SWYDDFA'R DIRPRWY ARWEINYDD DEPUTY LEADER'S OFFICE

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM48928

Eich Nghyf / Your Ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 6 February 2023

Cllr Lee Bridgeman C/O Members Services County Hall Atlantic Wharf Cardiff CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear Lee

Covid 19 Recovery In Schools

Thank you for the providing myself and Officers the opportunity to speak to the Committee about the impact of Covid-19 and the recovery work that is being undertaken. I will also pass on the Committee's appreciation and thanks to the Head Teachers who also attended the meeting.

Following the meeting I acknowledge the Committee's comments that a follow up session would be beneficial to discuss further progress. Officers will ensure that this is arranged for July 2023 and will update on the work in the following areas: attendance; access and attainment; referrals; development and behaviour; mental health and wellbeing; vulnerable learners; exclusions; and support for staff.

The Children and Young Peoples Recovery Board is a mechanism for ensuring cross council working to support the priorities around recovery that require an integrated approach – particularly wellbeing and vulnerable learners. Officers from Education, Childrens Services, Housing, and Communities meet monthly to monitor progress work against key priorities and ensure improved integration and alignment between services. The key workstreams of the board currently include: Locality Based Services/Community Focussed Schools; Tackling Youth Violence and Exploitation; Integrated Youth Services; and Business Intelligence and Information Management. I would advise the Committee that on building on the recovery work to date and to ensure continued integration there is review looking to incorporate the work of the board into the wider programme management arrangements for children and young people. The board has not specifically considered Cardiff 2030 or the Cardiff Commitment, although both fundamentally support the work of each workstream.

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County Hall

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Regarding partnerships, the department is currently collating a comprehensive directory of partners that work with our schools so that there is a comprehensive support network that can add value to recovery efforts. I would however add that there are considerable number of partnerships working arrangements that are in place. The work of the Cardiff Commitment programme is a good example of these partnership arrangements.

Turning to the financial settlement from Welsh Government I can confirm that on the 14th of December 2022, the Council was provided with its Provisional Budget Settlement. A Cabinet Report was considered by Cabinet on the 22nd of December 2022 which set out the latest planning assumptions and launches the Budget Consultation process. The Council is currently anticipating a 9% increase in its Revenue Support Grant which whilst higher than anticipated still results in a significant budget gap for 2023/24 totalling £23.5 million that will require financial decisions to be made such as Council Tax increases and reductions in services.

Whilst the settlement is higher, the cost pressures facing the Council next year are extraordinary and it is within this context that the Council has confirmed that, the current planning assumption for the overall delegated school budgets is a 9.3% increase. This will be subject to confirmation that the level of grant provided at the provisional stage is equally reflected at Final Settlement stage in early March 2023 and approval of the full Council no later than 10 March 2023.

In considering the 2023/24 budget for delegated schools, the Council has been minded to provide all available funding up front and therefore schools have been asked that their budget planning must accommodate all pay and general inflation (including energy) costs within the budget made available. The Council recognises that the 9.3% increase will still require difficult financial decisions to be undertaken by individual schools. However, the Cabinet has been keen to confirm that no general efficiency cut is applied to the school budget increases that have been indicated. Where any pay and general inflationary costs incurred in year differ from the allowance made within the 9.3% increase, this will be considered for adjustment as part of the delegated school budget build requirements for 2024/25. These initial budget indications represent a good financial settlement for schools for the 2023/2024 financial year.

The Committee asked for further information into reasons why anxiety is a problem for pupils and/or their families; how widespread it is; what numbers/percentage of pupils are still affected; and how persistent a problem it continues to be. It is understood from research as well as feedback from officers that increased anxiety can be attributed to many reasons and these include high expectations and pressure to succeed both within school and through social media, a world that feels scary and threatening, particularly again about what is seen in the media currently – murders, shootings, war in Ukraine, illness, and the role of social and economic deprivation. It is difficult to determine numbers precisely, a survey published by NHS Digital in September 2021, found one in six children in England had a probable mental disorder in 2021 – a similar rate to 2020 but an increase from one in nine in 2017. In a further report 52% of 17- to 23-year-olds have experienced a deterioration in mental health in the last five years (The Children's Society 18/06/2021).

There are a number of challenges faced in terms of building capacity of mental health and well-being services. These include budgets, recruitment, retention and relevant training of staff, implementation of new strategies/approaches, top-down support, and

work across professional boundaries for example, health in education, education providing services historically provided by health.

I trust this foregoing provides sufficient information to the responses requested by the Committee and I look forward to presenting an update on this area in July.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely

Councillor / Cynghorydd Sarah Merry Deputy Leader / Dirprwy Arweinydd Cabinet Member for Education Aelod Cabinet Dros Addysg