

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE & THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 5 MAY 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A.C. Jones (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

P. Hughes-Griffiths E. Skinner

Councillors (Virtually):

S.M. Allen K.V. Broom J.M. Charles M. Donoghue
(substitute) (substitute)

B.W. Jones D. Jones M.J.A. Lewis S.L. Rees

M. Thomas

Co-opted Members (In Person)

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

Co-opted Members (Virtually)

F. Healey-Benson, Parent Governor

Cabinet Members (In Person)

G. Davies, Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language

Cabinet Members Virtually)

G. John, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism

Also Present (In Person):

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services
A Thomas, Head of Education Services and Inclusion
E. Forsyth, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness
M. Morgan, Senior Educational Support Adviser
F. Gordon, Additional Learning Needs Advisory Teacher (Process)
M. Davies, Additional Learning Needs Advisory Teacher
T. Davies, Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer
D. Livingstone, Post-16 Transition Officer
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer (Note Taker)

Also Present (Virtually):

S. Davies, Head of Access to Education
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 am - 12.34 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Bowen, L. Davies and H. Jones.

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. POLICY ON AWARDING GRANTS AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE

The Committee considered the Council's Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language which had been prepared in order to comply with the provisions enshrined within the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The Policy provided a consistent approach in the handling of the Welsh language across the Council's various grants, ensured compliance with the Welsh Language Standards in the allocation of grants and equipped Council employees to assist third party bodies to promote the Welsh language in their operations effectively. In this regard, it was noted that the Policy was aligned to the Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-28 and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

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

In response to a query regarding approval of the Policy and the eligibility criteria for awarding grants, the Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager clarified that the document, following approval by the Cabinet, would form a central part of the grant allocation process across all departments of the Council. Furthermore, central support would be provided to the relevant departments throughout the operational period of the grants and would enable the impact of the Policy on the Welsh language to be measured.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism assured Committee that bespoke support and assistance would be afforded to applicants during the enquiry stage of the application process to ensure that Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) would not be disadvantaged. In this regard, it was acknowledged that the Council's expectations would differ according to the type of organisation, the activity and amount of grant funding being awarded.

In response to a suggestion that previous grant applications be reviewed to ensure that SMEs would not be excluded from the process, the Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager explained that the proactive offer of support would add value to the activity of the relevant organisation as a whole and aimed to provide a developmental approach to enable organisations, through the Council's influence, to utilise the Welsh Language and ensure its viability.

Committee Members commended the Policy as a means of clearly stipulating the Council's expectations within the grant awarding process to ensure a positive impact on the activities of third-party bodies on the Welsh Language.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Policy on Awarding Grants and the Welsh Language be endorsed and referred to the Cabinet for consideration.

5. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS UPDATE

The Committee received for consideration a progress update on the Council'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 Committee received a presentation which detailed the progress of transition from Statements of Special Education Needs (SEN) to Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for pupils with ALN. It was reported that implementation would be undertaken on a phased basis up to August 2025 and would result in three potential categorisation outcomes for children and young people. Consideration was also given to the feedback on the level of success of the transition into the new ALN system, which included an overview of the areas that are working well and those that need to be addressed in terms of the role of the ALN Officers and Co-ordinators, Early Years and Post-16 Provision for children and young people with ALN, training and support, and also the ongoing partnership working with health professionals. The Committee reviewed the statistical data on pupils with ALN in mainstream schools and those requiring specialist setting support whereby it was recognised that there had been a significant increase in demand for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision since September 2021.

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

In response to a query, the process and criteria for the transfer of SEN Statements to ALN IDPs was explained to Members. In this regard it was confirmed that all pupils with existing SEN Statements would be considered for an IDP, with new pupils proceeding directly to the ALN IDP process. Furthermore, legislation prescribed that Statements to 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. This timeframe was considered to be manageable on the whole, and an improvement on the SEN system, though it was acknowledged that delays could be incurred when awaiting key learner information from stakeholders.

Following concerns regarding potential inconsistencies in the quality of IDPs, an assurance was provided to the Committee that central support was provided by way of close working arrangements with schools to ensure consistency in the standard of IDPs. Furthermore, to address potential disparity in the quality of IDPs across schools of different sizes, it was noted that a comprehensive programme of support and training was provided according to the identified school clusters. In this regard, the progress made by the ALN co-ordinators in the transition from SEN to ALN was highly commended. The Director of

Education and Children's Services referred to recently completed Estyn inspections and a separate report which confirmed that the ALN provision within Carmarthenshire schools was excellent.

The Committee was informed that the notion of IDPs was that they were flexible documents which would transfer with pupils who moved schools. In respect of the Carmarthenshire learners attending out of county schools and settings, it was confirmed that IDPs would be produced by Carmarthenshire following close partnership working and relevant information gathering with the relevant ALN co-ordinator of the school/setting and in accordance with the person-centred approach. Furthermore, it was confirmed that whilst a re-charge facility to the origin Authority was in place for looked-after children, cross border IDP funding was yet to be determined.

Reference was made to the impact on schools in terms of the time pressures on the ALN co-ordinators, and budgetary pressures in accordance with the changes to the formula funding allocation. However, the new person-centred approach was welcomed by ALN coordinators in terms of IDPs being more meaningful, with improved outcomes for learners with ALN.

In response to a query, an overview of the support available for those Educated Otherwise than a School (EOTAS) and Electively Home Educated (EHE) was provided to the Committee. It was agreed that statistics pertaining to the number of EOTAS and EHE children within the county be circulated to the Committee.

In response to concerns raised in respect of capacity issues within specialist settings, the ALN Advisory Teacher clarified that the Council's priority going forward was to enhance the capacity within mainstream schools meet the needs of pupils with ALN in order to provide learners with the opportunity to attend schools within their locality.

Reference was made to the significant footprint of Post 16 specialist provision within the county which afforded a 3-year entitlement to funding and support under the SEN framework. However, it was noted that the ALN code directed a 2-year entitlement for education and training Post 16 where there is a reasonable need which will necessitate a review of the local FEI and LA specialist provision offer. An assurance was provided that discussions were ongoing with Welsh Government to seek clarity on whether the county's existing post-16 provision within the mainstream schools would continue to be funded and the implications of this model, compared with Welsh Government's current preferred route of funding via independent providers. The Committee requested an update on the outcome of the discussions with Welsh Government in due course.

Concerns were raised by the Committee in terms of the lack of parity between Welsh-medium schools in being able to access a wide range of standardised assessments and resources to support the early and accurate identification of ALN, compared with English medium schools. An assurance was provided that this was a priority area for the Council and work was ongoing to address the issue nationally.

Reference was made to the statistical information set out within the report whereby the Director of Education and Children's Services duly clarified that

more secondary school children needed to be transferred to the ALN IDP framework as they had initially been provided with a Statement of SEN, whereas a number of primary school children had been provided with current IDPs, issued prior to the statutory requirement to do so, in instances where parental consent had been provided.

The Committee commended the implementation of new systems and processes to meet statutory requirements and acknowledged the need identified by the Division for additional core funding to ensure a sufficient ALN provision in the long-term. The unprecedented pressures faced by schools to improve attendance and support the academic, social and emotional well-being of learners was also noted.

RESOLVED that:-

- 5.1 Statistics pertaining to the number of children ‘Educated Otherwise than a School’ (EOTAS) and Electively Home Educated (EHE) within the County be circulated to the Committee.**
- 5.2 An update on the outcome of discussions with Welsh Government pertaining to funding of post-16 provision be circulated to the Committee in due course.**
- 5.3 The report be endorsed and referred to the Cabinet for consideration.**

6. WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY 2023-28

The Committee received for consideration the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for 2023-28, which had been prepared in conjunction with the Welsh Language Strategic Forum as part of the Council’s responsibilities through the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011 and the subsequent Welsh Language Standards. The strategy detailed how the Council proposed to promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of the Welsh language across the county.

The Strategy sought to instigate an increase in the number of Welsh speakers, pride and confidence in the Welsh language, increased use of Welsh in the workplace and workforce as ‘a norm’ and thriving Welsh speaking communities. A total of 9 workstreams would be implemented as an action plan to deliver the aims of the strategy during its period of operation. The Strategy would be formally launched at the National Urdd Eisteddfod 2023 in Llandovery.

Reference was made to paragraph 6 of the foreword whereby the Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language clarified that the wording would be revised as follows:

*“Our desire in Carmarthenshire is not **only** to increase numbers and encourage use, but **also** to welcome people into Welsh confidently and without apology.”*

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

A request was made for the graphical representation on page 57 of the meeting documentation to be labelled appropriately. This was agreed.

A concern was raised regarding the lack of physical Welsh Language classes being offered in local areas to enable learners to use and develop their Welsh language skills. The Director of Education and Children's Services reported that the Welsh for Adults provision operated on a franchise arrangement with Coleg Sir Gar and work was ongoing to enhance and expand the provision. In this regard, it was noted that Committee's feedback and input on the Welsh for Adults provision would be welcomed by the division.

Committee welcomed the strategy as a means of positively impacting upon the viability of the Welsh language in Carmarthenshire and highlighted the importance of residents being given the opportunity to hear and use the Welsh language within their daily lives.

RESOLVED that the

- 6.1 The graphical representation on page 57 of the meeting documentation to be labelled appropriately.**
- 6.2 Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for 2023-28 be endorsed and referred to the Cabinet for consideration.**

7. AN EVALUATION OF ESTYN INSPECTIONS ACROSS CARMARTHENSHIRE SCHOOLS, PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS AND SPECIALIST SETTINGS

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of Estyn inspection outcomes within the county for the past five years. The report concluded that standards and leadership were judged good or better in the majority of schools, with only a minority of schools placed in a follow-up category for improvement. An overview of new inspection framework adopted by Estyn in March 2022 was provided to the Committee, together with a summary of the strong or effective practice identified by Estyn inspectors to be shared with others.

The Committee reviewed the school improvement recommendations provided by Estyn since March 2022 and an assurance was provided to the Committee that all Estyn outcomes influenced the division's improvement strategies for schools, ways of working and the Professional Learning support programme.

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

A concern was raised regarding the Estyn Inspection Programme in light of the transition to the new curriculum, coupled with the adverse impact on the development of learners as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness explained that the shift in focus from learners' outcomes to the progress made by learners enabled Estyn, schools and the Authority to take a holistic view of learners, to better meet the needs of individual learners.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. SCRUTINY ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report which detailed the progress achieved in relation to requests or referrals emerging from previous meetings during the 2022/23 municipal year.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH MARCH 2023

Subject to the inclusion of relevant co-opted members' attendance, it was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 March 2023 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE