

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 23 APRIL 2018

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price [Chair]

Councillors:

L.R. Bowen, I.W. Davies, W.T. Evans (in place of K.V. Broom), 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 M. Jones – Parent Governor [Dinefwr Area]
Mrs G. Cornock-Evans – Parent Governor [Carmarthen Area]
Mr J. Davies – Parent Governor [Llanelli Area]

Also in attendance:

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

Also present:

Mr Alan Edwards, ERW Head of Teaching and Learning – in respect of agenda item no. 5

The following Officers were in attendance:

Mr G. Morgans	-	Director of Education & Children's Services
Mr N. Daniel	-	Head of ICT
Ms E. Forsyth	-	Head of School Effectiveness/Principal Challenge Adviser
Mr A. Morgan	-	Head of Education Services
Mr A. Rees	-	Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing
Mr S. Davies	-	Modernisation Services Manager
Ms C. Griffiths	-	Welsh Language Development Manager
Ms B. James	-	Service Manager Corporate Parenting
Mr M. Jenkins	-	Strategic Technical Manager
Ms J. Meredith	-	Service Manager
Ms A. Parsons	-	Social Worker Fostering Recruitment
Mr J. Buck	-	Children & Schools Information Officer
Mrs M. Evans Thomas	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 10.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K. Broom. The Chair welcomed to their first meeting the newly elected Parent Governor Members, Mrs Melanie Jones, Mrs Georgina Cornock-Evans and Mr James Davies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
D. Jones	5 – ERW Curriculum Update	Her sons are members of the Carmarthenshire Music Service
G. Jones	8 – Draft New Corporate Strategy 2018-2023	His wife works in the Education Department
G. Jones	10 - 2017/18 Wellbeing Objectives Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 3	His wife works in the Education Department
G. Jones	11 - Digital Schools Strategy 2018-2021	His wife works in the Education Department
Mrs V. Kenny	6 – Corporate Parenting Annual Report	Her daughter works in Social Services
Mrs V. Kenny	9 – Fostering Service Annual Report	Her daughter works in Social Services
D. Price	5 – ERW Curriculum Update	His wife lectures at Canolfan Peniarth
D. Price	7 – Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)	His wife lectures at Canolfan Peniarth

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. ERW CURRICULUM UPDATE

[NOTE: Councillors D. Jones and D. Price had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Alan Edwards, ERW Head of Teaching and Learning, who had been invited to give a presentation to the Committee.

The presentation provided an overview of progress and developments within the school curriculum. Reference was made to the evolving curriculum agenda across Wales at this current time which supported the statement made by the Welsh Assembly Cabinet Secretary for Education:-

“The children and young people of today are entering a fast-changing world that is increasingly competitive, globally connected and technologically advanced. Schools are having to prepare our young people for jobs that have not yet been created and challenges that we are yet to encounter. This will require a renewed

commitment to improving both the skills and knowledge of our young people, as we raise standards in our transformational curriculum. Education has never been more important. Education reform is our national mission.”

The presentation covered the following key areas:-

- Successful Future Progress
- Engagement
- Curriculum Design
- Professional Teaching Standards
- Change Management

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

- Asked how much input immediate past pupils have had in the process, the Committee was advised that up until now pupils have not been engaged to any great extent, however, from now on school pupils will be asked what they think an effective curriculum looks like;
- With regard to the preparation of resources in Welsh and English, officers were asked if we are getting to the stage where a PISA type approach is needed. The Committee was informed that in terms of PISA, a range of bilingual resources have been developed and are already available in secondary schools. A project has also commenced this year which assists secondary schools to use these resources effectively. Work is also beginning with primary schools in this regard, however, no resources have been allocated yet as these would be tailored to the individual requirements of the school;
- Asked how much scope there is for a Carmarthenshire curriculum to be developed and how school could feed in to that. The Committee was advised that the new curriculum would not be overly prescriptive, therefore, there would be the ability to develop a localised curriculum;
- Reference was made to Leaders of Learning and officers were asked how confident they are with regard to capacity. The Committee was advised that there would be a huge amount of change, however, all the Leaders of Learning that have been recruited have been trained in change management. Training is also being provided to all headteachers to support that change. Officers are fairly happy with capacity and have recently undergone an external review of the new system before it is rolled out the result was amber/green which was very positive at this stage of the process.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT

[NOTE: Mrs V. Kenny had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered the Corporate Parenting Annual Report which provided details regarding how well the Local Authority is meeting its corporate parenting duties under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014.

The report detailed outcomes for children looked after by the Local Authority up to the age of 25 and an update on progress against targets set in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

The Service Manager (Corporate Parenting) was accompanied by a young looked after person who gave the Committee a brief outline of her experiences whilst in foster care.

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

- Reference was made to the necessity of ensuring that looked after children visit the doctor and dentist regularly and officers were asked why this was not included in the strategy. The Committee was advised that this was an omission and confirmed that this information would be included in the strategy;
- Reference was made to permanency planning and officers were asked if looked after children are matched with the foster carer to ensure a longer term placement as they are unable to form attachments if this is not the case. The Committee was informed that there is a process of matching foster carers, however, Carmarthenshire does have a small number of children who have a high number of placement moves and this is often due to complex issues;
- Concern was expressed that when they reach the age of 16 looked after children are moved and when they reach 18 they do not have the same level of support. The Committee was informed that looked after children are supported in Carmarthenshire up to the age of 25 and quite a high number remain with their foster families post 18. There are also young looked after people who move into independent living at the age of 16/17/18 and they are supported to ensure that they have the necessary skills. There is currently a bit of a lack of independent living support, however, officers are working to address that;
- Officers were asked if there is a continued connection with young people who leave the Local Authority and the Service Manager (Corporate Parenting) explained that the Authority has a responsibility to continue to support our looked after children up to the age of 25 whether they reside within the Authority's area or not. These young people are tracked, monitored and supported

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the report be endorsed.

7. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP)

[NOTE: Councillor D. Price had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) (including pupils transferring from Welsh medium primary to Welsh medium secondary schools).

The Committee was reminded that producing and implementing a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is a statutory requirement for the Local Authority. The Carmarthenshire WESP was endorsed by the Welsh Government in early March

2018, without the need for further amendments and it was encouraging that the Carmarthenshire WESP has been praised by senior civil servants.

The WESP provided an outline of the following:-

- policy and legislative background;
- chronology of the iterative process;
- underlying principles and rationale;
- challenges and opportunities;
- objectives of the WESP;
- 7 WESP outcomes;
- implementation;
- support to schools;
- next steps

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

- Reference was made to the target of achieving 1m Welsh speakers by 2050 and officers were asked how many schools offer Welsh lessons to parents as it was felt that this would help with that target. The Welsh Language Development Manager stated that it is very important for parents to feel that they are a part of their child's education and added that the department has been successful in securing a grant to work with parents in this regard;
- Reference was made to the fact that under the aims and objectives section, no objectives are listed and no dates by which progress can be measure. The Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing explained that the aims and objectives are listed directly from the WESP itself. He added that the Welsh in Education Forum agreed at its last meeting to monitor the progress of the WESP. The Head of Education Services added that with regard to measurable targets, the department holds a suite of Performance Indicators and many of those underpin the objectives as well.

RESOLVED

7.1 that the report be received;

7.3 that the Committee receive an update report on case studies involving the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary schools.

8. DRAFT NEW CORPORATE STRATEGY 2018-23

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

Members considered sections of the draft new Corporate Strategy 2018-23 relevant to the remit of the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee.

The draft new Corporate Strategy will replace the current one published in 2015 and will consolidate the following plans into one document:-

- the 2015-20 Corporate Strategy;
- the Improvement Objectives, as required by the Local Government Measure 2009;

- The Wellbeing Objectives as required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;
- Carmarthenshire County Council's Executive Board key projects and Programmes for the next 5 years, as set out in "Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire: the next 5 years".

It was noted that our Wellbeing Objectives do not have to change every year, or be deliverable within one year and that it is perfectly legitimate to set objectives which span more than one year.

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

- Reference was made to the fact that the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment only on those areas of the strategy within its remit, however, it was pointed out that there are other areas whose actions and measures affect its remit too. The Director of Education & Children agreed that his department contributes to many objectives which are led by other departments and suggested that in future the entire strategy be brought to Committee with the Education & Children elements highlighted. The Committee was informed that any cross-cutting issues are included in the Action Plan;
- With regard to children who need specific help, officers were asked how they will ensure that the statements are carried out early in the child's education. The Director of Education & Children explained that the Authority has a duty towards these children. Schools with over 100 pupil will get money for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those schools with under 100 pupils approach the Authority for additional resources required to help with children with SEN. The money is allocated in this way because the formula used does not work for schools with less than 100 pupils;
- Reference was made to the European funding currently being received and officers were asked what will happen to that money in the future. The Director of Education & Children informed the Committee that confirmation has been received that the money will be available until 2020;
- Concern was expressed with regard to the statement in the report that "We aim to keep the percentage of looked after children who have experienced one or more changes of school during a period or periods of being looked after which were not due to transitional arrangements to a minimum" as it was felt that this should say "We will continue to reduce...". The Committee was informed that the wording was taken from a statutory Performance Indicator which forms part of the Social Services & Wellbeing Act. Officers agreed to check and to change the wording if possible.
- Reference was made to the statement about children carrying too much weight and concern was expressed about the lack of play areas and the fact that the Authority is closing playgrounds or transferring them or building on them and concern was expressed that there appears to be no joined up thinking.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the draft new Corporate Strategy 2018-23 be endorsed.

9. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report providing information on the performance and quality of care provided in relation to the fostering service within Carmarthenshire, which was a requirement under statutory regulations of the Fostering Services in Wales.

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

- Reference was made to the fact that the department has recruited 9 foster carers this year and officers were asked if this number is high in relation to other areas. The Committee was informed that the Authority is performing quite well in the region and in Wales in this regard and the importance of quality over quantity was stressed;
- Concern was expressed over the fact that neighbouring Authorities pay more and that this is hampering recruitment. The Committee was informed that officers are working towards bringing the payments to a par and to this end our payments were increased this year and it was hoped to continue to review and increase the payments going forward. There is a variation in the fees paid across Wales and the National Fostering Framework is looking to harmonise these fees;
- Acknowledging that there is quite a difference in the payments made between Authorities, officers were asked if the support provided also differs from Authority to Authority. The Committee was advised that Carmarthenshire offers a lot of emotional support so we retain our foster carers. We put in place a lot of bespoke packages to help our foster carers e.g. help for when children are not in school.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the report be endorsed.

10. 2017/18 WELLBEING OBJECTIVES PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 3

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

Members considered a report detailing progress against actions and measures in the 2017/18 Wellbeing Objectives delivery plan relevant to the Committee's remit, as at 31st December, 2017.

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

- Disappointment was expressed that over 50% of the objectives are not reported and concern was expressed that the not reported data appeared in the middle of the off target and on target data. The Children & Schools Information Officer explained that the quarter 4 data was late and was therefore showing as not reported while all quarter 3 data due to be reviewed was included in the report;
- Reference was made to the unforeseen capacity issues referred to in the report and officers were asked if this was to do with the Health Board or Council. The Children & Schools Information Officer advised that the capacity issues relate to both the Health Board and the Authority and officers from both sides are working closely on that.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

11. DIGITAL SCHOOLS STRATEGY 2018-2021

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

The Committee considered the Digital Schools Strategy 2018-2021, which was the first ever Digital Schools Strategy for Carmarthenshire which sets out the Authority's vision, underpinned by overarching principles and key priority areas for the provision of ICT Services to schools.

Carmarthenshire's ICT Services Division provides extensive support and services to all schools across the Authority. Schools' use of technology promotes innovative learning by digitally confident students, inspired by skilled and creative teaching. The three year Digital Schools Strategy outlines where the Authority intends to take the ICT provision within schools over the coming years, to ensure that schools have the appropriate technology to deliver the Digital Competence Framework.

The strategy provided clarity on the following areas:-

- why we need a Digital Schools Strategy;
- our digital vision for Carmarthenshire schools;
- our overarching principles for delivering the strategy;
- Carmarthenshire Schools Digital Estate;
- key priority areas:
 - HWB First
 - security of data and online services
 - efficient and effective networks
 - digital schools ad classrooms
- key projects to be delivered

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

- Reference was made to problems being experienced with school children being unable to do their school work online at home any longer. The Strategic Technical Manager explained that children used to click a link to access online modules, however, there were security risks so we had to stop using that system. Officers are currently working on a new system;
- Concern was expressed that a lot of children are being disadvantaged because they do not have ipads and the apps used in schools are not transferrable to android systems and officers were asked whether there are any plans to migrate the two systems. The Committee was advised that officers are working on this issue and it was intended that all apps distributed to the new system, HWB, will be available on multiple platforms;
- Reference was made to the fact that we do not have the same standard of provision with the Welsh and English systems and officers were asked how confident they are that this can be achieved. The Head of ICT conceded that it is a challenge as the big companies who provide systems like Office 365 only do so in English;
- Reference was made to the fact that the strategy refers only to infrastructure and it was felt that an opportunity has been lost in relation to ensuring that staff have the appropriate skills required. The Head of ICT explained that his division is responsible for ensuring that the infrastructure

required to provide the service is there and it is the Education Department which is responsible for the delivery of IT skills to teachers. He added that there is a lot of work being done alongside the strategy to deliver digital competency.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the report be approved.

12. SCHOOL VISITS FEEDBACK REPORT - SPRING 2018

The Committee considered a report providing an overview of the school visits undertaken during the Spring Term 2018.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

13. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the reason for the non-submission of the following report:-

- ALN Reform including SEN

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

14. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

Reference was made to the high number of reports to be considered at the meeting to be held on 7th June and in view of the fact that an additional meeting has been arranged for 14th May, it was suggested that some items could be considered at that meeting.

RESOLVED

14.1 that the TIC Programme Update and Task & Finish Review 2015/16 Action Plan Monitoring be placed on the agenda of the meeting to be held on 14th March, 2018;

14.2 that the remaining items to be considered at the meeting to be held on 7th June, 2018 be noted.

15. MINUTES - 14TH MARCH, 2018

Reference was made to a question asked at the last meeting under minute number 5 in relation to the £500k allocated for schools and the request for a report on this matter. The Chair advised that officers would prepare a report accordingly which would be included in the Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th March, 2018 be signed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of the above-mentioned amendment.

CHAIR

DATE