

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 FEBRUARY 2017

Present: Councillor Richard Cook (Chairperson),  
Councillors Boyle, Chaundy, Joyce, Murphy, Dianne Rees and  
Thorne

Co-opted Members: Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic  
Representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales Representative) and  
Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative)

### 55 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Hayley Smith

### 56 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were received in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

### 57 : CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM - CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING STANDARDS IN CARDIFF'S SCHOOLS

The Chairperson welcomed Hannah Woodhouse (Managing Director, Central South Consortium), Nick Batchelar (Director, Education and Lifelong Learning) to the meeting.

Hannah Woodhouse firstly apologised on behalf of Councillor Huw David, Chair of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee and then presented the discussion paper on raising standards in Cardiff Schools.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members were concerned to note that there was no information in the report in relation to NEET's and were advised that there has been focus on NEETs in discussion with secondary schools and Challenge Advisors have been discussing alternative provision with Headteachers. It was however accepted that this information is not contained in the report provided to this Committee.
- Following a question from Members Ms Woodhouse advised that resource has not been cut to Woodlands, a school currently in special measures and advised that that Challenge Advisors were working with the school. The Director advised that the issue was not one of resource but of the efficacy. The Challenge Advisors require specialist expertise. Work has been ongoing to reform the curriculum.
- Members queried whether poor leadership is being targeted by the Consortium and were advised that there are programmes specifically designed for new Headteachers and those who have been Heads for some time. There is a categorisation process which identifies schools where leadership and

governance is of concern. Support is also available from other Headteachers. The Director advised that the Consortium has had a more significant impact in primary schools; there are reasons for that – a smaller pool of schools; Challenge Cymru have been more closely involved; reporting is better; and recruitment has been an issue but the Consortium does need to be more active in secondary schools.

- Members referred to the information provided in relation to the recent categorisation outcomes and asked for clarification as to how they can be sure that all the assessments carried out tally. The Managing Director advised that she considers the assessments. Sometimes results can be read a different way, there is a human element. It should be noted that there is also regional categorisation.
- The Director advised that he has challenged the Consortium on information provided for example: the spend on staffing; the adequacy of Challenge Advisors; the efficacy of some of the development; and the extent to which they are embedded in and aligned with other authority areas.
- Members were advised that the Challenge Advisors are highly skilled professionals, most of whom have had headship experiences. It is important that the right people are recruited, they work together, and that there is quality training. Due to budgetary constraints there are still difficulties in recruitment for secondary schools.
- Members asked for information as to how many Headteachers or Senior Leaders were currently suspended with full pay. Officers advised that that information was not currently available. Members were advised that HR support was provided by the authority and that the Consortium play a role in brokering any interim leadership, for example the use of a Deputy from another school and although information as to costs was not available, any additional leadership would also have to be funded.

AGREED – That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Consortium conveying the observations of the Committee.

#### 58 : VERBAL BRIEFING ON THE RECENT SCHOOL ELECTRICAL INSPECTIONS.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member – Education) and Nick Batchelar (Director, Education and Lifelong Learning) to the meeting to provide Members with a verbal update on the recent maintenance issues at three Secondary Schools.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she stated that as a result of problems experienced at Cantonian High School it was decided that a review of other schools took place. As a result of those reviews Willows High School and Michaelston Community College were closed for work to be carried out.

Pupils from Willows High School returned to school today. Michaelston Community College was due to close at the end of this academic year in any event.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members queried why the work was not undertaken during the holidays and were advised that after receiving a second opinion in respect of each school there was no option but to take the disruptive step of closing the schools. Members were also advised that there needs to be greater clarity of responsibilities for maintenance work between the landlord and the tenant.
- Members were advised that there were conversations with parents, their concerns were voiced and both school prioritised the Year 10/11 pupils.
- Members queried the costs of the work carried out and were advised that the costs are not recoverable through insurance and have to be budgeted for.

AGREED – That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to relevant Cabinet Member, Directors and officers thanking them for attending the meeting on 13 February and to convey the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

59 : Draft Budget Proposals 2017/18 - Corporate Overview, Social Services & Education

#### Corporate Overview

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member – Corporate Services and Performance), Christine Salter (Director, Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer) and Alan Evans (OM, Accountancy) to the meeting.

Christine Salter provided Members with a presentation outlining the following topics:

- Final Settlement
- Consultation and Post Consultation updates
- Draft Revenue Budget
- Medium Term Outlook
- Draft Capital Programme

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members asked whether the Medium Term Outlook has changed with a shift in Government nuances. Officers advised that whilst the position slightly better this year care should be taken as it may not be as good in 2018/19.
- Members queried whether the Financial Resilience Mechanism (FRM), which stood at £4 should be held back rather than used as described, but were advised that there is £4m for next year in the base.

- Members expressed concern at the reduction of the level of contingency from £4m to £3m and were advised that since February 2016 efforts have been made to increase the robustness of savings. Members were referred to the Planning Status information referred to in the Risk Assessment Summary of Savings proposals and the detailed plans for £15.8m.
- Members referred to the use of the FRM and queried whether Property Condition would be schools, but were advised it was to be used for property condition surveys and the refurbishment of the roof at Cardiff Indoor Market.

### Children's Services

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent (Cabinet Member – Early years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader), Tony Young (Director, Social Services), Irfan Alam (Assistant Director, Children's Services), Christine Salter (Director, Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer and Alan Evans (OM, Accountancy) to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she outlined the positivity of this budget despite the savings that have had to be made.

The Director, Social Services provided Members with a presentation in which he referred to the additional net budget allocation for Social Services of £9.2m, an additional 44 post in Children's Services and Children's Social Services savings of £2.839m.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members queried the unachievable savings from last year in the sum of £872,000 in respect of the Lean Review and Out of County Placements and the saving this year for remodelling and sought clarification of the difference between the Lean Review and the remodelling. Members were advised that Lean Review was a business support process which did not bring in savings; the remodelling relates to the Family Support Service and the stripping away of bureaucracy and the use of the Sign of Safety approach.
- Members were advised that 44 of the new 59 additional posts are in Children's Services within the Preventative Strategy and that if those staff deliver they will pay for themselves over the longer term, that will help mitigate the growth in overall expenditure.
- Members expressed concern that recruitment of the additional staff could take some time and if young people are being returned from Out of County Placements, is there not the risk of a gap in staffing levels? Officers advised that they are trying to ensure that the alignment between the employment of staff and savings is achieved.
- Members sought clarification of the achievability of savings in the Adult Resource Centre. Officers indicated that the teams have been established and work is ongoing.

- With reference to the saving - Safer Families Initiative, Members queried how successful volunteers have been in the past. Members were advised that the number of volunteers is steadily increasing; they are providing overnight stays and stays for longer periods of time which negates the need for the for Local Authority care being provided in those instances.

## Education

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member, Education), Nick Batchelar (Direction, Education and Lifelong Learning), Neil Hardee (Head of Performance Resources and Services for Education), Christine Salter (Director, Corporate Resources), Alan Evans (OM, Accountancy) and Simon Williams (Passenger Transport) to the meeting.

Neil Hardee provided Members with a presentation.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- Following a question, Members were advised that there would not be a dilution of community schools. They are included in the design of new school buildings.
- Members queried, as there are increased numbers coming into the City, whether the schools are in the right place, particularly bearing in mind the number of large developments underway. Officers advised that a Stakeholders Group and Needs Analysis Group has been formed in relation to Band B which will touch on the LDP. Education facilities will be required and there will be Section 106 monies available. There will be active engagement with Headteachers; they know their local areas and know about the parental preference in those areas.
- Members queried with Unicef Child Friendly City Status as an essential spend, and were advised that it was a Cabinet lead decision. The initiative will secure better value and alignment.
- Members sought clarification as to where the 7 posts in Central Staffing will be lost and were advised that whilst it is hard to find savings, vacancies will be considered – away from front line services and there has also be a review of the Admissions Team.
- Members asked which school will host the Pupil Referral Unit. Officers indicated that once the budget has been finalised contact will be made with the schools asking for expressions of interest.
- Members queried the wisdom of the £100,000 saving from the Central budget which equates to the loss of 3 full time posts in the Education Welfare Team and whether that capacity, with the experience and knowledge those officers have, they could be used to support NEETs. Officers advised that these savings and the reduction in these posts was necessary.
- Members referred to the Challenges presenting the Consortium, particularly in relation to secondary schools and expressed concerns about the loss of

funding for Challenge Cymru. Officers advised that there is an extra one year funding of £200,000 for the transitional period.

- Members were advised that the 30% cap will result in the savings of £1.5m having to be found by the schools themselves.
- Members queried whether transport would be provided to the new Eastern High School as there is no bus route. Officers advised that transport is provided if the young person lives more than 3 miles from the school, however, Cardiff Bus are being consulted as to whether a change in the bus route(s) could be accommodated.

AGREED – That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to relevant Cabinet Members, Directors and Officers thanking them for attending the meeting on 13 February and to convey the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

60 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee will be on 7 March 2017 at 4.30 pm in Committee Room 4.

***This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.***