



County Hall  
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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** TUESDAY, 4 JULY 2023, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact [scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk)

11 **Correspondence following Committee Meeting**(Pages 3 - 14)

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Date: 5 July 2023

My Ref: CYP/SOP\_ALN/July23



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Councillor Sarah Merry  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 JULY 2023 –  
SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING PROPOSALS - PROVISION FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS**

I am writing to you following the consideration of proposals at the SOP Task & Finish Group meeting on the 27 June 2023; and sign off at formal CYP Scrutiny Committee on the 4 July 2023, relating to School Organisation Proposals: Provision for Children and Young People with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

We commend the report to Cabinet for approval. Further comments made are as follows:

Members of the Task Group considered the content of the Cabinet report and its appendices with officers on the 27 June 2023. They discussed issues relating to:

- Overall proposals contained in the report and any changes since the previous report on this issue.
- Ensuring future proofing of any individual proposals (when they arise) including projections for demand and capacity.
- Financial-related issues and challenges – cost projections; robust monitoring processes; revenue and capital funding; income sources

- Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs)
- Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)
- Land matters
- Staffing
- Timelines and scrutiny's input into the process as further details emerge.

Task & Finish Group Members were satisfied with the content of the Cabinet report and its appendices and recommended that the report be commended to Cabinet for approval. This was agreed and signed off by CYPSC on the 4 July 2023.

At the CYPSC meeting on the 4 July 2023, the Task & Finish Group also assured Members that agreement has already been reached that, as finer details of ALN proposals emerge, they will be submitted (via a number of reports following consultations on smaller, individual proposals) to a formal meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. This will ensure that Members have the opportunity to consider proposals in detail and in a manageable way. This will be added to the Committee's work programme, as appropriate.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter. I do not require a response to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light grey rectangular background.

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**

**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: CYPSC Members

Mel Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Richard Portas, Director of School Organisation Planning

Michele Duddridge-Friedl, Operational Manager, School Organisation Programme Strategy

Brett Andrewartha, School Organisation Planning Manager

Mel Jackson, PA to the Deputy Leader

Helen Eager, PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Paula Williams, PA to the Director of SOP

Jo Watkins, Cabinet Support Manager

Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms

Cllr Calum Davies – FAO Group Leader

Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader

Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader

Mr Gavin McArthur – Chair, Governance & Audit Committee

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Date: 19 July 2023

My Ref: CYP/CI\_Recovery\_VH/July23



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Councillor Sarah Merry  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 JULY 2023 –  
CARDIFF INFLUENCERS; EDUCATION/SCHOOLS PANDEMIC RECOVERY;  
VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to provide us with briefings from the Cardiff Influencers and the Virtual Headteacher; and an update on the Education/Schools Pandemic Recovery. Please can you thank Mike Tate; Richard Portas; Michele Duddridge-Friedl; Cai Maxwell; Patrick Brunnock; Claire Skidmore; Michelle Jones; and Deborah Williams; and please also pass on our further thanks to Zach; Naima; Liberty; Ahmed; Mikaeel; Aure; and Tyrese from the Cardiff Influencers.

The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

Cardiff Influencers

We wish to reiterate our thanks on the presentation made by the Cardiff Influencers and the responses to our questions. As we made clear at the meeting, these young people are a credit and inspiration.

We would particularly wish to commend Michele and Cai for setting up the group. Their hard work and dedication to developing these young people proved to pay dividends. We believe that this model for the recruitment of young people in key polices, plans, strategies and service improvements should be communicated across the Council as an example of best practice. It also proved again that staff are going above and beyond their duties to come up with innovative approaches, despite the

numerous “wicked issues” faced by the service area. They have placed their trust in these young people, built confidence, taken them on a journey to understand the issues they are engaging with; and this is to be congratulated!

As stated at the meeting, we would wish to invite the group back to a committee meeting in the future. We recognise that they are in the early days of their involvement in developing the SOP Strategy, but in response to this letter, we would **request** that they provide information to us in relation to what impact they have already made in the process. For example:

- Where they believe their voice is in the decision-making process in relation to the SOP Strategy;
- Where their input has already resulted in change and/or made the draft SOP Strategy better directly due to their input; and
- Skills they learned and what they can take forward into the future by being part of this group.

During the Group’s presentation and the Q&A that followed, the Influencers listed free school transport; flexible learning using technology; well-being; and ALN as some of their priorities. These excellent ideas were repeatedly brought up in subsequent agenda items, so we would **request** your views on what commitments you can make in listening to and acting upon the suggestions they raised.

Overall, Members were most impressed by all members of the group as individuals. Members stated that the 4 purposes of learning are:

- ambitious and capable contributors;
- enterprising and creative learners;
- ethical citizens; and
- healthy and confident individuals.

This was demonstrated by each and every one of the group. We believe that this is how learning and developing outside of the classroom illustrates how we want to see young people moving forward.

To this end, the whole committee agreed that it would wish to email the heads of the schools to praise each individual who attended the meeting, to commend how they represented themselves and their schools, and that we were impressed how mature, enthusiastic and knowledgeable they were. Alison has already emailed Michele and Cai for this information and I will email Heads as soon as the information is received.

## Education/Schools Pandemic Recovery

Members wanted to thank yourself, Mike, Patrick, Claire and Michelle for returning to formal committee (following the first session in December 2022), to update us on a range of issues relating to the school pandemic recovery. Throughout the presentations and Q&A session, we discussed issues and ongoing challenges concerning;

- Attendance
- Referrals
- Vulnerable Learners
- Exclusions (including fixed term exclusions and issues around dysregulation)
- Support for staff and pupils;
- Impact on Schools and learners
- EOTAS
- Education Welfare
- Mental Health and well-being (including ALN funding and mitigating risk)
- Attainment
- Budgets and funding – including challenges in prioritising areas of funding; deficits; grant funding etc.
- Use of digital technology – E-sgol.
- System concerns and problem solving
- The impact of the new curriculum, including funding
- Recruitment and Retention of staff
- Third sector and agency support in tackling “wicked issues”
- The positive news of collaboration across clusters and beyond
- Demand for services in addressing some of the challenges raised above

Members summarised that much of the information provided during discussions on these issues was very sobering, and again commend schools (with the support of the LEA) in continuing to work and deliver within extremely difficult circumstances, echoing Patrick’s comment of schools being expected to “do more, with less”. Given the range of concerns expressed at the meeting (which the committee expressly agreed that we can’t ignore) we would **request** any further insights/views on whether (on reflection) the worst-case scenario has turned into reality.

We will continue to monitor issues in relation to the above bullet points and would request that you, education senior officers agree to come back in six months’ time to give a further insight into the situation (ie. at our meeting on 5 December 2023). Given the time commitments needed to prepare and attend scrutiny, we would be happy to hear from new head teachers should Patrick, Claire and Michelle be unable to attend. We will ask Alison Jones to liaise with senior officers and the head teachers closer to the time.

During discussions, Councillor Melbourne spoke about the work she is doing around E-sgol and it was agreed that yourself, senior education officers and Councillor Melbourne meet to discuss this further. We therefore **request** that you put this meeting in place.

A key statement picked up by Members was regarding the lack of a long-term recovery plan. Following the December 2022 meeting, we asked for information on the role of the Cardiff Recovery Board. Given the extreme challenges faced by the schools and council, we **request** the following information:

- Is there a long-term recovery plan in place or being developed currently; and what this involves, what does it look like?
- If so, who is leading on this in Cardiff?
- What role is the Cardiff Recovery Board taking in developing and implementing any recovery plan?
- To what extent is the leading body representing to Welsh Government the need (at national level) for long-term recovery planning?

The committee stated that we need to (as a cross party council-wide commitment) to chase, lobby Welsh and UK Government regarding the need to ensure that we are not failing our children and assurances/commitment to this being sufficiently funded. We therefore **recommend** that this issue be discussed across all parties (led by Cabinet) with a view to agreement at full council in the future.

- To explain further, we are aware that there are services in Cardiff and the wider region that could make significant differences to children and young people's lives, but the reality is that there is simply not the funding available to schools to bring those services in.
- We continue to be concerned about school deficits, and following discussions at the last Council meeting and a letter from this Committee to Councillor Weaver (we are awaiting a response) on the issue, it is clear that the Council and schools are getting funding in a piecemeal way from Welsh Government. We remain apprehensive around Welsh Government Grants in this area being terminated; and the pay settlement not being covered in full. All this places huge resource pressures for schools and the Council should be committed across the board to work with schools on this.
- We commend schools are doing their best in creating the best possible solutions for learning. However, in the face of an onslaught of challenges (which are more severe in some parts of the city), we need to come together as a Council to support Education and Schools.

In addition, we feel there needs to be a long-term focus in relation to neuro diversity. Current referral rates are 13 months; and we heard the use of the word “dysregulation” throughout discussions on this issue. We **request** that you provide clarity on the following:

- Whether the waiting list has come down; and
- Whether there is a correlation between undiagnosed children and young people with exclusions and dysregulation.

Whilst we acknowledge that this is likely to be a health board issue, rather than a Council issue, we would **request** any thoughts on the role of the Council in this area – such as campaigning and lobbying.

The Committee has agreed that it wishes to scrutinise ALN reform as an agenda item and how this is working in practice; what have been the successes and challenges etc. This will be added to our work programme and shared accordingly. We would wish for this Item to be a joint session with health to talk through challenges, ideas and solutions to this. We know that all are overstretched. The session will aim to support this issue and seek solutions.

Ultimately, we strongly support the Council in investing in children’s futures, with schools being at the heart of this.

#### Virtual Headteacher

Thank you to Deborah for briefing the committee on her work. We welcome and support Deborah’s work; and we would also wish to back her calls for a funding guarantee; and we will invite yourself and Deborah to come back to a future meeting to update us on progress.

**To recap**, the Committee is requesting the following:

#### Cardiff Influencers

1. The Cardiff Influencers provide information to us in relation to what impact they have already made in the SOP Strategy process. For example:
  - Where they believe their voice is in the decision-making process in relation to the SOP Strategy;
  - Where their input has already resulted in change and/or made the draft SOP Strategy better directly due to their input; and
  - Skills they learned and what they can take forward into the future by being part of this group.

2. Your views on what commitments you can make in listening to and acting upon the suggestions they raised at the meeting, including free school transport; flexible learning using technology; well-being; and ALN.

### Education/Schools Pandemic Recovery

3. Provide any further insights/views on whether (on reflection) the worst-case scenario has turned into reality in relation to the ongoing issues faced in pandemic recovery.
4. Agree to come back in six months' time to give a further insight into the situation (ie. at our meeting on 5 December 2023).
5. Make arrangements to meet with Councillor Melbourne regarding the work she is doing around E-sgol.
6. Provide the following information in relation to long-term recovery planning:
  - Is there a long-term recovery plan in place or being developed currently; and what this involves, what does it look like?
  - If so, who is leading on this in Cardiff?
  - What role is the Cardiff Recovery Board taking in developing and implementing any recovery plan?
  - To what extent is the leading body representing to Welsh Government the need (at national level) for long-term recovery planning?
7. Provide clarity on the following, relating to neuro diversity referral rates and "dysregulation"
  - Whether the waiting list has come down; and
  - Whether there is a correlation between undiagnosed children and young people with exclusions and dysregulation.
8. Provide information relating to the role the Council is playing (such as campaigning and lobbying) in supporting health in relation to neuro diversity referrals.

Virtual Headteacher

9. Agree that Deborah to come back to a future meeting to update us on progress.

To summarise, in addition to the above observations and requests, the Committee makes **1** formal recommendation following this scrutiny, as set out below. As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could state whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet’s response. If the recommendation is accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored.

<b>Recommendation</b>	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Action Date
The committee stated that we need to (as a cross party council-wide commitment) to chase, lobby Welsh and UK Government regarding the need to ensure that we are not failing our children and seek assurances/commitment to long-term pandemic recovery planning; and this being sufficiently funded. We therefore recommend that this issue be discussed across all parties (led by Cabinet) with a view to agreement at full council in the future.				

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN**

**Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

CC: CYPSC Members

Melanie Godfrey - Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Mike Tate - Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Patrick Brunnock - Head Teacher, Corpus Christi RC High School

Claire Skidmore - Head Teacher, Radyr Primary School

Michelle Jones – Head Teacher, Lansdowne Primary School

Cardiff Influencers via Michele Duddridge-Friedl

Melanie Jackson - PA to the Deputy Leader

Helen Eager - PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Louise Spain - PA to the Assistant Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms

Gavin McArthur – Chair, Governance & Audit Committee

Cllr John Lancaster – Group Leader

Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader

Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader