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CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2016, 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

11 **Correspondence Following the Meeting** *(Pages 1 - 14)*

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My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

21 March 2016



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Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2016 to provide an opening statement and answer questions on the **Corporate Performance report for Quarter three and the verbal update on the “Cardiff 2020 Aiming for Excellence” plan.**

I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar for his presentation of the report and update together with the answers to Members’ questions. Members raised a number of comments, and concerns for your consideration, which they asked me to write to you about.

The Committee firstly expressed concern about the level of Neets and stated that the Council must reduce the level as soon as possible. Members noted that a report had recently been approved by Cabinet outlining a new approach to youth engagement and progression, and Members welcomed the opportunity to be briefed on this approach in the near future. Members considered that the Youth Service is crucial to helping to engage with young people, and should be used to enhance engagement and support.

The Members then focused on the Admissions Policy 2017/18. Members drew your attention to specific instances where some pupils were not offered their first choice of High School, and had been allocated alternative schooling in, what the parents considered, as an inappropriate school. The Committee welcomed the idea of a co-ordinated admissions process across, Faith, Welsh and English medium schools, and Members agreed to write to the admissions officers for the Faith schools to support the proposal, as they considered that this would help streamline the process for both parents and schools.

Finally the Committee asked about the level of School Governor vacancies. Members were informed of an initiative to increase the number and expertise of Local Authority School Governors, which had already had an impact. Members noted that there was a move towards more links between schools, and the Committee agreed that they would welcome a discussion about increasing the links between school governing bodies.

In respect of the “Cardiff 2020 Aiming for Excellence” presentation, the Committee noted the work being undertaken as set out in the presentation and looked forward to the scrutiny of the draft plan at the June Committee meeting.

Finally the Committee considered the Budget Monitoring Panel’s report resulting from its month nine monitoring meeting. The Committee approved the report which included a recommendation for a briefing paper to be presented to the next Panel meeting providing an update on the implementation of the Biometric school meals system, as the Panel had been informed that sufficient funding should soon be available to fully implement the system across all Primary Schools.

I hope that these comments, advice and requests for information, detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff’s pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving further reports in the future and as such the Members require a formal response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires:

- A briefing on the Cabinet report “Cardiff’s commitment to youth engagement and progression” at a future meeting;
- A progress report on the co-ordinated admissions process across Faith, Welsh and English medium schools, later in the year;
- An update on the appointment of School Governors across all schools, later this year;
- That the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning presents to Committee, in June 2016, the draft “Cardiff 2020 – Aiming for Excellence” plan; and
- A progress report on the implementation of the Biometric school meals system at the next Budget monitoring panel meeting.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Angela Kent, OM Schools Performance
Neil Hardee, Head of Performance Resources and Services



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Date 21 March 2016

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH
Your Ref:

Councillor Sue Lent
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

Thank you for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2016 to help present the **Quarter 3 Performance Information**. I would also like to thank Tony Young and Irfan Alam for their full and honest answers that were provided at the meeting. During the consideration of the reports and answers to Members' questions, the Committee identified a number of comments, concerns and recommendations, which they asked me to write to you about.

The Committee welcomed the sustained improvement in many of the performance indicators and wished to ask that you pass on the Committee's thanks to the Directorate's staff for all their hard work in improving performance across the service. The Committee however expressed concern that some of the performance indicators had shown a small decline. The Members noted that a number of explanations given for the decline in performance, referred to capacity issues and the resultant need to appoint agency workers.

Members therefore initially focused their questions around the recruitment and retention of social workers, and the appointment to the pool of social workers. The Members explained that they have already queried the length of the recruitment process for social workers and they understood the difficulties in recruiting social workers. As a result the Members agreed to continue to monitor the level of staff vacancies, sickness and the use of agency staff.

The Committee noted the Director's comments that as a result of the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and to ensure that data is comparable and consistent, local authorities must introduce a new set of performance measures. The Members requested a briefing on these new performance indicators and how they can be included in current corporate performance and local performance indicators reported to Committee on a quarterly basis.

The Members noted the difficulty in recruiting personal advisors due the specialist nature of their work, and hope that you would soon be able to report that progress was being made to recruit to these posts.

Finally the Committee considered the Budget Monitoring Panel's report following its month nine monitoring meeting. The Committee approved the report which recommended that a briefing paper be presented to the next Panel meeting providing an update on the progress being made on the accommodation of the Youth Offending Services and Looked After Children Service. The Committee also agreed to hold a short investigation into the cost of accommodating Looked After Children, and I would be pleased if the Director could liaise with Martyn Hutchings to help facilitate this investigation.

I hope that these comments, advice and requests for information, will be of use and support in improving outcomes for children. The Committee looks forward to receiving future quarterly performance reports, a briefing and training session on the new performance indicators together with a positive response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests the following, and requires a response:

- Further monitoring reports on the level of social worker vacancies and the number and spend on Agency workers.
- A training session on the new performance indicators for Children's Services.
- A briefing paper on the accommodation of the Youth Offending Services and Looked After Children service for the next budget monitoring panel meeting

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Cook', with a horizontal line underneath it.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services
Melanie Jackson - Personal Assistant to Deputy Leader
Irfan Alam – Assistant Director of Social Services

**SWYDDFA'R DIRPRWY ARWEINYDD
DEPUTY LEADER'S OFFICE**



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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM34078

Eich Nghyf / Your Ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 17th May 2016

Councillor Richard Cook
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear Richard

CYP Scrutiny 15 March - Qtr 3 Performance Information

Thank you for your letter of 21st March 2016 on behalf of the Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee following its meeting on the above date.

I would like to thank members for their constructive comments and I am pleased to provide the following response to your request.

1. Level of social worker vacancies and the number and spend on agency workers

Children's Services monitor social worker vacancies and agency cover arrangements on a regular basis. The position that will be reported for Quarter 4 is demonstrated below, alongside information for the previous 4 quarters:

Quarter	No. of SW vacancies at end of quarter	No. of agency social workers
Q4 2014-15	37.7	32
Q1 2015-16	36.3	34
Q2 2015-16	29.3	30
Q3 2015-16	35.9	26
Q4 2015-16	33.1	42

ATEBWCHT / PLEASE REPLY TO:

Swyddfa'r Dirprwy Arweinydd, Ystafell 525, Neuadd y Sir, Glanfa'r Iwerydd, Caerdydd CF10 4UW
Ffôn (029) 2087 2501
Deputy Leader's Office, Room 525, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4UW
Tel (029) 2087 2501



The advertisements for social worker posts are subject to review at the time of writing to reflect some of the messages from the recent Care & Social Services, Wales (CSSIW) inspection report. The Directorate has a rolling advertisement and is currently projecting that the number of agency social workers should reduce to 31 by the end of Quarter 1 and 11 by the end of Quarter 2, although this is subject to successful recruitment to posts, and timely progression of the recruitment process.

The level of spend on agency social workers has continued to decrease, as follows:

2013/14	=	£2,613,000
2014/15	=	£2,459,000
2015/16 = £2,063,000 (at the time of writing)		

2. Request for a training session on the new performance indicators for Children's Services

The Director sees this as an opportunity to engage the joint Scrutiny Committees in refreshing and developing our approach to measuring and monitoring outcomes, and is preparing a proposal for the joint Chairs to consider. The new performance indicators would be covered as part of this session.

3. Request for a briefing paper on the accommodation of the Youth Offending Services and Looked After Children service for the next budget monitoring panel meeting

I am pleased to report that a building has been identified for the looked after children's service and a project plan is now being developed to support a move by Autumn this year. Likewise, a building has also been identified for the Youth Offending Service and plans are being developed to move in to new premises by the end of summer if not sooner. Both buildings are existing council buildings.

I trust this information answers your queries, should you require anything further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely



Councillor / Cynghorydd Sue Lent
Deputy Leader / Dirprwy Arweinydd
Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Families
Aelod Cabinet Dros Y Blynyddoedd Cynnar, Plant a Theuluoedd



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Date 21 March 2016

My Ref SS/CYP/MJH
Your Ref:

Councillor Sue Lent
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Families, Children and Early Years
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sue

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you Tony Young and Nichola Poole for attending Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2016 to present the progress report on the **Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014**. During the way forward section of the meeting the Members considered the information in the report together with answers to their questions, and agreed to provide you with the following comments and concerns.

The Committee were pleased to receive the first of a series of briefings on the Information, Advice and Assistance Service, which is central to the success of the transition to the care and support systems under the Act. Members were aware that the system had to be operational from 6 April 2016. However as the service was still at an early stage of development, those developing the service were open to any feedback on the system. The Members considered that the following issues should be considered, prior to the system's implementation on 6 April 2016:

- The Members considered that the name of the internet site "Dewis Cymru" was not particularly memorable, and would not be recognised by the general public as a site that provided information on social care and support, an alternative should be found;
- That the use of an internet site was not particularly accessible to all, and especially to vulnerable people.
- That the Information, Advice and Assistance service should utilise other methods of engagement with the public to ensure that those without the internet can access the services provided such as phone, face to face, outreach, social networks and publications.

Finally the Members considered that for the service to be informative and successful it must have accessible, accurate and up to date information to enable people to make informed choices. Therefore the Committee recommends that appropriate measures must

be included in the development and maintenance of the information, advice and assistance being provided by the services to ensure that at all times it is accurate, includes all appropriate advice, and actions to support those seeking support. Additionally it would be best, if this portal is to be the main one for Wales, that any other sites offering similar advice and information were removed so as to avoid duplication and confusion.

I hope that these comments, advice and requests for information, will be of use and support in implementing this aspect of the Act. The Committee looks forward to receiving a positive response to this letter within the next month.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Cook', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Tony Young, Director of Children's Services
Melanie Jackson - Personal Assistant to Deputy Leader
Irfan Alam – Assistant Director of Social Services
Nichola Poole, Regional Lead Sustainable Social Services

**SWYDDFA'R DIRPRWY ARWEINYDD
DEPUTY LEADER'S OFFICE**

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM34082

Eich Nghyf / Your Ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 11th April 2016

Cllr Richard Cook
Cardiff Council
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Annwyl / Dear Richard

CYP 15 March 2016 - Social Services & Well Being Act

Many thanks for your letter which recognises the importance of developing the Information, Advice and Assistance Service in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

I am pleased to confirm that all the points you have raised have been considered in the development of the Information, Advice and Assistance Service. This service has been developed in Cardiff and the Vale so that information and advice is easily accessible to all people in our area through a range of access points including face to face, telephone, email, text, or through the internet. As you mention in your letter it is so important that we offer information and advice through these different access points so that no citizen is disadvantaged and this service is easily accessible to vulnerable people. The IAA service will continue to develop and the new national directory of resources will support officers who are helping people in need of care and/or support either via social services staff when they visit or through our contact centres and hubs, libraries, or other first points of contact in social services. If people choose to access the directory of resources for themselves this option will also be available to them through the Council's web site or directly via the internet. We will ensure that improvements to the Council's website clearly highlight the directory of resources should people wish to access it themselves and training will be given to those staff who provide information and advice to citizens so that they are able to easily access this directory if required.

I will feed back to the Social Services Improvement Agency and Welsh Government who have developed this national information portal, that the Committee does not like the name Dewis Cymru and would like it to be renamed.

ATEBWCH I / PLEASE REPLY TO:

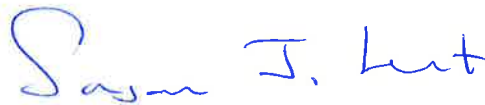
Swyddfa'r Dirprwy Arweinydd, Ystafell 525, Neuadd y Sir, Glanfa'r Iwerydd, Caerdydd CF10 4UW
Ffôn (029) 2087 2501
Deputy Leader's Office, Room 525, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff CF10 4UW
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Your point relating to accessible, accurate and up to date information to enable people to make informed choices is an essential part of the service we are providing through the first points of contact in social services. The national directory of resources is easy to update and maintain so that information is accurate and up to date. We have been working closely with our third sector partners and the uploading of local resources is progressing well. We are aiming to have a good representation of services/resources on the system by 6th April. I strongly recommend that you have a demonstration of this national directory at a future meeting so that you can fully appreciate the potential the system has to provide our citizens with accurate, up to date information to help them make informed choices relating to care and /or support.

Thank you again for giving us the opportunity to provide you with an update on the development of the Information, Advice and Assistance Service.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely



Councillor / Cynghorydd Sue Lent
Deputy Leader / Dirprwy Arweinydd
Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Families
Aelod Cabinet Dros Y Blynyddoedd Cynnar, Plant a Theuluoedd



My Ref / Fy Ref: SM/CC

Your Ref / Eich Ref :

Date / Dyddiad: 19th October 2015

Councillor Richard Cook
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear / Annwyl Richard,

RE:- Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Phased Inquiry – The effectiveness of school governing bodies in improving the educational attainment of their pupils

Thank you for your letter dated 16th July 2015 setting out the findings and recommendations of the second phase of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Task Group inquiry into the support and training of governors to help improve the effectiveness of Governing Bodies to improve the educational attainment of pupils. I am pleased to note that your overall findings and recommendations reflect my own views. Strengthening school governance is a priority for Education within the Corporate Plan, Education Development Plan and Estyn Action Plan.

Turning specifically to the recommendations, please find my response as detailed below:

Recommendation 1 - Agreed

During the course of their school visit annual cycle Challenge Advisers make a judgement about the quality of school leadership, this includes the effectiveness of governing bodies. The annual Challenge Adviser's School Improvement report includes a statement about governance.

Recommendation 2 - Agreed

The application process to become a school governor requires those applying to set out their skills and abilities. Local Authority governors are matched with schools where their skills are needed. Governing Bodies are encouraged to undertake a self evaluation exercise, currently the Governors Wales Bronze Award Quality Mark, and are supported by Governor Support Services with this. Feedback from Governing Bodies has indicated that although working towards the Bronze Award is a useful exercise, a more manageable approach to self-evaluation would be more helpful. An identified self evaluation tool kit could be recommended to Cardiff school governing bodies. We have recently received



notification that the Welsh Government has tasked Governors Wales to lead on the construction of a national self-evaluation template for Governing Bodies in Wales.

Recommendation 3 - Agreed

The Local Authority has revised the Service Level Agreement with schools that clearly outlines the service provided by Governor Support Services. Central South Consortium has also produced a document outlining their responsibilities towards school governors.

Recommendation 4 - Not agreed

There are currently no plans to transfer Governor Support Services to the Central South Consortium. There is a Governor Support Lead Officer role in the Consortium and this had resulted in increasing alignment and cooperation between each Local Authority's Governor Support Services.

Recommendation 5 – Agreed

The role of the Local Authority Governor Support Services is to support schools to enable them to comply with law, minimise legal risks and operate effective governance processes. Schools sign up to a service level agreement which outlines the service they can expect from Governor Support Services.

Capacity within the Local Authority to support school governors will be increased by further recruitment to the Business Support Team.

The Local Authority will continue to work with the Central South Consortium to ensure that Governing Bodies are supported.

Recommendation 6 - Agreed

Senior Officers from the Education Directorate hold a briefing meeting for the Chairs of Governing Bodies each school term.

The Central South Consortium Governor Steering Group are running a termly series of briefing sessions aimed at all governors across the consortium. The sessions will update governors on the latest developments and give them the opportunity to consider the implications for their roles.

A governors' newsletter has been produced each school term. Following feedback from governors this will now move to a regular electronic communication.

Robert Hill has been commissioned to carry out focused work in relation to school governors.

Central South Consortium produce regular newsletters for Headteachers and the Local Authority will ensure that these are made available to governors.

Recommendation 7 - Agreed

The Gwaunmeisgyn Primary School model has been shared with Chairs of Governors at their briefing in June and the presentation has been distributed to all Chairs of Governors.

Central South Consortium has appointed consultant governors to transfer best practice across schools and will begin work in the autumn term.

Recommendation 8 – Agreed

The Education Department recognises the vital role that governing bodies play in raising the standards of achievement in Cardiff schools and hence is committed to high quality support and training to Cardiff's school governors. A full range of training is provided to enable governors to meet mandatory training requirements and to discharge their duties effectively. Courses are of high quality and purpose designed, offered at a range of accessible venues and available at daytime and evening. Cluster training and whole Governing Body training is available.

On-line training is also available from September 2015 and will cover the four mandatory training requirements.

Attendance at mandatory training is monitored and supportive action is taken to ensure all governors are compliant.

Where an improvement in governance is identified as a priority in red, amber or yellow schools, the Challenge Advise will broker support which could include a consultant governor, school to school governor links or support from the Challenge Adviser themselves.

Recommendation 9 - Agreed

All mandatory training meets the requirements of the training programmes commissioned by the Welsh Government.

Governors complete an evaluation following each training session. Trainers will be trained in delivering a consistent 'in-house' style of training in response to feedback governors who have attended training.

Dip sampling to quality assure training will take place. An evaluation report will be produced termly.

Recommendation 10 – Agreed

Training for clerks is provided and will be quality assured as above.

Ongoing support for clerks is available through Governor Support Services.

The training programme for clerks has been refreshed and improved for the academic year 2015/2016.

The self evaluation tool for clerks published in the mandatory clerk's training programme will be circulated to all clerks and chairs in the new academic year.

I attach as requested an action plan for the implementation of those recommendations that are accepted.

Thank you for your continuing support on the vital agenda to improve educational attainment for all our children.

Yours sincerely

Yn Gwyr.



**Cllr /Y Cyng Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member for Education/
Yr Aelod Cabinet Dros Addysg
Member for Cathays /
Aelod Dros Cathays**