

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 JULY 2023

Present: Councillor Bridgeman(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Boes, Davies, Ferguson-Thorne, Hopkins,
Melbourne and Moultrie

12 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Patricia Arlotte, Carol Cobert and Emily Gao.

13 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

14 : CARDIFF INFLUENCERS BRIEFING - SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING STRATEGY

The Chairperson advised that this session allows Members to receive a briefing from the Cardiff Influencers, on the work they are doing on the development of the School Organisational Planning Strategy.

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed:

- The Cardiff Influencers Group, Zach; Naima; Liberty; Ahmed; Mikaeel; Aure; and Tyrese
- Cllr Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education
- Richard Portas, Director of School Organisation Planning
- Michele Duddridge-Friedl, Operational Manager, School Organisation Programme Strategy; and
- Cai Maxwell, Performance Management Support Officer in Education & Lifelong Learning.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement, after which Members received a presentation from the Cardiff Influencers.

The Chairperson asked Members for their comments, questions, and observations.

Members expressed their appreciation for the presentation made by the Cardiff Influencers and the responses to their questions. They commended Michele and Cai for setting up the group and acknowledged their hard work and dedication in developing these young people. The committee views this model of engaging young people in key policies and strategies as an example of best practice and believes it should be communicated across the Council.

Members expressed their intention to invite the group back to a future committee meeting and requested that the Influencers provide information on the impact they have already made in the development of the SOP Strategy. Members were interested in knowing where the group's voice is in the decision-making process, where their input has led to changes and improvements in the draft SOP Strategy, and what skills they have gained through their involvement.

Members recognised the priorities identified by the Cardiff Influencers, such as free school transport, flexible learning through technology, Well-being, and Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Members reinforced the Council's commitment to listening to and acting upon these suggestions.

Members were highly impressed by each individual in the group and identified how they exemplified the four purposes of learning: ambitious and capable contributors, enterprising and creative learners, ethical citizens, and healthy and confident individuals. Members advised that they intend to email the Heads of the schools to praise each individual for their representation and commend their maturity, enthusiasm, and knowledge displayed during the meeting.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

15 : EDUCATION/SCHOOLS PANDEMIC RECOVERY

Members were advised that this item allows them to receive a detailed update on Covid-19 Recovery in Schools, following Committee's deep dive in December 2023.

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed:

- Cllr Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education
- Mike Tate (Assistant Director of Education and 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)

The Cabinet Member was invited to make a statement after which Members received presentations from witnesses.

The Chairperson invited question, comments, and observations from Members.

During the discussions, the Committee highlighted a range of challenges and ongoing concerns, including attendance, referrals, vulnerable learners, exclusions, support for staff and pupils, mental health and well-being, budgeting, use of digital technology, and recruitment and retention of staff. Members acknowledged the sobering nature of the information provided and commended schools for their dedication and resilience in facing these challenges.

Members requested further insights on whether the worst-case scenario has turned into reality and expressed their intention to continue monitoring the above-mentioned issues.

A key statement that caught the attention of the Committee was the lack of a long-term recovery plan. Members sought clarification on the existence and development of such a plan in Cardiff, the role of the Cardiff Recovery Board in its implementation, and how the Council is representing the need for long-term recovery planning at the national level.

The Committee called for a cross-party council-wide commitment to chase and lobby the Welsh and UK governments for sufficient funding to support children and young people. They expressed concerns about school deficits and the need for consistent and adequate funding to address resource pressures.

Members emphasised the importance of a long-term focus on neurodiversity, and while they acknowledged this to be a Health board issue, they sought the Council's role in areas such as campaigning and lobbying.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

16 : VIRTUAL HEADTEACHER

The Chairperson advised that this item enabled Members to receive a presentation from the Virtual Headteacher on her work to date and plans for the future.

For this item, the Chairperson welcomed:

- Cllr Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Education
- Mike Tate (Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning)
- Deborah Williams, Virtual Head Teacher.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make a statement after which Members received presentations from Deborah Williams.

The Chairperson invited question, comments, and observations from Members.

Members expressed their gratitude to Deborah for her briefing on her work, and they welcomed and supported her efforts.

Members also endorsed Deborah's call for a funding guarantee.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

17 : SOP TASK & FINISH REPORT

Committee Members were advised by the Chair of the Task & Finish Group, Cllr Hopkins, that the Task & Finish Group conducted a thorough review of the Cabinet report and its appendices on June 27, 2023. They discussed various aspects, including overall proposals, future-proofing, financial considerations, SRBs, PRUs, land matters, staffing, timelines, and scrutiny's involvement in the process as more details emerge.

Additionally, the Task & Finish Group confirmed that as more specific details about ALN proposals become available, they will be presented to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee in individual reports following consultations. This approach would allow Members to thoroughly examine proposals in a manageable manner and will be incorporated into the Committee's work programme as appropriate.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

18 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

19 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12th September 2023 at 4.30pm

The meeting terminated at 8.20 pm