

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 24 September 2015

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

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

S. Pearson – Parent Governor Representative

Also in attendance:

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

Also in attendance as an observer: Councillor D. Jenkins

The following Officers were in attendance:

R Sully, Director of Education & Children
G. Morgans, Chief Education Officer (CEO)/Head of Education Services
S. Smith, Head of Children's Services
A. Walters, Head of School Effectiveness
D. Astins, Strategic Development Manager
M. Morden, Lifelong Learning Networks Manager
S. Nolan, Group Accountant
Z. Morgan, Service Co-ordinator
S. Powell, Young People's Participation Co-ordinator
B. Dolan, Senior Consultant

Also present:

L. Blazey, CYSUR Regional Board Manager (Item 5)

Location: Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen (10:00am - 1:05pm)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I.W. Davies, J. James and J.E Williams and Mrs. Vera Kenny, Roman Catholic Church representative.

The Chair paid tribute to Councillor Keith Davies, a former Executive Board Member for Education & Children and a member of the Committee, who passed away in August. The Committee paid its respects with a minute's silence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST.

There were no declarations of personal interest.

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3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS.

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. FORTHCOMING ITEMS.

The Committee was provided with a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting scheduled for the 23rd of November 2015.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items be noted.

5. CYSUR (REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN) ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Committee considered a report which highlighted what CYSUR has achieved in the past year and what the priorities are going forward for the regional board, including a review of the current arrangements. The report also considered trends and themes within Carmarthenshire. The Chair welcomed Liz Blazey, CYSUR Regional Board Manager, to the meeting.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

Further information was requested regarding the Elected Member engagement process. The Head of Children's Services advised that the nominated Lead Member for each Authority is circulated with the relevant CYSUR Executive Board agendas and also subsequently briefed by the Chair, who happens to be Jake Morgan, Director of Community Services in Carmarthenshire. Local Members received general safeguarding training and the Committee Members were also offered visits to frontline teams. He was happy to offer additional sessions on a more regular basis. In response to comments about the lack of Elected Member involvement in the CYSUR Executive Board and decision making process, he stated that there was no Elected Member representation on the CYSUR Executive Board. The Director added that the aim of CYSUR was to establish the best possible and most safeguarding systems across the region, professional practice rather than governance.

A question was asked about the financial arrangements for CYSUR. The Regional Board Manager clarified that a £100k budget had been agreed with contributions from each authority. This included business support and regionally commissioned training. The implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 might specify partner contributions going forward.

It was asked what advantages there were in working regionally this way. The Head of Children's Services stated that most of the benefits were yet to be seen however partners such as Dyfed-Powys Police, Hywel Dda Health Board and Probation found it easier to communicate strategic issues at a regional level. The local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had created invaluable information

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sharing and the ability to react rapidly at the point of referral. A regional MASH could potentially be a more effective use of resources.

Clarification was asked for in relation to Looked After Children (LAC) placed by other authorities. The Head of Children's Services advised that the Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding Panel monitored the numbers of LAC placed by other authorities and raised the risk issues with Welsh Government which had yet to respond.

It was asked why the numbers of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) suffering emotional abuse and the numbers being re-registered were increasing. The Head of Children's Services stated that children were registered for one overriding issue however often suffered multiple issues. There were an increasing number of children experiencing domestic abuse which was an area of concern usually classed as Emotional Abuse; hence the rise as safeguarding training delivered to schools and other partner agencies had raised awareness. A key message was that mental health services for children and young people needed to be improved. The re-registering of children was an issue that needed to be looked at however, as stated in the report; there is a desire to only use the register as a short term measure. It was important to note that his teams continued to work with families when they came off the CPR and a Children in Need plan was always put in place.

A question was asked about the nature of Section 47 enquiries. The Head of Children's Services confirmed that these were where a referral proceeds to a formal investigation, usually jointly with the Police, because of the likelihood of an offence committed against a child causing significant harm.

RESOLVED

5.1 Endorse the report

5.2 To request that the CYSUR Executive Board gives consideration to Elected Member representation on the Board.

6. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2015/16

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Reports relating to the 2015/16 financial year as at the end of June for the Education & Children Department.

Concerns were expressed about the budget pressures caused by school based EVR and redundancy costs. The Head of Education Services advised the Council held the budget for school based redundancies but had, in reality, no control over it as decisions are made by Governing Bodies. Consideration was being given to reviewing the policy which currently included 3 years enhancement which is more generous than other authorities. A redeployment protocol for schools was also being developed and they were working effectively with some secondary schools.

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Tracking of teachers released through voluntary redundancy was also being undertaken to ensure they were not re-employed in a slightly different capacity in a brief space of time. The Director added that these decisions were made by individual schools over which the Department had no control.

It was noted that the forecast overspend of £602k was being balanced from the departmental reserves. It was asked what reserve remained. The Director stated that the forecast overspend had increased to £1m as at the end of August which left no departmental reserves. This also meant that their planned use over the next few years had to be abandoned.

An update on the Seaside new school project was requested. The Director advised that the final plan had been submitted to WG. The Environment Department was working with the appointed contractor to keep costs down and building work would commence in spring 2016. Following concerns expressed about the access from Copperwork Road, he shared the disappointment that WG refused to fund any work outside the school site, which restricted improvements to the access.

It was highlighted that parents were complaining about the delays in progressing the Trimsaran school project. The Director responded that the school should be communicating with parents but that the project had suffered numerous complications in terms of site selection, with several changes of direction. Contractors had started work on demolishing the infants block however the nature of the work had also become more difficult.

In response to a question about Cwm Tywi, the Director confirmed that the consultation was proceeding. It was currently intended to increase capacity at the Llangadog school site to secure provision in the area.

RESOLVED to endorse the report.

7. INTRODUCTION OF A CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING POLICY THAT COVERS ALL THE COUNCIL'S SERVICE AREAS

The Committee considered a draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy which had been developed in response to a 2014 Wales Audit Office review of the assurance and accountability arrangements of Carmarthenshire County Council for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures were in place and being adhered to. The review was specifically in relation to children and overall the findings were that the authority had adequate systems in place. One of the recommendations was to develop and introduce a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that covers all the Council's service areas.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the proposed policy.

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

The Committee considered a report and received a presentation regarding the provisional Examination and Teacher Assessment Results and provisional school attendance data for 2015. It noted that the verified data would be presented early in the New Year.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

A question was asked about the potential impact of journey times on pupil performance. The Head of School Effectiveness advised that this could be looked at regionally by sampling 10 schools and a sample of pupils living at a distance compared with a sample of pupils living locally.

The Committee congratulated the officers on the improvements in performance and attendance. It was asked if enough publicity had been given to this. The Head of Education Services noted that press releases about the results at Glanymor School had been published on the day of the results. The Director advised that the verified data report to the Committee would provide a further opportunity to celebrate the results.

It was highlighted that consistent KS2 and KS3 teacher assessments were part of Estyn's criteria for a successful school. The Head of School Effectiveness responded that Welsh Government (WG) had assumed that teachers were mature enough to make accurate assessments however there were no national guidelines and the guidance for the "best-fit" model had been interpreted differently. Aneirin Thomas (Challenge Advisor, Team Leader) was leading on the ERW regional review making recommendations to WG on how to improve the system and police it. One of the suggestions was to look at a pupil's full portfolio and Estyn now asked to see pupils' books. It was also intended to moderate Welsh and English language assessments next year to improve consistency. The Director added that the WG review of assessments in 2013 had concluded that they were worth nothing for the purpose of comparing performance. The results of the moderation pilot this year should be published in the coming months.

It was asked if the KS3 results could also be presented by linguistic category of the schools. The Director agreed to include this in the verified data report planned for January 2016.

Clarification was requested in relation to the age range for the national literacy and numeracy tests and it was asked why the Welsh language results were below the Welsh average. The Head of Education Services advised that they were a global figure for years 2 to 9. He added that the Welsh literacy tests only assessed Welsh 1st language at primary and secondary. Over 60% of pupils in Welsh Medium schools did not come from Welsh speaking households however the results would need to be analysed and compared with other similar counties to see where improvements could be made.

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It was noted that one of the priorities for this year is to improve the performance of e-fsm learners. The Head of School Effectiveness stated that this was a national as well as a local priority. There were positive examples locally of how the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) had been used but also examples where there had been no improvements, despite the PDG. WG now wanted the outcomes from the PDG and, going forward, schools where less than 30% of e-fsm learners achieved Level 2 (5 GCSE A*C passes) would automatically be classed in the amber category 3. The ERW target this year was 30% and next year would be 32%. The Committee suggested forming a task and finish group to undertake detailed research into this area. The Director welcomed the idea, highlighting the added value the work by Members would bring.

It was noted that joint arrangements for the scrutiny of ERW were being developed, initially by informal discussions between scrutiny officers and the Managing Director of ERW. The Committee was asked if it was happy to nominate the Chair and Vice-Chair to represent it at any regional meetings, seminars or events to further develop the regional scrutiny arrangements.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to:

- 8.1 Endorse the report**
- 8.2 Establish a task and finish Group to undertake a review into the attainment gap for eligible for free school meals learners.**
- 8.3 That the Chair be given delegated authority to accept nominations to serve on the politically balanced task and finish group from the leaders of the political groups (2 Independents, 2 Labour and 2 Plaid Cymru).**
- 8.4 To extend an invitation to the co-opted members of the Committee to join the task and finish group.**
- 8.5 That the Chair and Vice-Chair be nominated to represent the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee at all events held to develop joint scrutiny arrangements across the ERW region.**

9. CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2015-18, ACTION PLAN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROMISE

The Committee welcomed a report including The Children & Young People's Participation Strategy 2015-18, the Action Plan to deliver on the 10 priorities and a Children's Rights Promise, developed by children and young people across the county to give a clearer understanding of children's rights.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to endorse the Children & Young People's Participation Strategy 2015-18, Action Plan and Children's Rights Promise to the Executive Board.

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10. YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET) A CARMARTHENSHIRE PERSPECTIVE

The Committee considered an update regarding the current actions to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education and training (NEETs), as requested at its meeting on the 18th May 2015.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:

Clarification was requested as to the extent of the Authority's ability to track NEETs. The Director advised that NEET data could be captured on exit from school but no further by the Authority. The Lifelong Learning Networks Manager added that Careers Wales captured school destination and NEET "snapshot" data at the end of October for year 11, 12 & 13 leavers. There was also monthly tracking between the 5 tier database sectors and youth workers could actively follow up that NEET group.

Further detail was requested in relation to the reference that the allocation to the Youth Services core budget from the notional allocation in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) was the lowest in Wales. The Director clarified that an assessment of need formula had been agreed between the WG and WLGA. The notional element for Youth Services was £1.9m but Council had decided to only give £563k to the core budget. The Service had been successful in securing grants however levels were falling.

Reference was made to the final statement in the report about the very significant risk that the number of young people becoming NEET would increase in the next 5 years. The Director advised the reducing budget meant that fewer youth workers could be employed. Hopes were being pinned on funding from the new ESF projects in November however this would be far less than what was needed.

UNANIMOUSLY resolved to endorse the report.

11. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORTS

The Committee considered the explanation for the non-submission of the Families First Update and Flying Start Update reports.

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

12. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 6th JULY, 2015.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th of July 2015, be signed as a correct record.

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13. **TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE JOINT EDUCATION & CHILDREN AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 18th MAY 2015**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the joint Education & Children and Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 18th of May 2015, be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE