

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE & THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A.C. Jones (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

S.M. Allen	K.V. Broom	L. Davies	P. Hughes-Griffiths
B.W. Jones	E. Skinner		

Councillors (Virtually):

L.R. Bowen	D. Jones	S.L. Rees	M. Thomas
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Co-opted Members (In Person):

A. Butcher, Parent Governor
A. Enoch, Parent Governor
V. Kenny, Roman Catholic Church Representative

Cabinet Members (In Person)

G. Davies, Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language

Also Present (In Person):

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
S. Davies, Head of Access to Education
A Thomas, Head of Education Services and Inclusion
E. Forsyth, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness
G. Evans, Headteacher, Ysgol Y Strade
Ll. Jones, Principal Education Support Advisor
C. Davies Education Support Advisor
G. Kirby, Music Service Coordinator
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

A. Rees, Head of Strategy and Learner Support
J. Stuart, Senior Business Partner (HR)
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 am – 12.36pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.J.A. Lewis and H. Jones.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
B. W. Jones	5. School Recruitment and Staffing Update	Son is Headteacher of a school within Carmarthenshire. Cllr Jones has been granted dispensation by the Standards Committee allowing her to speak and make representations only.

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. REVIEW OF SUPPLY STAFF ARRANGEMENTS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

Committee considered a report which detailed the current Supply Staff arrangements in Carmarthenshire. The report had been requested to review the cost effectiveness of the current external provision and to explore the potential viability of an in-house service provision.

The report set out the current arrangements, costings and potential alternative models for the provision of supply staff. In this regard, Committee was interested to note that the Welsh Government would be implementing a National Supply Pool with a digital platform in an endeavour to develop options for a sustainable model of supply teaching with fair work across Wales. It was noted that implementation would be on a staggered approach and Committee looked forward with interest to receiving an update following analysis of the pilot within Anglesey Local Authority.

A number of observations and queries were addressed, as follows:

In response to a query regarding the significant increase in agency staff expenditure in recent years, the Lead Business Partner explained that the costings may be attributable to the additional agency staff engaged by schools which had been paid for by Welsh Government grant funding as part of the post-pandemic recovery process. Committee was advised that the funding would have primarily been awarded for the purpose of recruiting additional teaching and support staff, however due to the uncertainty around the duration of the grant funding, schools may have been reluctant to employ permanent staff which would have incurred additional redundancy costs following the cessation of funding. Accordingly, a reduction in overall agency spend was expected in line with the reduction or withdrawal of these grants.

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The Head of Education and Inclusion Services clarified, in response to a question, that the additional expenditure was attributable directly to the increase in demand, as opposed to the rising costs of supply teachers.

Following a query, the Lead Business Partner outlined the costings and timescales involved in direct Local Authority employment, including on-costs compared with utilisation of Agency Staff which would include agency fees. In this regard the Lead Business Partner confirmed that the minimum pay rate for Supply Teachers who held the Qualified Teacher Status was in line with the current published School Teacher's Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document; nevertheless, schools were authorised to pay highly daily rates if appropriate.

A discussion ensued on the differing roles of Supply Teachers with Qualified Teacher Status and Cover Supervisors. In response to the concerns raised by Committee regarding the potential for schools to utilise more Cover Supervisors as a budget saving solution, the Head of Education and Inclusion Services outlined the quality of learning checks undertaken by the Authority and commented that schools should make effective use of a blend of both Supply Teachers and Cover Supervisors.

Following a query regarding the allocation of funding for schools, the Head of Education and Inclusion Services confirmed that additional funding would be provided to schools with greater challenges, including those within deprived areas by way of core funding and grant supplements.

The Committee acknowledged that initial analysis suggested that none of the alternative models detailed within the report would result in savings to schools or the Authority. However, a change of approach to covering short-term teacher absences with a Cover Supervisor could generate some efficiencies with minimum impact on pupils and their learning. Accordingly, it was expressed that the way forward should incorporate a combined approach, with improved absence management processes to reduce the amount of supply cover needed, together with cost effective supply cover.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 4.1 the report be noted and a further update be considered by the Committee following completion of the pilot study undertaken at Anglesey Local Authority.**
- 4.2 the comments and observations made by the Committee in respect of the review of supply staff arrangements within Carmarthenshire Council be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration.**

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

5. SCHOOL RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING UPDATE

[Note: Councillor B. W. Jones had earlier declared an interest in this item and remained in the meeting during the deliberation of the matter but did not vote].

Committee considered a report which provided an update on the current position in respect of recruitment and retention in schools. In this regard, the report set out statistics for the county, together with comparable figures at a national level pertaining to the recruitment and retention of teachers, the number of Welsh language medium teachers, the number of students applying for and completing Post Graduate Certificates in Welsh and English and an overview of the current leadership context.

In reviewing the report, a synopsis of the array of measures being explored to address the significant challenges was provided to the Committee in the context of professional development programmes, marketing campaigns and the recruitment process within the Council. Detailed consideration was given to the overarching recommendations set out in the report.

A number of observations and queries were addressed, as follows:

In response to a query, the Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness reported that there was a national shortage of people interested in teaching as a career. Reference was made to anecdotal evidence of teaching becoming a less desirable profession for a variety of reasons which needed to be addressed, including the remuneration for Teaching Assistant roles commensurable to the requirements of the role. The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness provided an assurance that a Consultative Group had been established within the Authority to review all aspects of the teaching structure and was comprised of a vertical slice of employees involved in the education of Carmarthenshire pupils. It was acknowledged that more work could be done on a national level to tap into the wealth of experience available which would, in turn, contribute positively to the learning experience.

In response to a request for further information pertaining to the professional learning offer, the Committee was advised that the Carmarthenshire Leadership Academy had been co-constructed with school leaders and would be supported by a central online platform to assist schools in prioritising training requirements to areas of need. An assurance was provided that additional support was available from the School Improvement Team to the smaller schools with limited extended leadership structure.

A suggestion was put forth to undertake a task and finish on school federations to explore the correlation between recruitment and budget implications within the context of the Modernising Education Programme. The Chair advised that, if appropriate, the need for a task and finish group could be reviewed following delivery of the workshop on school federations to the Committee scheduled in the Spring 2024. The Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language highlighted that the Cabinet was currently reviewing the school footprint as part of

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the Modernising Education Programme to address the significant challenges currently faced by schools.

Following a query on the impact of school building maintenance costs on school budgets the Director of Education and Children reported that information would be circulated to the Committee on the calculation of the funding formula and school budget allocation per head. It was confirmed that Governing Bodies were responsible for ensuring that the funding was utilised to meet the needs of their respective school. It was however acknowledged that the funding did not meet all costs incurred by some schools, particularly in respect of repair and maintenance of buildings as the budget allocation was primarily based on pupil numbers. Initiatives such as the handy van service had been rolled out to primary schools in an endeavour to ease the burden of schools in this regard.

RESOLVED that:

- 5.1 the report be noted;**
- 5.2 information on the calculation of the funding formula and school budget allocation per head be circulated to the Committee;**
- 5.3 the comments and observations made by the Committee in respect of the recruitment and retention in schools be noted by the Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language and the Director of Education and Children's Services.**

6. THE MUSIC SERVICE

Committee received for consideration a report which provided an overview of the statutory and non-statutory delivery of the music service within Carmarthenshire County Council, together with the positive impact on personal and societal levels.

The report detailed the array of benefits derived from music education and noted its importance within the context of the Curriculum for Wales and the National Plan for Music Education. Furthermore, the Committee was provided with an overview of the range of support offered to both primary and secondary schools via an annual Service Level Agreement for a wide range of disciplines, in addition to the corporate and community support provided by the music service annually.

A number of observations and queries were addressed, as follows:

An overview of the funding mechanisms for the music service was provided to the Committee whereby schools had a menu of options available to them as part of a Service Level Agreement. It was explained that most schools had a charging policy in place whereby pupils were required to pay a contribution towards music tuition, which was topped up by core funding by the Authority. Furthermore, it was clarified that music education as a subject within secondary schools would be provided from school budgets. In response to a query, the

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Music Service Coordinator provided an assurance that no charges were levied upon pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) for music service tuition and loan of instruments to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. The Committee was gratified to note that many pupils made the most of the opportunities provided in this regard.

The Committee commended the music service provision within the Council for its sterling contribution to the development of learners across Carmarthenshire and emphasised the importance of music education for several reasons, including health and wellbeing, confidence building, cultural appreciation, cognitive development and creativity.

The Music Service Coordinator, in response to comments made by the Committee, provided a synopsis of the future plans for community support which included opportunities to work with the Adult and Community Learning team to provide opportunities for learners of all ages and engage greater with the generic public. The Authority also engaged with theatres across Carmarthenshire to offer a programme of orchestra concerts.

RESOLVED that:

- 6.1 the report be noted;**
- 6.2 the development of the music provision for adults be endorsed;**
- 6.3 the comments and observations made by the Committee in respect of the music service be noted by the Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language and the Director of Education and Children's Services.**

7. SCRUTINY ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report which detailed the progress achieved in relation to requests or referrals emerging from previous meetings of the Education, Young People and Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee during the 2022/23 and 2023/24 municipal years.

Reference was made to the delayed report in respect of the Update on Estyn's Review of the Welsh for Adults Provision whereby it was emphasised that two years had passed since the review and therefore a request was made for the report to be provided for the next meeting. The Director of Education and Children's Services clarified that there had been developments in respect of the service within the county and discussions with Welsh for Adults were ongoing. An assurance was provided that the report would be submitted to the Committee as soon as possible, with a final date to be confirmed with the Chair.

RESOLVED that:

- 7.1 the report be noted;**

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7.2 An update report on Estyn’s Review of the Welsh for Adults Provision be submitted to the Committee as soon as possible, with a final date to be confirmed with the Chair.

8. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the following scrutiny report:

Eight Priority Areas within the Education and Children's Services division (Estyn Inspection Recommendations). It was noted that the report would be considered by the Committee in Spring 2024.

In addition, Committee was advised that the report pertaining to the 10 year social services strategy, which was due to be circulated by email, had been delayed until 31 January 2024.

RESOLVED that the explanation for the non-submission be noted.

9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 31st January 2024.

RESOLVED that

9.1 the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 31st January 2024 be noted.

9.2 An update report on school budgets be incorporated into the 2024/25 Forward Work Plan, to be considered at the Committee meeting scheduled 26 June 2024.

10. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 9TH OCTOBER 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9th October 2023 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.