they sat within the overall Youth Support Service, the Committee was advised that the Service, as an entity, was divided into 4 distinct teams comprising Universal Support, Targeted Youth Support, Targeted Youth Support 8-18yrs and Youth Justice. The Youth Club Service lay within the remit of the Universal Support Team which directly operated 9 youth clubs, whilst also providing support for Dr M's in Carmarthen together with three Urdd Clubs within the County.
- In noting the above, views were expressed that the report made no reference to the role Young Farmer's Clubs and other voluntary clubs played within the County and that the importance of that role should not be overlooked. Disappointment was also expressed that the Council did not have a dedicated officer working with, and supporting the valuable work undertaken by the Young Farmer Movement which, included working with schools to help young people develop skills and gain employment.

The Director of Education and Children's Services welcomed the emphasis being placed on a universal service provision together with the external funding that brought. He advised that with regard to the Council's investment in the service that was being used to drive provision to those in greatest need of support rather than investing in universal support, as reflected nationally. However, he advised that the Council's core budget funding of the youth service at 31% of the local government revenue settlement for youth services was the lowest of all Welsh authorities, with the Welsh average being 73%. Notwithstanding that differential, the Council still provided a high degree of service within the available resources and, if funding were to increase to the national average significantly more could be achieved.

The Principal Manager – Youth Support Services advised that following the Committee's meeting on the 14th April, 2016 (minute 7 refers) where it had resolved for "officers to make concerted efforts to strengthen the links between the Authority and the YFC network in the County" discussions had been held with the Carmarthen YFC to discuss what the authority could do, in the absence of adequate resources, to strengthen those links. Further meetings were also planned to take place with the YFC.

- In response to a question relating to the issue of child mental health, the Principal Manager – Youth Support Services confirmed that the emotional mental health of children was critical to their development and the service worked closely with Children Mental Health Services to ensure young people could access services when needed. The service also worked with schools to target young people who appeared to be in need of help, and endeavoured to ensure any issues were identified as early as possible to help young people access the services they required.
- Reference was made to the 1.1% funding cut to the Youth Support Service for 2016/17 equating to £25,510 and information was requested on its impact or, otherwise, on service delivery.

The Principal Manager – Youth Support Services advised that the funding reduction had necessitated careful planning and whilst the service received funding from a number of external sources/partners the reduction had meant that a number of vacancies had not been filled, thereby limiting its universal provision whilst still spreading available resources as widely as possible.

The Director of Education and Children Services advised that the Youth Service had undergone significant restructuring over the previous two years with the main aim of reducing management costs to protect front line services resulting in savings of between £250 and £300k.

- With regard to the delivery of the Youth Justice Service, reference was made to the issue of criminality, and its prevention, and to what avenues were available to achieve that objective?

The Principal Manager – Youth Support Services advised that initially all children identified as being at risk of potentially falling into criminality received an assessment covering a wide range of factors including family life, education, hobbies/interests etc. Once completed, a target plan would be provided tailored to the individual's needs which could include working with schools, the provision of holiday programmes and also working with other agencies such as the police and fire services to provide the children with experiences of working life to help them learn to manage their lives.

The Director Education and Children Services advised that one of the biggest challenges/obstacles facing the department providing service delivery was that of funding. The loss of EU funding over the previous 18 months had resulted in a number of staff redundancies which, to some degree had been offset by the Cynnydd project having received funding and appointed staff. He stressed that the lack of resources meant the work undertaken by the service had to be channelled to those most in need, and it was difficult for the Council to increase funding for the service when set against reducing income and increasing demand for service delivery across a wide range of services. Nevertheless, good service provision was being achieved within the limited resources.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION AND TEACHER ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND PROVISIONAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA

The Committee received the Provisional Examination and Teacher Assessment Results together with Provisional School Attendance Data. It noted that the data detailed therein was unverified, and that the finalised verified report would be presented as part of the Annual Performance Report in early 2017.

The following questions/observations were made on the report:

- In welcoming the results, a question was asked on whether any of those had been disappointing and why?

The Chief Education Officer advised that one area of disappointment had been the Foundation Phase results. Whilst the end of term results had not been as anticipated, that may have been attributable to the way in which teacher assessments had been undertaken and that, possibly, there was a need to increase teacher confidence in undertaking the assessments

The performance of schools with a high number of pupils in receipt of free school meals had also been disappointing and was an area requiring examination as some schools had performed well whilst others had not.

- Reference was made to the achievements attained by Monmouth and the Vale of Glamorgan in the Welsh Language and explanations sought on how their schools had performed better than those in Carmarthenshire.

The Chief Education Officer advised that one potential reasons for that result was that Carmarthenshire, like Gwynedd and Ceredigion, had a larger number of pupils being assessed through the medium of Welsh. However, work was being undertaken to improve performance in that area.

- Reference was made to the reduced performance in Welsh as a second language from 79.5% in 2015 to 74.8% in 2016. The Chief Education Officer advised that over the next 5 years the way in which Welsh would be taught in schools would be changing. Welsh, as a second language course would be replaced, with all Welsh being taught via the Welsh Language continuum.
- Reference was made to the focus on academic achievement and a view expressed that emphasis should also be applied to vocational provision.

The Chief Education Officer stated that education needed to be for all and that course provision needed to reflect educational ability in order to maximise pupil achievements. With regard to vocational training, provision was currently catered for at both Bro Myrddin School and at the Vocational Village at Bryngwyn, in Llanelli. Work was also being undertaken on the preparation of a report on employability for 11-19 year olds.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Reports relating to the 2016/17 financial year as at 30th June 2016 for the Education and Children Department. It was advised that the report indicated a current potential year end overspend of £1.17m on the revenue budget and a net surplus of £5.275m on the capital budget.

The Group Accountant advised that in relation to the revenue overspend that, in the main related to school redundancies and early voluntary retirement totalling approximately £750k. With regard to the Capital underspend, that related to slippages within the MEP programme due to specific scheme timescales, and would be utilised over the lifetime of the schemes

The following issues/questions were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the projected £116k overspend on the Residential and Respite Unit budget and an explanation sought on that situation.

The Director of Education and Children advised that when consideration had been given to the 2016/17 budget, the provision of residential centres for children with special care had been put forward as a potential saving on the basis the service mainly related to medical need, and it was felt the Health Board should make a greater contribution towards its provision. However, the anticipated additional contribution from the Health Board had not been forthcoming, resulting in the service projecting a year end overspend. He advised that discussions were ongoing with the Health Board regarding its contribution to the service.

- Reference was made to the MEP programme and a question asked on the latest position of the new primary school intended for Ammanford. Also on whether or not it had been placed on the agenda for the new regeneration workforce established for Ammanford.

The Director of Education and Children advised that the position within Ammanford was complex in that not only had the significant increase in pupil numbers over the last four years rendered the original proposals irrelevant, but difficulties were also being encountered in identifying a suitable site for the new school. Notwithstanding those difficulties, the provision of the new school was still regarded as one of the Council's priorities.

- In response to a question on the projected £1,017m overspend on the revenue budget and its potential budgetary implications for service provision, the Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the situation had deteriorated subsequent to the report's preparation, with the projected overspend having increased to £1.4m. He stated that whilst all departments were expected to work within their allocated budgets, which the Education Department had been very successful in over recent years, one area of concern related to redundancies and early voluntary retirements within schools. Whilst the decision to make school staff redundant/ offer early voluntary retirement was made by schools, the financial consequences thereof lay solely with the County Council which, for the current year was anticipated to cost the Council £750k, representing a slight decrease over the £1m cost in 2015/16.

The department, in addressing that overspend critically examined its budget in an endeavour to achieve further savings which included service reductions and not filling staff vacancies wherever possible whilst still having regard to its statutory duties. If, after consideration of the options available, the department was unable to address the overspend either in whole or in part, the resultant financial burden would fall upon the Council.

- Reference was made to the capital programme and to visits undertaken by the Committee to schools within the County resulting in recommendations being made for works to be undertaken to specific schools e.g Hendy Primary school. Clarification was sought on the process by which those works would be built into the programme.

The Director confirmed that officers regularly monitored the MEP and submitted bi-annual reports to the Executive Board. With regard to the position at Hendy School, whilst the Department held the Capital budget for the MEP, it also operated a £1m maintenance budget to ensure the Council met its landlord liabilities with works being undertaken on a priority basis with Health and Safety having top priority. Whilst some of the works recommended for Hendy school had been financed from the maintenance budget, it had not been possible to undertake all the works and if further works were required to be undertaken, then the Council could make adjustments to the MEP to fund the costs, which would result in some plans having to be delayed.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. 2016/17 IMPROVEMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 – 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2016

The Committee received for scrutiny the 2016/17 Improvement Plan Performance Report for quarter 1 with regard to the Actions and Remits relevant to its remit.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to EDU/015a appertaining to the percentage of final statements of special educational need issued within 26 weeks which had recorded a first quarter result of 66.7 set against a target result of 40. Clarification was sought on why the target appeared to have been set too low.

The Chief Education Officer advised that the reason for the low target reflected the performance achieved in 2015/16. The reason for the improved performance was attributable to fewer statements being written and a higher than anticipated contribution from the Health Board. Should the trend continue, the target could be revisited during the year.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

10. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

The Committee received for consideration its Annual Report for 2015/16 detailing information on a wide range of issues undertaken over the year.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

11. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORTS

The Committee considered the explanation provided for the non-submission of two reports appertaining to the proposed closure of Llanedi and Bancffosfel'n Primary Schools.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the explanations provided for the non-submission be noted.

12. TO SIGN AS CORRECT RECORDS THE MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE'S MEETINGS HELD ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:

12.1. 9TH MARCH 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 9th March, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

12.2. 14TH APRIL 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 14th April, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

12.3. 23RD MAY 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 23rd May, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

12.4. 17TH JUNE 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 17th June, 2016 be signed as a correct record.

13. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE EDUCATION & CHILDREN AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, HELD ON THE 23RD MAY 2016

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the Joint meeting of the Education and Children and Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committees held on the 23rd May, 2016 be received.

CHAIR

DATE