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EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 24 April 2019

PRESENT: Councillor E.G. Thomas (Vice Chair)

Councillors:

B.D.J. Phillips (In place of D. Price), K.V. Broom, B.W. Jones, D. Jones, R. James (In place of G.R. Jones), M.J.A. Lewis, S. Najmi, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, B. Thomas and D.T. Williams.

Co-opted Members:

J Davies - Parent Governor (Llanelli Area)
D. Richards - Church in Wales Representative
V. Kenny - Roman Catholic Church Representative

Also in attendance:

E. Symonds – Voices from Care Wales

The following Officers were in attendance:

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
A. Rees, Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing
S. Smith, Head of Children's Services
S. Davies, Head of Access to Education
A. Morgan, Head of Education Services
B. James, Service Manager Corporate Parenting
J. Buck, Performance and Information Officer
L. Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, 3, Spilman Street, Carmarthen. SA31 1LE. 10.00 am - 12.20 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs D. Price, J. Jenkins, G. Jones, I. Davies, Mrs M. Jones, Mrs G. Cornock-Evans and Cllr G. Davies (Executive Board Member for Education and Children)

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

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
S. Najmi	5- Annual Report on Corporate Parenting Activity	An employee of Gower College Swansea

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. CORPORATE STRATEGY 2018-23

The Performance and Information Officer gave an overview of the report and drew members' attention to the reviewed actions plans.

The following observations/questions were raised on the presentation:

Members highlighted the section of Measure C8 of Objective 3 which referenced the statutory procedures associated with federating, and asked whether the department had been successful in achieving this measure. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the measure provided an opportunity to deal with the challenges faced in the process of federating. As noted at previous meetings, a lack of quality leaders and aspiring leaders continued to present a challenge and federating alleviated this to an extent, however it was acknowledged that an additional set of skills were required to lead a federated school. The Head of Education Services advised that there were 13 Federations at present, five formal and eight informal; noting that a formal federation has a single governing body which is a significant benefit. Estyn have revised their inspection framework in light of Federated schools. Carmarthenshire has supported this work effectively through the use of 'pilots.' The revised inspection framework for formally federated schools reflects the demands and needs of these settings in a much better manner. An informal federation had been inspected by Estyn and as a result some changes would be made to the process. He further advised that schools with fewer than 50 pupils presented a financial challenge.

In response to a question on the future of Pendine Outdoor Education Centre, the Director of Education and Children's Services advised that he could not provide a detailed answer, as it was managed by another department. However the provision would be looked at closely over the next year and that the Department of Education and Children's Services would work closely with the Department of Community Services to consider the provision.

Members asked for further information on the PISA results, and the Director of Education and Children's Services advised that they were awaiting results of the most recent PISA tests. He noted that the new curriculum will move towards problem and results based assessments, a new way of working which is closer aligned to PISA assessments. The Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing acknowledged that PISA Style questions did not sit comfortably within the current Welsh Curriculum, however some schools have done well in preparing for the PISA tests. He also supported the Director of Education and Children's Services' viewpoint that the new curriculum's move to a more problem solving approach and applied learning will result in improved outcomes in future tests.

In response to Section E of Objective 3 within the report, members raised concerns in relation to the focus on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and the Welsh Government target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that the WESP had gone through the corporate process and was in line with similar local authorities. He further advised that the aim is that pupils are bilingual, having two first languages by the end of their time in Primary School. The Head of Education services stated

that although the target is to create one million Welsh speakers by 2050, it would be unwise not to include the ability to read and write in Welsh within that target.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Corporate Strategy 2018-2023 report be received.

5. ANNUAL REPORT ON CORPORATE PARENTING ACTIVITY

[NOTE: Councillor S. Najmi had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Chair welcomed Tyler, Josh, Shannon, Jo-anna and Rhian to the meeting.

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. 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) gave an overview of the report and invited members to question the young people who were in attendance at the meeting.

The following questions/observations were raised:-

In answer to a question on the experiences of care leavers in relation to Personal Advisors (PAs), members were advised that they were significantly positive and provided one to one support across a broad range of areas. In sharing their experiences, the young people present spoke of the consistent support provided by PAs in relation to support with education, trying new activities and in preparation for leaving care. The young people advised that Social Workers did not provide as much support as PA's were able to, as they often had many commitments.

Members were informed that support was made available for those in post 16 education within Carmarthenshire, however it was noted that support received for those attending other colleges was inconsistent. It was noted that the transition from school to college was a difficult time as the general support given within post 16 education at college was less than in schools.

Members asked whether the care leavers felt that they were being listened to, and what could be done to improve the services available to them. The young people advised that in the main they were listened to and were supported to attend LAC (Looked after Children) reviews, however as stated previously, allocated Social Workers change often and care leavers have to build another relationship and start the process building trust again.

Members acknowledged that leaving care posed significant change in a young person's life (a local authority maintains a responsibility to support care leavers until they reach the age of 25) and asked what measures were in place to support young people through this transition. The Service Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that the aim to provide care leavers with a council tenancy sometimes resulted in having to place care leavers in temporary accommodation for a

significant amount of time. This was due in part to the lack of one bedroom accommodation available within the local authority housing stock. However, continued support was provided during the transition period, using the St Basil's 'Positive Pathway' model. The authority was also investigating the possibility of shared housing.

Members asked for clarification on the support available in relation to mental health issues and were advised that those within the education system were able to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services through school or college. However, those not in education, training or employment were unable to access these services in a similar way. This causes a delay in users being able to access support in a timely manner. It was also noted that more could be done to support care leavers experiencing depression and anxiety. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that he would feedback the comments made to the mental Health Strategic Group.

On behalf of the committee and officers present, the Vice Chair thanked Tyler, Josh, Shannon, Jo-anna and Rhian for their attendance at the meeting and for their honesty in responding to the questions of members.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Annual Report on Corporate Parenting Activity be received

6. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF PROVISION AT YSGOL RHYS PRITCHARD

The Head of Access to Education gave an overview of the report and the proposal to change the nature of provision of Ysgol Rhys Pritchard to Welsh medium.

The following observations/questions were raised:

In answer to a question on the decision to categorise or change the category of the school, the Head of Access to Education advised that Governing Bodies categorise the linguistic nature of schools themselves and can make changes in consultation and agreement with parents. However the WG School Organisation Code requires the Authority to follow a statutory process to make a permanent change to the nature of linguistic provision. This allows an opportunity for all stakeholders to have their opinions considered as part of a formal process. Parents of prospective pupils are difficult to identify but consulted as part of the wider community, although it is not a requirement of the Code.

Members raised concerns with regard to the lack of choice for parents in the area with regards to accessing education for their children in their preferred language. The Head of Access to Education advised that there isn't a statutory requirement to provide a choice, however, provision in abutting catchment areas are often considered as part of the process. Members noted that the lack of choice is an issue that primarily affects rural areas. The Director of Education and Children's Services reiterated that although children have a right to education their parents do not have an automatic right to their language preference. However, parents can choose another school outside of their catchment area. He further advised that

federating schools support the agenda for providing strong, inclusive, robust and long term education provision in rural areas.

RESOLVED that:

6.1 the proposal is endorsed;

6.2 a RECOMMENDATION is made to the Executive Board that a formal consultation be initiated.

7. MODERNISING EDUCATION PROGRAMME - PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF PROVISION AT YSGOL Y DDWYLAN, YSGOL GRIFFITH JONES, YSGOL LLANGYNNWR AND YSGOL LLYS HYWEL

The Head of Access to Education gave an overview of the report and the proposal to change the nature of provision of Ysgol y Ddwylan, Ysgol Griffith Jones, Ysgol Llangynnwyr and Ysgol Llys Hywel to Welsh medium with the choice of language medium being introduced in Key Stage 2.

The following observations/questions were raised:

In answer to a question on how the decision to develop the proposal was made, the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that as discussed under the previous agenda item, the proposed changes are in response to the vision of the Governing Body of the schools involved, and it complements the aims of the Corporate Strategy and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. He further noted that surgeries and feedback sessions had been run to better inform parents of the strategy. Dual-stream schools are able to change stream if they have the capacity.

In response to a question referencing the resourcing of Welsh stream schools in Llanelli, the Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that the department had run a pilot scheme to up-skill staff, focusing on confidence and proficiency in using the Welsh language. A sabbatical scheme was piloted in Ysgol y Felin to encourage staff who were able to speak Welsh but did not feel confident enough to teach through the medium of Welsh. Referencing the increase in provision in Llanelli the Director of Education and Children's Services advised that Ysgol Pen Rhos was a dual stream school and the provision at Ysgol Ffwrnes was set to increase. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that secondary schools in Llanelli are planning to develop Welsh streams in response to this growth, and a change of language category report would be coming to the scrutiny committee over the next few months.

Members asked for clarification on whether there is a need for a new language category. The Head of Curriculum and Wellbeing advised that nationally there were currently around 14 different categories that were being reviewed by the Welsh Government. He further advised that the authority would meet with the Welsh Government with regards to this matter very soon, and anticipated that a revised list of categories would be circulated under consultation in July.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

7.1 the proposal is endorsed;

7.2 a RECOMMENDATION is made to the Executive Board that a formal consultation be initiated.

**8. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TASK & FINISH GROUP
DRAFT FINAL REPORT 2018/19**

The Draft Final Report was presented to the group.

The following observations/questions were raised on the presentation:

It was noted that the topic selected for the Task and Finish Group had been very broad, and that consideration should be given at the next selection point to identifying a more focused topic.

The report should acknowledge the additional hidden costs to parents of accessing free childcare.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

8.1 the report be reviewed to ensure reference is made to the additional costs incurred by parents accessing free childcare

8.2 the report and recommendations are sent to the Executive Board for consideration

9. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the reasons for the non-submission of the following report:-
- Fostering Annual Report

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items and agreed that the items should be presented to the next meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting to be held on 6th June 2019, be agreed.

11. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 26th NOVEMBER 2018

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 26TH November 2018 be signed as a correct record.

12. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 13th MARCH 2019

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 13th March 2019 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

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