

# EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE & THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1 December 2022

**PRESENT:** Councillor A.C. Jones (Chair) (In Person)

**Councillors (In Person):**

L. Davies, P. Hughes-Griffiths

**Councillors (Virtually):**

S.M. Allen, K.V. Broom, L.M. Davies, B.W. Jones, D. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, S.L. Rees,  
E. Skinner, M. Thomas

**Co-opted Members (In Person):**

A. Enoch, V. Kenny

**Co-opted Members (Virtually):**

F. Healey-Benson

**The following Cabinet Members were in attendance (In Person):**

J. Tremlett, P.M. Hughes

**The following Cabinet Member was in attendance (Virtually):**

G. Davies

**The following Officers were in attendance (In Person):**

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services

A. Rees, Head of Strategy and Learner Support

G. Adams, Principal Manager - Youth Support Service

A. Eynon, Principal Translator

J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer (Minute Taker)

**The following Officers were in attendance (remotely):**

N. Daniel, Head of ICT and Corporate Policy

S. Davies, Head of Access to Education

A Thomas, Head of Education Services and Inclusion

J.G. Buck, Performance & Information Officer

M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

**Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 2.00 - 3.45 pm**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from D. Elias. The Chair advised the Committee that Councillor. S. Rees was required to leave the meeting early in order to attend other council business.

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

There were no declarations of personal interest including any party whips.

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

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

### **4. CARMARTHENSHIRE YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2022/2023**

The Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Plan for 2022/23 was presented to the Committee.

Consideration was given to the governance, leadership and partnership arrangements which had culminated in the development of the Youth Justice Plan, set out at Appendix 1 to the report, in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The Youth Justice Plan outlined the provision of the Youth Support Service and the Youth Justice Team under a single management structure which provided a holistic approach to the delivery of youth support services across Carmarthenshire. The Committee's attention was referred to section 8 of the Youth Justice Plan which detailed the performance of the partnership during 2021/22 and also set out the priorities and improvement planning objectives for the forthcoming year in accordance with the overarching 'child first' principles and an ethos of continuous improvement.

The Committee acknowledged the crucial work of the partnership in seeking to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in order to safeguard the most vulnerable and complex children and families across the County. Furthermore, it was noted that several strategic groups had been established to address emerging demands linked to the well-being of vulnerable children and adults.

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

The Committee commended the ongoing dedication and commitment of staff working within the Youth Justice Team in working with children and young people during the unprecedented challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic.

It was clarified to the Committee that the 'Bureau system' within the County was an out of court diversion scheme delivered in partnership between the Authority and Police and was designed to deliver interventions at an early stage to divert children and young people from the court.

In response to a query raised, it was explained to members that the graphical representation set out at page 19 of the Youth Justice Plan pertaining to 'offence type' had been condensed and would therefore be re-issued to the Committee with the full information. An assurance was also given to the Committee that future reports would contain a comprehensive glossary to explain the full list of abbreviations, and keys would be provided to enable readers to easily interpret the graphical representations.

A question was put forth regarding challenges that were anticipated in meeting the extensive priorities and objectives that had been set for the Youth Justice Team for 2022/23. It was explained to the Committee that the priorities were

strategically aligned with national expectations and in accordance with key performance indicator reporting requirements. It was emphasised that ambitious targets had been set to enable the Youth Justice Team to strive to deliver meaningful change for children and young people within the county. Reference was also made to the efforts made to promote participation and positive engagement across Youth Justice work going forward, and this focus would be supported and strengthened with the implementation of a strategy.

In response to a query, the Committee was assured to note the array of mechanisms by way of partnership working to address the exploitation of children regarding county lines and gangs, and the connections with the supply of drugs and serious violence.

Following a query in respect of funding for the delivery of services, the Youth Support Service Principal Manager was pleased to report that the funding contribution to the Youth Justice Team would increase by £20k for 2022/23, and further grant allocations in respect of prevention initiatives and early interventions would enable the team to maintain a stable staffing structure.

Reference was made priority area 8 which related to the delivery of services in Welsh. The Youth Support Service Principal Manager detailed the recruitment and training initiatives to ensure that the delivery of services in Welsh was maintained and strengthened where possible.

Reference was made to the performance measure pertaining to Mental Health, whereby the Youth Support Service Principal Manager provided background information on the reporting methodology and confirmed that she was confident that access to mental health services had been timely and effective during the reporting period.

In response to concerns raised by a Member, the Youth Support Service Principal Manager clarified to the Committee that due to the complexity of a small cohort of re-offenders, the annual weighted average could fluctuate considerably.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Plan for 2022/23 be received.**

## **5. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021/22**

The Committee considered the draft Council Annual Report for the period 2021/22 which had been produced to meet the relevant provisions within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021. The report detailed the progress made with the Council's 13 Well-being Objectives (WBO) against a backdrop of unprecedented circumstances presented by the coronavirus pandemic, together with the Council's self-assessment against the performance requirements of the previous financial year. The Committee was advised that the draft Annual Report would be updated to reflect the outcome of the consultation process pertaining to performance requirements set out at Appendix 5C.

Consideration was given to the relevant Well-Being Objectives falling within the remit of the committee, namely:

- WBO 1: Help to give every child the best start in life and improve their early life experiences.
- WBO 2: Help children live healthy lifestyles.
- WBO 3: Support and improve progress, achievement, and outcomes for all learners.
- WBO 4: Tackle poverty by doing all we can to prevent it, help people into work and improve the lives of those living in poverty.
- WBO 12: Promote Welsh Language and Culture.

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

A concern was raised that the Authority's focus on the promotion of Welsh Language, which was an area that was already performing well, could cause undue pressure on children and their families, during a period of uncertainty in the context of the demands associated with the forthcoming academic year as the country emerged from the coronavirus pandemic, the implementation of the new curriculum and resource constraints. The Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language clarified that the agenda for the promotion of the Welsh Language was set at a national level through Welsh Government policy.

In response to a query on the graphical representation set out on page 87 of the report, it was confirmed that the wording would be reviewed because, whilst the long-term trend had reduced, the figure for 2021/22 represented an increase on the previous year.

Reference was made to the conclusion of EU grant funding eligibility and an update was requested on the alternative funding streams for Youth Services such as Cam Nesa, Cynnydd and NEET style interventions. It was confirmed to the Committee that the Shared Prosperity Fund had replaced the EU grant funding and it was expected that funds in the region of £38m would be received by Carmarthenshire to be distributed to areas of need. In response to a query, the Head of Strategy and Learner Support stated that figures could be obtained to provide comparable information between the EU level of grant funding and the Shared Prosperity Fund.

A member enquired regarding the support provisions in place to meet the needs of the increased number of children diagnosed with autism referred to in WBO1. The Director of Education and Children's Services referred to the challenges presented in meeting the needs of children requiring additional learning needs in the context of financial constraints, however investment was being made to provide a safe environment by way of specialist units and effective services.

In response to a query in respect of the obesity statistics set out at WBO2 of the report, the Director of Education and Children's Services confirmed that updated figures were awaited. It was recognised that the improvements made in this area in recent years had been somewhat curtailed by the coronavirus pandemic; accordingly, the health and wellbeing of children was considered to be a key priority in the development of the Authority's corporate strategy.

An update was requested in terms of the task and finish group's review of school pupil admission dates and age-ranges across the County. The Committee was duly advised that the matter had recently been discussed at the pre-cabinet stage whereby it was agreed that a comprehensive consultation process would commence in the new year, incorporating the recommendations made by the task and finish group. It was noted that any revisions to the admissions policy would not take effect until September 2024 at the earliest.

Reference was made to the recent introduction of free school meals in Wales and concerns were highlighted that parents/guardians would no longer apply for free school meals which would have an impact on the level of Pupil Development Grant (PDG) funding which the school would access. The Director of Education and Children's Services recognised that the PDG was an important measure for all schools across Wales to support vulnerable children and an assurance was provided that representations had been made to Welsh Government in this regard. Members were further advised of the ongoing work within the Authority to tackle poverty in the education system and further information would be available in this regard in due course.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to recommend to the Cabinet that the draft Council Annual Report 2021/22 be endorsed.**

## **6. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT**

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

- Support for curriculum development across the schools in Carmarthenshire.

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

## **7. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

The Committee reviewed the list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023, which had been derived from the Committee's Forward Work Plan 2022/23. The Chair emphasised that the Forward Work Plan was a flexible document that could be updated as required throughout the year as new information emerges. Accordingly, a further Forward Work Planning session would be arranged in due course to review the Committee's priorities for 2022/23 in accordance with the Cabinet Forward Work Plan.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED**

- 7.1 That the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2023 be noted.**
- 7.2 A Forward Work Planning Session be arranged in County Hall, in due course to review the Committee's priorities in accordance with the Cabinet's Forward Work Plan.**

**8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 6TH OCTOBER 2022**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 be signed as a correct record.

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**