

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price [Chair]

Councillors:

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

Mrs V. Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative

Mrs J. Voyle-Williams – Church in Wales Representative

Mrs A. Pickles – Parent Governor [Carmarthen Area]

The following Officers were in attendance:

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 J. Owen	-	TIC Programme Manager
Mr A. Carter	-	Senior Manager TIC Schools
Ms S. Nolan	-	Group Accountant
Mrs M. Evans Thomas	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen : 10.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mrs K. Hill (Parent Governors Member).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Councillor G. Jones	Items 5-9	His wife works in the Education Department.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. SCHOOL BUDGETS

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

The Committee considered a report providing an overview of the regulations that encompass the allocation of school budgets, the budget process and the

calculation of the delegated budget received from the Local Authority. Individual school budget final balances for the financial years 2015/16 and 2016/17 were appended to the report for information.

The Committee noted that a school's governing body has the collective and legal responsibility for the overall direction of the school and its strategic management. This included the effective financial management of the school's delegated budget and the responsibility for ensuring that the school's financial resources are utilised in support of improving learner outcomes in the most effective and efficient way.

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

- If a school has a deficit reserve balance how do they contact officers for assistance/advice? The Head of Education Services explained that they are able to contact any of the Support Officers in the Education Department. Officers try to intervene early on and work with governing bodies to make sure that progress is made;
- Concern was expressed over how many schools have a large reserve balance when so many other schools are struggling. The Head of Education Services referred to the new legislation that was recently introduced regarding surplus school balances and clawback and advised the Committee that the Authority has not yet used those powers. However, if a surplus balance continues year on year then discussions would have to be held in that regard.

RESOLVED

5.1 that the information be noted;

5.2 that the Committee receive an update report on School Budgets at a future meeting.

6. TIC PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

The Committee considered a report and received a presentation providing an update on the TIC (Transform, Innovate, Change) Programme – Support for Schools.

Historically the delegated school budget has been protected from reductions as part of the corporate efficiency programme. As the outlook for future years is for further reductions to the Council's budget, schools have been challenged to find budget efficiencies whilst ensuring standards are maintained or improved. To assist with this, the Council's TIC team has been joined by Allan Carter, Deputy Head of Queen Elizabeth High School on a secondment to focus on helping schools find budget efficiencies.

The TIC programme was established over four years ago in response to the severest of financial challenges. During the last financial year, TIC projects helped deliver more than £2m of financial savings and, in total, has helped identify nearly £11.5m savings since its inception. Allan commenced his role full time in September 2017 and is working with TIC colleagues to gain an understanding of

their methodology and to see how that success can be replicated across schools in Carmarthenshire.

The TIC Schools' programme aims to apply TIC principles of collaborative working, reducing waste and sharing good practice to support schools in reducing costs but, at the same time, protecting the quality of front-line service and improving outcomes. It also aims to strengthen relationships between schools and the Local Authority through partnership working. It is not intended to be a top-down approach.

During the first two months of his secondment Allan has identified a number of focus areas where savings could be made and is working with colleagues to take these forward.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report and presentation:-

- Reference was made to collaborative procurement and tendering and officers were asked if the Authority would support schools co-working on things like grass cutting. The Head of Education Services advised the Committee that schools have individual Service Level Agreements but opportunities to enhance efficiency are always looked at and currently form a part of the TIC work;
- Officers were asked if consideration has been given to joint working and sharing staff/expertise to deliver some curriculum topics. The Head of Education Services advised the Committee that work is already being undertaken regarding joining groups of pupils to deliver some subjects;
- Concern was expressed that one problem being faced by schools is that their IT systems are not standardised. Mr Carter advised the Committee that all systems should be standardised. The Strategic Development Manager further clarified that all primary schools use the Teacher Centre system and all secondary schools are on SIMS (Secondary Schools' Management Information System);
- Reference was made to illness and staff absence and the consequential cost of arranging cover and the effect that has on pupils and officers were asked if the Authority has a strategy in place to protect staff and children from these knock-on effects. The Head of Education Services informed the Committee that a workshop was held recently for all school governors to promote the philosophy that happy staff are effective staff. It is important to have resources in place to support the wellbeing of staff;
- Reference was made to Business Managers and officers were asked if schools would have to pay for this service. The Head of Education Services explained that the pilot scheme will be financed by Welsh Government until July 2019;
- With regard to bringing in staff from outside agencies to cover illness/absence, officers were asked if there is provision for the Authority to have a pool of staff that can be called upon to cover rather than using staff from external agencies. The Head of Education Services informed the Committee that the Authority has just been successful in securing funding from the Welsh Government to pilot such a model which would see 3 centrally based staff who could be deployed to a cluster of schools should the need arise. He added that the bid which was accepted was only for 3 teachers, however, it was a model which could be rolled out in the future.

RESOLVED

6.1 that the report and presentation be received;

6.2 that the Committee receive an update report in six months' time.

7. SCRUTINY PANEL SCHOOL VISIT PROGRAMME AND FRAMEWORK

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

The Committee considered a report detailing proposals for school visits from January 2018 onwards.

Members of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee have undertaken numerous school visits over a period of many years. The historical nature of these visits has understandably tended to focus on premises issues, appropriate to the evolving Modernising Education Programme at that time. However, our work with schools should support and challenge across a wide range of school activities and it was therefore proposed to realign the school visits programme's focus and facilitate broader and deeper discussion on aspects chosen as greater priorities e.g. leadership, teaching, learning and outcomes. However, it was not intended to preclude or ignore any elements of premises related issues which may arise and require attention.

The suggested format for school visits was as follows:-

- (1) Overview of the school's current context (to include a "guided members' learning walk");
- (2) Overview of current performance (outcomes and categorisation);
- (3) Discussion and analysis of strengths and best practice, areas for improvement and current priorities with senior school leaders, ERW/LA officers (to include summary of the School Development Plan, Self-evaluation Report and most recent ERW Support Visit reports);
- (4) Review and Conclusion Session between members.

It was anticipated that the above would take between 2½-3 hours and it was therefore suggested that one designated School Visit Day be arranged per term to include 2 schools with one school visited in the morning session and one school visited in the afternoon session.

It was proposed that the visits be undertaken by groups of members rather than the whole Committee as this would enable more focused working during visits, providing greater opportunities for a more detailed and engaging experience for members. It was therefore suggested that the Committee be split into three groups for school visits as follows:-

Group 1

Chair or Vice-Chair

Councillors Liam Bowen, Ieuan Wyn Davies, Jean Lewis and Bill Thomas Mrs Vera Kenny

1 Parent Governor

Group 2

Chair or Vice-Chair
Councillors Kim Broom, Gary Jones, Shahana Najmi and Dorian Williams
Mrs Jean Voyle Williams
1 Parent Governor

Group 3

Chair or Vice-Chair
Councillors John Jenkins, Betsan Jones, Dot Jones and Emlyn Schiavone
1 Parent Governor

There were many factors to consider with regard to choosing which schools to visit such as:-

- ensuring a range of different phases to provide members with primary, secondary and special school experiences;
- focusing on schools working to specific agendas or priorities such as
 - (a) schools in need of improving National Categorisation categories;
 - (b) schools sharing/leading best practice;
 - (c) schools working within specific networks (to include formal/informal Federations, Action Research projects etc)

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the proposals for school visits by the Committee from January 2018 as detailed above be approved.

8. REVISED ESTYN INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

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

The Committee considered a report on the Revised Estyn Inspection Framework. This inspection framework is used for all inspections of education and training providers in Wales and there is one framework for all schools and pupil referral units. The revised framework provides schools with the opportunity to present their practice against the following inspection areas:-

- Standards
- Wellbeing and attitudes to learning
- Teaching and learning experiences
- Care, support and guidance
- Leadership and management

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Aled Davies, the Headteacher of Llangunnor Primary School, who had been invited to make a presentation to the Committee.

Mr Davies advised the Committee that his school had recently undergone an inspection and was the first school in the county to do so under the new framework. Schools were aware that a new inspection framework was being introduced and officers from the Education Department have helped schools to prepare by providing training sessions and assistance with the preparation of documents and School Development Plans.

Schools used to get 4 weeks' notice of an impending inspection but under the new framework only 15 working days' notice is given. You get a call on Monday

morning to inform you of the visit and you have to upload all the required documents onto Estyn's website by the Friday of the same week. Schools should have all the necessary documents ready anyway as they are all statutory documents. Estyn need to know that a school knows what needs to be improved and where the school is going etc. and that is all contained in the School Development Plan. The self-evaluation documents must be completed and supported by the robust evidence to prove what you are stating. It is very important to have these documents ready and in place.

With regard to the inspection itself, it is far more centred on the pupils and the inspectors spend a lot of time talking to the children. They collect evidence from these conversations with pupils. They may not speak to the headteacher at all as they have seen the self-evaluation forms and know what the headteacher's views and opinions are. They place far more emphasis on speaking to pupils and staff and also to parents and governors. The emphasis is now more centred on the individual and the progress that they make at the school, however, the inspectors still look at specific groups e.g. eFSM.

Studies have indicated that the 65-70% of the jobs that these children will be doing have not yet been created, therefore, it is important to emphasise on the skills that children need and not a particular job.

The wellbeing of the pupil is also very important and the attitude of the pupil towards learning. Attendance is another important factor which is looked at as 90% attendance may sound good, however, if a child has attained a 90% attendance rate at school from the age of 4-16 that equates to the loss of one whole year of schooling.

Previously, inspections would entail an inspector sitting in on a lesson for an hour and then giving an opinion on the teaching method. Under the new system one Inspector looks at discipline, another at use of the Welsh language during the day etc. Then all the Inspectors meet at the end of the day to discuss their findings. The headteacher is welcome to sit in and listen to the discussion.

The Inspectors look at tracking, monitoring, provision of support and personal development including whether staff are given training opportunities. They also look at leadership and management and even looked at the minutes of staff meetings. The main difference in this respect under the new regime is that previously this would involve a small group including the Headteacher and a couple of others, however, now all governors and teachers are involved.

The following questions were raised on the report and presentation:-

- Asked if there is any follow up to the self-evaluation the Committee was informed that it becomes part of the School Development Plan which will indicate what needs to be done over the next 2-3 years and it is monitored regularly;
- Asked if ERW supported the school through the inspection process the Committee was informed that the school's link Challenge Adviser worked closely with the school throughout this process;
- Asked whether all schools in the county are "inspection ready" and what the Authority was doing to help them in this respect, the Head of Education Services informed the Committee that the LA/ERW provides a range of

support for schools and that schools are in the process of revising their current self-evaluation documentation in line with the revised Estyn Framework. This crucial work then evolves into the individual School Development Plan. Officers are conscious of not overloading schools with too many action points/recommendations and need to make sure that governors have a hands on approach. He added that schools in the county are as ready as any schools in other Authorities. He stressed the need to emphasise progress as opposed to simply focusing on 'headline data statistics' and the need to track/focus on the child through the Key Stages. Mr Davies added that it does put pressure on staff and the most important thing for a headteacher is to ensure that the teachers are fit and active and that they inspire the pupils. He stressed that when preparing for the new inspection framework it is essential to consider whether we are putting too much pressure on our teachers.

The Chair thanked Mr Davies for attending the meeting and for an interesting and informative presentation.

RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received.

9. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME STRATEGIC OUTLINE PROGRAMME - BAND B UPDATE

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

The Committee was reminded that preparations for the national 21st Century Schools Programme commenced in 2010 through an invitation by the Welsh Government to Local Authorities to submit a Strategic Outline Programme for the modernisation of their whole schools estate, placed within four bands for investment, A-D, in order of priority according to most urgent need.

During 2010 a major review of the MEP was completed and as part of that review the Council resolved that the MEP be reviewed and revised in the future every two years or otherwise as required to ensure consistency with the timeframe of the national 21st Century Schools Programme. Since that time the Executive Board has approved an updated MEP in 2011, 2013 and 2016

The Committee thereupon proceeded to consider a report detailing the updated Strategic Outline Plan of the MEP and an updated prioritised programme for investment as part of Band B of the national 21st Century Schools Programme.

The following questions were raised on the report:-

- Asked how projects are prioritised and whether there is a protocol, the Modernisation Services Manager informed the Committee that an exercise is completed whereby a viability review of all schools is undertaken and from that strategic projects are generated. A full options appraisal exercise is then completed and criteria are used to score the strategic projects. The current programme of projects was last approved by the Executive Board in 2016;
- Reference was made to the difficulty encountered in raise money for such projects and concern was expressed over the use of the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) in such instances. The Modernisation Services Manager

explained that discussions are ongoing with the Welsh Government who advise that MIM is a better, improved model to the PFI (Private Finance Initiative). Officers will explore the MIM suggestion and bring a further report back to Committee including the projects that are being proposed to take forward;

- Officers were asked how consultation is undertaken with communities, governors, schools etc. The Modernisation Services Manager explained that all projects entail discussions with the schools themselves. There is also consultation around the future of those schools and around the new build. Meetings are held with communities and schools very early on in the process.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

- 9.1 that the updated Strategic Outline Programme of the MEP including an updated prioritised programme for investment as part of Band B of the National 21st Century Schools Programme be approved;**
- 9.2 that the Band B projects selected for further exploration under the Mutual Investment Model be approved, however, that the Committee's concerns regarding MIM be noted;**
- 9.3 that funding arrangements for the Band B submission be approved in order to confirm whether both capital and revenue elements are affordable;**
- 9.4 that the importance be stressed of consulting with the community, school and interested parties before projects proceed.**

10. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORTS

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the following scrutiny reports which were scheduled to be considered at today's meeting:-

- Half Year Compliments & Complaints Report 2017/18
- ERW Business Plan 2017/18 and Review of 2016/17 (including updates on Curriculum Changes
- Fostering Annual Report

RESOLVED that the explanations for the non-submissions be noted.

11. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED

- 13.1 that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on Thursday, 21st December, 2017 be noted;**
- 13.2 that the revised Education & Children Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be noted;**
- 13.3 that the Executive Board Forward Work Programme be noted.**

12. MINUTES - 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 28th September, 2017 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE