

# EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 24 January 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillor D. Price (Chair)

**Councillors:**

L.R. Bowen, K.V. Broom, D.M. Cundy, I.W. Davies, B.W. Jones, G.R. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, B. Thomas, E.G. Thomas, D.T. Williams, M. Jones, G. Cornock-Evans and J. Davies

**Also in attendance:**

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

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services  
A. Rees, Head of Learner Programmes  
S. Davies, Head of Access to Education  
A. Morgan, Head of Education Services  
S. Nolan, Group Accountant  
L. Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

**Chamber, - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP. - Times Not Specified**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for were received from Councillor S. Najmi and from Mrs G. Cornock-Evans (Parent Governor Member - Carmarthen).

**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	4, 5 and 6	His wife works in the Education Department
E. Schiavone	4, 5 and 6	His wife works in Q.E. High School

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

**3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)**

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

**4. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

[NOTE: Councillors G. Jones and E. Schiavone had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee received the Budget Monitoring Report in relation to the Education and Children Service which provided an update on the latest budgetary position as at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019, in respect of the 2018/19 financial year. The Education and Children Service is currently projecting an overspend of £1.672m on the revenue budget.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:

It was highlighted that the projected overspend had decreased from £1.9 million at the end of August to £1.6 million at the end of October and the latest draft report to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 submitted showed a slightly improved picture. Members asked for the contributing factors of a further reduced overspend. It was noted that the overspend might reduce further if some small contingencies were not utilised.

## 5. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT 2017/18

[NOTE: Councillors G. Jones and E. Schiavone had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee received the School Performance and Achievement Report for 2017/18. Members were asked to note the content of the report and the key issues arising from analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in relation to the performance of schools during the academic year 2017/18. The Head of Education Services gave a verbal overview of the report and in particular drew members' attention to the following items:

- Summary of teacher assessments and examination results for pupils in the Foundation Phase, Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5.
- School Improvements Outcomes
- Developing Values for Skills for Lifelong Learning

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:

- Members asked for further information about pupils who have additional private tuition outside school and whether this was monitored, with particular concerns raised in relation to additional tuition being undertaken to cover the shortfall in a particular subject or school. Concerns were also raised in relation to the inequality and deprivation agenda in relation to this matter. The Head of Education Services advised that it would be difficult to attempt to manage and control this area, however, it may be possible to look into a way of monitoring the issue.
- Members asked for further information on the Carmarthenshire Independent School-based Counselling Service, which is stated in the report as a professionally accredited independent school-based counselling service available to young people from year 6 to age 18. The Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing advised that there is a great need for this service, which is currently provided, typically in secondary schools, three days a week. An anonymised report is provided to headteachers in order to gain an overview of issues and concerns.

- Concerns were raised with regards to the Foundation Phase Indicator and Area of Learning Outcomes (1.1.1 Page 31), which shows that we remain under the Wales average in our FPI performance – showing a decline of 4.7%. The Head of Education Services advised that the areas in question were not assessed in the same way across the country, although some work was being done to resolve this.
- Members sought clarification in relation to item 1.2 in the report (Attendance – Primary School Performance) and raised concerns regarding the below-target performance over the past three years. The Head of Education Services advised that further analysis of the figures showed that health and holidays (authorised and unauthorised) were the main reasons for absence. He advised that if the Education Welfare Service or a school had specific concerns regarding a pupil's attendance necessary steps would be taken to work with the parents involved.
- Members were encouraged by the significant increase in the number of graduates of the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) Programme and asked for further information on the number of graduates who were now in post or awaiting appointment. Furthermore, in response to a further query in relation to the opportunities available for mentoring graduates of the programme, the Head of Education Services advised that there were opportunities for individuals to be released for mentoring, but that costs were associated with this. It was acknowledged that this would be an area which would warrant further consideration.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the School Performance and Achievement Report 2017/18 be received.**

## **6. MEP PROGRESS REPORT TO DECEMBER 2018**

[NOTE: Councillors G. Jones and E. Schiavone had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee received an update on the Modernising Education Programme update to December 2018.

The Head of Access to Education gave a verbal overview of the report and drew members attention to projects in Band A which were close to completion and Band B projects due to commence in April 2019. Recent reconsideration by the Welsh Government of grant intervention rates for Band B have increased the grant rate for capital projects in mainstream schools to 65% and 75% for Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units.

The following observations/questions were raised on the report:

In response to a question on the former site of Ysgol Tregib, Llandeilo, the Executive Board Member for Education advised that a report on the site had been informally considered by the Executive Board ahead of formally presenting the matter to the Executive Board at a later date. The Executive Board Member also addressed the delays to the programme at Ysgol Gymraeg Rhydaman, advising that the purchase of an additional piece of land for a new site had caused delays, but an agreement in principle to purchase additional land had been accepted.

Members raised concerns regarding the lack of information regarding the proposed federation of schools and school closures. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the portfolio of primary schools has been under review since September, and discussions on creating new federations were in their early stages. Discussions were centred on the number of pupils and the locations and size of the unit to be created; it is preferred that a federation has in excess of 100 pupils. It was acknowledged that officers involved in the process of federating required specific leadership skills and relevant training was currently being reviewed. In response to a question on whether headteachers would be open to the prospect of federating schools, the Head of Education Services advised that the Local Authority cannot maintain the current footprint and that there was clear plan in place to strengthen the current service. He underlined that there was no intention to eradicate local provision; however there was a need to be clear in regard to providing the best possible service with the funding available, which may entail federating smaller schools.

The Committee shared examples of community use of local school facilities and agreed that further work was required in order to create a model that would enable local communities to utilise these assets. Members noted that responsibility for damage, supervision, insurance and maintenance were among the issues that constitute barriers to sharing school facilities. The Head of Access to Education advised that the Governing Body had responsibility for the school facilities and any agreement would be between them and the organisation taking responsibility for the facilities outside school hours. In addition, the Committee were informed that there were no known examples of best practice within other Local Authorities or any powers to enforce schools to enter into an agreement to share facilities. Governing Bodies were generally very proactive in wanting to share facilities with their communities.

Concerns were also raised in relation to the long-term maintenance of 3G AstroTurf pitches, which were an example of shared assets between schools and communities. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the development of a corporate strategy in regard to this matter was currently under way. It was considered that the responsibility for covering such maintenance costs should not fall to individual schools but shared between schools and the Local Authority.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the MEP Progress report to December 2018 be received.**

## **7. ERW SCRUTINY UPDATE**

The Director of Education and Children's Services shared a presentation previously delivered at the ERW Councillor Scrutiny Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019, and was due to be considered by the ERW Joint Committee at the next meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The presentation outlined proposed reforms to the ERW partnership.

The following observations/questions were raised on the presentation:

It was noted that the reforms appeared to set out a clearer vision of how ERW should work in the future, and the Committee was reassured that there was a clear focus on school improvement and to raise current standards.

The Director of Education and Children's Services acknowledged that there had been some difficult issues within the systems and structures of ERW, and also in regard to the expectation of each Local Authority; however recent changes implemented by the Interim Managing Director and proposed reforms would alleviate those issues going forward.

It was noted that the new reforms supported cross-border working and allowed for staff to undertake more work outside of their Local Authority. It also offered a more robust structure for reporting and monitoring.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the ERW Scrutiny Update be received.**

## **8. ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING**

The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing gave an overview of the report and drew members' attention to the changes in funding. The Welsh Government direct grant to the ACL was subject to change from September 2019 (WG to confirm time scale), following an extensive consultation by the Welsh Government. It is likely that the grant would continue to be awarded to LEA/FE colleges within each Local Authority, however the allocations would be recalculated to ensure a more equitable distribution across Wales, however, the allocation amount had yet to be confirmed. It was likely that the funding methodology would replicate the FE funding model rather than the current 'lump sum' allocation, and funding would be directly drawn down based on delivery, which may have implications for the overall service budget.

The following observations/questions were raised on the report:

In response to an observation on the fall below national standards in 2016/17, the Community Learning Manager advised that this was due to the way in which standards were currently recorded. There were instances when a period of learning may cover more than one year and also changes within an academic year. It was considered unlikely that the standards would remain below national standards.

Members sought clarification on the way in which courses were advertised and the types of courses available. The Community Learning Manager advised details of courses were available on the website and on the Dewis Cymru platform. Some participants were referred from other agencies. In recent years courses provided had moved away from leisure-based courses to courses focused on increasing employability and maintaining digital literacy.

Members asked for further information on the asset transfer of Glanamman Community Centre to Cwmamman Town Council, in particular how the transfer was financed and why it was marked for transfer. The Community Learning Manager advised that the transfer had been financed on a five-year sliding scale with 100% funding by CCC in year 1, decreasing to 75% in year 2 etc. Glanamman Community Centre had seen a decline in the number of adults engaging in learning and the centre would have closed if the asset transfer had

been declined. Other Community Learning Centres had previously gone through the asset transfer process, with centres transferred to the local community. The Executive Board Member for Education and Children shared an example of how community-run facilities work well; the Mynydd Du Centre in Brynamman offered some adult education provision in response to local need, where previously there had been no provision.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Adult Community Learning report be received.**

## **9. SCHOOL'S DEVELOPMENT FUND.**

The Director of Education and Children's Services gave an overview of his report.

The following observations/questions were raised on the report:

Members noted that a total of 11 applications had been received for the School Development Fund, with a total funding request of £224k. Of the 11 applications, three had already been approved at a combined value of £116k. The remaining applications have recently been received and were currently being reviewed. The majority of applications received relate to proposed upgrades to IT equipment in order to meet modern digital requirements or the purchase of telephone systems to enable schools to leave expensive lease agreements.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the School Development Fund report be received.**

## **10. HEALTHY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE**

The Healthy Schools Officer gave a presentation on the Carmarthenshire Healthy Schools Initiative.

The following observations/questions were raised on the report:

Members asked for clarification on the marked decrease in the number of schools achieving Phase 4 and 5, which must be achieved before being assessed for the National Quality Award. The Healthy Schools Officer advised that there was an increase in the amount of evidence required as the phases progress, but schools were achieving the milestones required and that Ysgol Feithrin Rhydaman was due to be assessed at the end of March. Seven schools were in the process, or about to begin the process of applying for the National Quality Award.

In response to a question, the Healthy Schools Officer advised that parents were encouraged to be involved in the initiative and schools often invite parents to view a presentation, or share information in a newsletter. Also, some of the milestones schools were required to achieve, involved parents and the wider community.

Members showed great interest in the Speakr programme and how it was used in schools to monitor the wellbeing of pupils, and wanted to gain an understanding of why only 54 schools currently use the programme. The Healthy Schools Officer advised that the cost of the IT kit required was the main barrier for schools, and it often came down to other whether the school had other priorities within their budgets. In giving an overview of the Speakr she advised that the programme

allowed children to record how they feel each morning on arrival at school, and at other points during the day. Pupils are able to note how they feel at that particular point, and the system provided an opportunity for pupils to provide a reason for their feelings. Staff were trained to deal with any concerns and would develop a plan to help any child. In addition a workshop would be held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 for Healthy Schools Co-ordinators on the Speakr Programme which aimed to encourage schools to buy into the programme. In response to a question on whether the funding for Speakr could be accessed from the School Development Fund, the Director of Education and Children's Services advised that it would not be a problem as the sums involved were relatively small.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Healthy Schools Initiative report be received.**

**11. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019, be agreed.**

**12. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 18th DECEMBER 2018.**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018 be signed as a correct record.**

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CHAIR

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DATE