

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE & THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 26 JUNE 2024

PRESENT: Councillor A.C. Jones (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

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

Councillors (Virtually):

D. Jones	S.L. Rees	J. Williams
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Co-opted Members (In Person):

A. Enoch, Parent Governor Representative
M. Hughes, Church in Wales Representative
V. Kenny, Roman Catholic Church Representative

The following Cabinet Member was in attendance (In Person):

Councillor G. Davies, Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language

School Representatives in attendance:

E. Powell, Ysgol Gynradd Peniel
G. Richards, Ysgol Gynradd Y Bedol
G. Roberts, Ysgol Gynradd Y Bedol

Also Present (In Person):

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
E. Forsyth, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness
A. Carter, Senior Manager - TIC Schools
R. Williams, Additional Needs Provision Manager
E. Williams, Additional Needs Processing Manager
R. Davies, Additional Learning Needs Advisory Teacher
T. Earey, Additional Learning Needs Advisory Teacher
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

S. Griffiths, Modernising Team Leader
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer
D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 am - 12.39 pm

[The meeting was adjourned at 11:35hrs due to technical issues. The meeting reconvened at 11:45].

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
Cllr. B. W. Jones	5. Modernising In Education Programme Strategy.	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. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

The Committee received for consideration an update on the Authority's implementation of the provisions enshrined within the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which aimed to transform the expectations, experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The report detailed the Authority's progress to date, areas of best practice, areas for improvement and the future developments required to support ongoing reform. The Committee was advised that the Authority was on target to transfer all children to the new ALN system by the end of the 2024/2025 academic year.

The Committee thereupon received a presentation which detailed the experiences of Ysgol Y Bedol, Ysgol Peniel and Ysgol St. John Lloyds in embedding the ALN system within their respective schools.

The Committee reviewed the areas considered to be working well and those that needed to be addressed in terms of the role of the ALN Co-ordinators, training and support, Person-Centred Planning approaches and the ongoing partnership working with health professionals. The Committee acknowledged the endeavours of the Authority in embedding a system which ensured the availability and delivery of bilingual resources, assessments, staffing and sufficiency of specialist provision. In this regard the Committee was informed that the Authority was the Welsh National lead in working across Local Authorities to

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ensure Welsh provision is in place and resources are being developed to support ALN transformation.

In considering the challenges for the implementation of ALN it was noted that the main areas centred upon staffing capacity, consistency in ALN identification, funding and resource allocation, quality assurance of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), multi-agency collaboration and engagement with non-maintained settings and meeting post-16 learner responsibilities.

The issues/observations raised by the Committee were addressed as follows:-

The Committee expressed concerns regarding the unacceptable NHS delays in children receiving autism and ADHD assessments but were encouraged to note that support was available to all pupils with additional learning needs, regardless of formal medical diagnosis.

The Additional Needs Provision Manager, in response to a query, appraised Committee of the array of measures undertaken by the Authority to enhance consistency of ALN procedures across schools; these included universal provision requirements, the sharing of best practice, the provision of a comprehensive training and support programme and close working arrangements with schools.

It was clarified to members that legislation prescribed that IDPs were expected to be completed within a period of 12 weeks using a person-centred approach and information gathering from a variety of sources / appropriate stakeholders. Furthermore, an enhanced ALN transition protocol had been embedded within the Authority to ensure that appropriate pupil information could be shared seamlessly within the confines of data protection protocols. Accordingly, IDPs were deemed to be flexible documents which would transfer with pupils who moved schools, including the transition from primary to secondary schools.

The ongoing review of the role requirements and pay structure of ALN Coordinators and Teaching Assistants was welcomed by the Committee, though it was acknowledged that any increases to the pay awards would have significant financial implications.

The Director of Education and Children's Services confirmed to the Committee that the Authority had seen a significant increase in the number of electively home educated pupils during the year and this trend was reflective at a national level. In this regard, parents/guardians were not required to stipulate their reasons for removing their children from school settings.

The Committee was informed that complexities in respect of health and multi-agency collaboration centred upon referrals from social services, establishing responsibility for funding and dealing with differing protocols for cross-border agencies. Support was provided to schools by the Authority to overcome such challenges. In response to a query, the Additional Needs Provision Manager clarified that the Authority provided a differentiated model of support to schools to address the individual needs of pupils.

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- 4.1 the report be noted;
- 4.2 a workshop on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation be incorporated into the 2024/25 Forward Work Plan.

5. MODERNISING IN EDUCATION PROGRAMME STRATEGY

[NOTE: Councillor B.W. Jones, having earlier declared an interest in this item, remained in the meeting during its consideration but did not vote.]

The Committee considered the Authority's draft MEP Strategy which had been developed to direct the future delivery of the new Modernising Education Programme. The draft strategy was guided by a set of strategic aims and underpinned by the principle of a holistic approach and the requirement to enhance and support a range of national, corporate and educational objectives. Furthermore, the draft strategy detailed the viability and investment criteria required to ensure an appropriate and transparent method of developing school organisation and investment proposals.

In presenting the report the Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language reminded Committee that a comprehensive public consultation on the draft strategy had been undertaken between 13th February 2024 and 12th March 2024 and all feedback provided would be considered by the Cabinet.

The issues/observations raised by the Committee were addressed as follows:-

In response to concerns raised in respect of new school buildings reaching pupil capacity within a short period of time, the Director of Education and Children's Services appraised Committee of the Welsh Government guidelines in respect of the design of new school buildings. It was reported that the Cabinet had, on occasion, previously accounted for the projected future capacity requirements of new schools during the design phase of buildings where the information available anticipated future growth; nevertheless, such decisions were made at risk and could incur financial penalties from Welsh Government should the future capacity projections not materialise. A request was made that the designs for future new buildings accommodate the potential to add extensions should the space and requirement allow.

The Modernising Education Programme Manager clarified, in response to a query regarding the significant timeframes involved in the delivery of new school build projects, that the Authority was able to base its projections for a period of 5 years, and project plans were periodically reviewed to ensure accuracy prior to the commencement of construction work. Furthermore, there was also an opportunity to amend the scope of a project with Welsh Government if required, however these were subject to certain conditions being met.

Reference was made to the significant financial pressures within the Education and Children capital programme whereby it was explained that school repairs and maintenance were prioritised according to areas of greatest needs; it was

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however acknowledged that the available budget was insufficient to meet the needs of schools.

In terms of improving the quality of buildings, a concern was expressed that the draft strategy referred only to new school buildings. A discussion thereupon ensued on the Carmarthenshire's Primary Educational Principles set out within the report. In this regard, a suggestion was put forth for the Cabinet to consider the removal of the education principle pertaining to no more than 2 year groups being allocated per teaching class on the basis that this would place additional pressure on staff and uncertainty for parents. In respect of the guiding principle relating to sustainable leadership, it was clarified that the aim was to enable all headteachers across the Authority to undertake a leadership role with no teaching commitments, however the complexities in this regard were recognised and furthermore, it was emphasised that the principles were not statutory requirements. It was agreed that information on the number of headteachers with teaching commitments, together with the number of primary schools with than 2 year groups being allocated per teaching class would be circulated to the Committee.

Reference was made to the Cabinet's vision for education which included a commitment to increase the utilisation of school facilities for community use outside of teaching hours. Accordingly, it was queried whether consideration would be given to the individual position of each school within the context of the resources and facilities available. The Director of Education and Children's Services clarified that a number of projects were in progress which specified grant funding for use by both schools and the community. It was also explained that whilst schools were encouraged to share its facilities with surrounding communities where possible, it was recognised that factors such as the current local provision, costs and the suitability of facilities would need to be considered.

Reference was made to the viability criteria set out within the draft strategy whereby the Director of Education and Children's Services emphasised the importance of ensuring an education system which was reflective of the geographical nature of the county and noted the suggestion to provide further information clarity in terms of pupil numbers.

RESOLVED that:

- 5.1 the report be noted;**
- 5.2 the comments made by the Committee be considered by the Cabinet.**

6. EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Committee received for consideration the Education, Young People and Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee Annual Report which detailed the work undertaken by the Committee during the 2023/24 municipal year. The report had

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been prepared in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Council's Constitution and provided an overview of the work programme and key issues addressed, whilst also incorporating any issues referred to, or from, the Cabinet, Task and Finish reviews, development sessions and member attendance.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be endorsed.

7. EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN FOR 2024/25

The Committee reviewed its draft Forward Work Plan for 2024/25 which had been compiled following the Committee's informal planning session held on the 10 April 2024 and subsequent feedback provided by members and officers. It was emphasised that the Forward Work Plan was a flexible document that could be updated throughout the year as and when required.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Education, Young People and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan 2024/25 be approved.

8. 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 2023/24 municipal year.

The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that that the information requested by the Committee in respect of the calculation of the funding formula and school budget allocation per head would be circulated to the Committee imminently. Further information in this regard would also be included within the schools budget report which was scheduled to be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 17 MAY 2024

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 May 2024 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

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