

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price (Chair)

Councillors:

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

Mrs V. Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative

Mrs A. Pickles – Parent Governor [Carmarthen Area]

Also in attendance:

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

The following Officers were in attendance:

Mr G. Morgans	-	Interim Director of Education & Children's Services
Mr A. Morgan	-	Head of Education Services
Ms G. Adams	-	Principal Manager Youth Support Services
Mr D. Astins	-	Strategic Development Manager
Mr S. Davies	-	Modernisation Services Manager
Ms F. Lewis	-	Service Manager Safeguarding & Adoption
Ms E. Forsythe	-	Principal Challenge Adviser School Improvement
Ms E. Callen	-	Social Worker Safeguarding & Adoption
Ms S. Nolan	-	Group Accountant
Mrs M. Evans Thomas	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 10.00 am - 12.45 pm.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Bowen, I.W. Davies, J.P. Jenkins, G. Jones and S. Najmi and from Mrs E. Heyes and Mrs K. Hill (Parent Governors Members) and Mrs J. Voyle Williams (Church in Wales Representative).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Councillor B.W. Jones	Minute No. 14 – MEP Proposal to Provide Nursery Provision at Ysgol Parc y Tywyn by Increasing its Age Range from 4-11 to 3-11	Her son teaches year 5 at the school.

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Councillor M.J.A. Lewis	Minute No. 6 – Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service Business Plan 2017-20	Vice-President of Carmarthenshire Young Farmers Association and she is involved with the Urdd.
Councillor D. Price	Minute No. 13 – 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. PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION AND TEACHER ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND PROVISIONAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA.

The Committee received the Provisional Examination and Teacher Assessment Results report which included Provisional School Attendance Data. The Committee noted that the report included some unverified data in respect of 2017 and that the finalised and verified performance data report would be presented to members in early 2018.

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

- Reference was made to the fact that the Foundation Phase Indicators have been below average for five years. The Head of Education Services explained that these are Wales-wide statistics and it was important to ensure that any monitoring and assessing undertaken is consistent. He added that officers require schools to demonstrate how they have ensured progress for every pupil. It is all about holding schools accountable;
- Concern was expressed that with income falling and benefit cut backs, poverty is becoming a major problem which could seriously affect the figures. The Head of Education Services acknowledged that there is a problem with poverty and disengagement, however, officers are working with the Welsh Government on this issue;
- Reference was made to the link between progress in the Foundation Phase and absence as this obviously affects progress and officers were asked what is being done to target absence. The Head of Education Services explained that officers work closely with the Welfare Service and schools on this issue. Other agencies are also called in if needed in order to support the family as it is important to find out why a particular child does not want

- to be in school. It is all about working with the family and making sure that children are happy;
- Reference was made to the varying performance levels for eFSM learners from school to school. The Head of Education Services explained that it is complicated because there are different problems in different areas. He added that a workshop was being arranged for all schools in order to share best practice in this area;
 - Reference was made to the minimal improvement in science performance and officer were asked whether it was the intention to arrange training for schools in this regard. The Principal Challenge Adviser informed the Committee that two years ago a pilot was undertaken in the Bro Dinefwr area around sharing expertise and equipment. As a result the staff and pupils made a presentation to all Secondary School Heads and the project has now been rolled out across all the other clusters for this academic year;
 - Concern was expressed over the number of children starting school with poor language and development skills which can be attributed to a dependency on technological gadgets. The Interim Director of Education & Children's Services agreed that there was evidence of this in some schools and interventions are made in such cases. He added that a document has been launched this week which deals with that exact issue;
 - Concern was expressed that the new GCSE format has had an impact on statistics Wales-wide and it should be noted that some of our schools have improved but the statistics do not show this

RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. CARMARTHENSHIRE YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN 2017-20.

[NOTE: Councillor M.J.A. Lewis had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered the Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service's Business Plan for 2017-20 which provided information about the structure, governance arrangements and resources available. The Plan also detailed the main areas of activity and identified the principal risks associated with children and young people in the Youth Justice System.

The service was established in January 2016, bringing together the Carmarthenshire Youth Service and the Carmarthenshire Youth Offending Service under a single integrated management structure. The Youth Support Service allows for the development of a more holistic approach to the delivery of youth support services across Carmarthenshire. The service retained the statutory functions of the Youth Justice Team, promotes the ethos of working together to deliver targeted support and retains elements of direct universal youth work provision.

It was noted that the Business Plan must meet legislative, grant making and business planning requirements.

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

- Officers were asked about the nature and language of the youth clubs in the county and whether any connection has been made with the Young Famers

Clubs and the Urdd. The Principal Youth Support Services Manager explained that there is an SLA in place with the Urdd to deliver Welsh language services for the team. Contact has also been made with the YFC. She added that officers are working on the provision of Welsh language facilities at youth clubs as they want to promote a vibrant Welsh culture;

- Reference was made to the current financial climate and uncertainty experienced within the team in relation to their future employment. The Principal Youth Support Services Manager explained that unfortunately the team has to achieve efficiencies and have therefore put together some options for consideration by members. It has been necessary to look at which services provided are statutory and which are not. The Interim Director of Education & Children's Services explained that it is important to try to get a mixed economy approach in future as we can no longer provide some of these services on our own. That is why it is important to link with the Urdd and other organisations. He added that it may be a good idea to create a Forum and get all the organisations together to create a network so that people know what is available.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE COUNCIL'S 2017/18 WELLBEING OBJECTIVES - QUARTER 1.

The Committee considered a report detailing progress against the actions and measures in the 2017/18 Well-being Objectives delivery plan relevant to the Committee's remit, as at 30th June, 2017.

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

- Reference was made to the data relating to the percentage of final statement of special education needs issued within 26 weeks and officers were asked if this was due to the fact that the Head of Psychology had left. The Interim Director of Education & Children's Services explained that there is an improvement as two years ago there would have been 20 late statements. Officers have changed the way that statements are undertaken and are working with psychologist colleagues and in future a child will have an individual learning plan instead of a statement. He added that they have been awarded a grant to purchase additional resources. He was not concerned about this indicator at the present time;
- In relation to promoting linguistic skills, officers were asked what connection has been made with Syrian families. The Interim Director explained that a member of staff who speaks Arabic has been recruited and is therefore able to converse with the families, go to the schools to ensure smooth transition etc. The families are also afforded the opportunity to go on courses to help their language skills;
- Reference was made to the new schools being built as part of the MEP and concern was expressed that Welsh language signage is often incorrect and was such a waste of money. The Interim Director advised the Committee that he was aware of the problems and would be pursuing this issue with the contractor.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2017/18.

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report in relation to the Education and Children Service which provided an update on the latest budgetary position as at 30th June, 2017, in respect of the 2017/18 financial year.

The Education and Children Service was projecting an overspend of £1,389k on the revenue budget and a net variance of -£176k against the 2017/18 approved capital budget.

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

- Reference was made to the use of fostering agencies and that this was probably due to the fact that neighbouring Authorities pay more. The Interim Director explained that there are discussions ongoing with regard to harmonising allowances nationally and officers are now able to compare levels paid by different Authorities. Officers were in the process of preparing a report on allowances for consideration by Council. He added that it is necessary to purchase additional specialist provision because of the complicated requirements of some children. The challenge is that it would cost an additional £1m for the Authority if we paid the same levels as neighbouring Authorities;
- The overspend detailed in the report was the projection as at 30th June and an assurance was sought from officers that this figure is being reduced. The Interim Director advised the Committee that the figure has improved this month and currently stands at around £1m. He added that he met with his 3rd tier managers the day before to discuss the budget and they were all reminded of the need to control their budgets and to be vigilant in keeping within budget;
- Officers were asked for an explanation with regard to the draft paper on the sustainability of the Music Service. The Interim Director explained that officers are currently working on figures for this service in order to ascertain the core costs and a report will be presented to Committee in due course.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT.

The Committee considered the Adoption Service Annual Report for 2016/17 which had been compiled by the National Adoption Service (NAS) and detailed the work and performance of the five Regional Adoption Services that comprise the NAS. It was noted that Carmarthenshire is the lead authority for one of the regional services, the Mid & West Wales Adoption Service.

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

- Asked what problems were encountered with the Foster to Adopt pilot scheme, the Committee was advised that the Welsh version, which was set up by the Welsh Government, is very different to the English version. In Wales Foster to Adopt applies only to people who are already adopters and

as a pilot it has not worked across the country because no-one has found way to make it viable.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

10. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016/17.

The Committee considered the Council's draft Annual Report for 2016/17 which included the second year progress report on the Corporate Strategy 2015-20, the Summary Annual Report 2016/17 and the full Annual Report.

When the Corporate Strategy was published in 2015/20 it was agreed that an annual progress report would be produced setting out 24 outcome measures to judge our progress against. The Corporate Strategy would be reviewed for 2018/19 as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires our Well-being Objectives to be incorporated within the Corporate Strategy.

In previous years the Annual Report and Improvement Plan have been combined into a single document. However, this year these documents have been separated because the new Well-being of Future Generations Act required the publication of our Well-being Objectives by the 31st March and it therefore made sense to incorporate our Improvement Plan for the year ahead within that. It would not have been possible to produce the Annual Report before the year's end.

It was noted that it was a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure the Authority must publish an Annual Report on past performance by the end of October each year.

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

- Concern was expressed over staff sickness and stress levels in schools. The Interim Director advised the Committee that offices are trying to address this challenge and to this end a workshop on this issue is being held for head teachers next month.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Report, including the Second Year Progress Report on the Corporate Strategy, be received.

11. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17.

The Committee received an Annual Report detailing the work of the Committee during the 2016/17 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.

RESOLVED that the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2016/17 be endorsed.

12. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme for 2017/18, which had been prepared in accordance with the Council's Constitution which required Scrutiny Committees to develop and publish annual forward work programmes identifying issues and reports to be considered at meetings during the course of the municipal year.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme for the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee for 2017/18 be confirmed.

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

[NOTE: Councillor D. Price, having earlier declared an interest in this item, vacated the Chair during consideration thereof. Councillor E.G. Thomas, Vice-Chair, presided for the duration of the item.]

The Committee considered a report detailing a proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School from 110 to 210.

Gorslas Primary School is a Welsh medium primary school located in the centre of the village of Gorslas near Crosshands. The school has a capacity for 110 pupils between the ages of 4-11 years old. The school was established in the 1920s and caters for pupils within the area of Gorslas and the surrounding areas. Over the last few years, the demand for Welsh medium education in Carmarthenshire has been increasing and this is also true for pupil numbers at the school and the school is currently over capacity.

A review of the problems, difficulties and service gaps associated with the existing arrangements at Gorslas Primary School had clearly established that:-

- there is misalignment between the capacity of the school and the demand for Welsh medium education places;
- the existing school building does not meet Carmarthenshire's standards in terms of the facilities it offers and the area space required;
- the site and buildings are insufficient in meeting the needs of the wider community;
- staff and pupils have to transfer between the mobile classrooms and the main school building;
- there is insufficient space, indoor and outdoor, to deliver and enhance the Foundation Phase curriculum and play opportunities for all learners;
- access/car parking at the school is limited and causes disruption at school drop off/pick up times.

On 20th June, 2016 the Executive Board approved a revised Modernising Education Programme and 21st Century Schools Band “A” Programme within which a scheme was being developed to provide Gorslas Primary School with a new school building which would address the issues noted above.

It was proposed that the capacity of the new school would be 210, which would allow the school to accommodate current and future demand for Welsh medium education places. The new school building would also provide space to accommodate a 30 place external nursery and facilities suitable for teaching and learning in the 21st century. The scheme was currently in development and it was proposed that the new school building would be ready for occupancy by 1st September, 2019.

As it was proposed to increase the capacity of the school by more than 25% of its current capacity, a statutory process must be followed in accordance with the School Organisation Code 2013 to formalise the arrangement.

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

- Reference was made to the fact that there are currently 122 pupils at the school and as the projection for 2022 only increased this number to 124 officers were asked where the pupils would be coming from. Concern was expressed over the potential impact on other schools in the area, in particular Maesybont and Cefneithin and officers were asked if there was any intention of close these schools in the future. The Modernisation Services Manager stated that there were no plans to close these schools at present. He explained there has been a lot of development in Gorslas and 2 mobile classrooms have been provided for the school in the past. He was confident that there will be demand for places at the school;
- Whilst recognising the need for a bigger school in the area, concern was expressed over the fact that 140 children from Gorslas are educated elsewhere and 44 children from outside the catchment area are educated at Gorslas and it was felt that this was something which could be addressed during the consultation process. The Modernisation Services Manager explained that during the consultation process it will be essential to make it clear to the public that we are consulting on the new school itself but also separately we need to consult because the school capacity is increasing by more than 25%;
- Reference was made to the preferred location for the new school being Gorslas park and officers were asked how much of the park would remain and also what are the plans for the existing school building. The Modernisation Services Manager explained that it was hoped to locate the school in the centre of the park so that good use can be made of the pathways around it. No discussions have taken place with regard to future use of the existing school site, however, the Authority has a policy where such sites are offered to community groups to take over and if no interest is expressed the site is put up for sale.

RESOLVED

13.1 that the report be received;

13.2 to endorse to the Executive Board the proposal to increase the capacity of Gorslas Community Primary School from 110 to 210

as from 1st September, 2019 when occupation at the new school building is proposed.

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

[NOTE: Councillor B.J. Jones had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered a report detailing a proposal to standardise the local authority nursery provision in the areas of Burry Port and Pembrey.

Ysgol Parc y Tywyn is a Welsh medium school with an age range of 4-11 and shares the same catchment area as the combined Burry Port Community School and Ysgol Pembrey, which are both categorised English medium schools with an age range of 3-11.

The proposal therefore sought to standardise the nursery education in the area by ensuring that the same level of provision is provided at both the Welsh and English medium schools in the areas of Burry Port and Pembrey.

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

- Officers were asked if the proposal would have an impact on nursery providers in the area in terms of job losses. The Interim Director advised the Committee that officers had been in discussion with the child care providers in the care regarding the proposal and if there are any jobs in the new provision then they would be suitably placed;
- Reference was made to the inconsistency in nursery provision throughout the county and officers were asking how this was being addressed. The Interim Director explained that in Carmarthenshire there is a mix of 3-11 and 4-11 provision and the intention is for all schools to move to 3-11. Unfortunately, this was not without its challenges including financial and also the consequences for childcare providers who get an element of their funding from the Education Department. It has therefore been necessary to look at schools on an individual basis and in this case the opportunity arose to change the provision in view of the fact that a new school is being built. There is inconsistency and we need to have provision across the county for children 3-11. To this end we need to work together with other organisations to ensure that if there is no provision in an area then we need to try and make sure that there is.

RESOLVED

14.1 that the report be received;

14.2 to endorse to the Executive Board the proposal to standardise the nursery education provision in the Burry Port and Pembrey areas.

15. FORTHCOMING ITEMS.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on Monday, 27th November, 2017 be noted.

16. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH APRIL, 2017.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th April, 2017 be received.

CHAIR

DATE