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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** MONDAY, 16 JANUARY 2023, 5.00 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)

**Correspondence following Committee Meeting**(Pages 3 - 20)

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Date: 18 January 2023

My Ref: CYP/CSS/Jan23



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Councillor Ash Lister  
Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's)  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
CARDIFF  
CF10 4UW

Dear Ash,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 JANUARY 2023 –  
DRAFT CHILDREN'S SERVICES STRATEGY 2023-26**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of Cabinet proposals relating to the Draft Children's Services Strategy 2023-26. Please also pass on our thanks to Sarah McGill and Deborah Driffield.

The Committee commends the report to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on the 19 January 2023.

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

As a general point, Members wanted to again offer the committee's support in assisting you and officers in the development of strategy and policy in Children's Services. This could be done in a formal committee setting or via a more informal "task and finish" arrangement. If we are able to assist in individual pieces of work to inform draft strategy and policy, please let us know.

**Recruitment and retention of staff**

We asked a number of questions on this issue, and sought clarity on vacancy rates, which was responded to.

We asked questions around utilising social care practitioners/social work assistants; and barriers to retraining (including the levels of qualifications required to enter into

social work; and length of time/commitment required to do so). We noted the responses from you in relation to the introduction of five-year work plans for individuals; the use of the trusted adult model; and ongoing discussions with Welsh Government on this matter, including conversion degrees. We would also be interested to be kept abreast of any dialogue with local universities on this issue.

We also asked a question relating to other offers that could come with the job, which could benefit both newly qualified and more experienced social workers. We were pleased to hear that clinical supervision has been used via education psychologists, and we noted that a specialist psychologist for social work staff was a desire and consideration for the Workforce Strategy. We would wish to lend our support for such a post to be created, as we feel that any support for staff working on the front-line and in very difficult circumstances is critical in demonstrating that social work is recognised and supported.

### **Engagement**

We asked a question relating to whether Children's Services had engaged with Parent Voices Wales. Deborah stated that she was unsure, so would find out. Please could you update us on this issue in response to this letter?

### **Children's Services Action Plan**

We asked whether there would be an accompanying Action Plan developed to ensure the aims and commitments set out in the Strategy document can be measured. We were pleased to hear that an Action Plan will be developed and we would request that this Committee is included at the development stages of the Action Plan – whether this be at formal committee, or in a more informal “task and finish” setting. We would request your commitment to be given in response to this letter and indicative timescales of when this will happen.

### **North Yorkshire Model/Right Place for Cardiff**

We sought some further details on the North Yorkshire Model and were pleased to hear that Cardiff was now accredited under the “Right Place for Cardiff” heading. We also asked whether Cardiff was producing some “best practice” and were pleased to be updated that the FDAC pilot and practice leads were generating interest; and that the trusted adult model was likely to go the same way. If available, we would appreciate more information on the model itself and the rationale behind why Cardiff chose this model over others. Please could you provide an overview of the model?

We prioritised the issue of “Innovations in Children's Services” for our 2022/23 work programme. This would include not just Right Place for Cardiff and FDAC, but the

Interventions and Reviewing Hubs. We would like to undertake a short scrutiny (one whole meeting) on this issue, to include witnesses such as

- Yourself, Sarah and Deborah
- Other relevant senior managers
- Key members of staff leading locality teams
- Young people with lived experience of interventions/reviewing hub (*can be anonymous correspondence if needed*).
- Social Worker views

Please could you indicate the most appropriate time for this to be considered by this Scrutiny and we will programme into our calendar of meetings as appropriate.

Linked with comments made on the action plan, we would also welcome some narrative on how the innovations implemented into the Services (as highlighted in this section) will fit into and inform the action plan.

### **Importance of Partnership Working**

We asked for views around current partnership arrangements and used the example of tackling knife crime and the Council's partnership with the Police. We noted the response relating to the work being undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership on this issue. Members were also informed of the SAFE Model. During the last administration, the Committee received a briefing on the SAFE Model (presented to Committee in February 2022), so I have asked Alison to resend this to committee Members. If we require any further information or an updated briefing, I will let you know.

### **Closer to Home/Out of County Placements**

We asked questions regarding "invest to save" in relation to bringing/keeping children and young people closer to home/in county. We also posed a case study regarding "breaking the cycle" of children and young people who had been placed out of county. We were satisfied with the responses given.

### **Foster Carers**

Members were pleased with the responses given in relation to commitments to foster carers. We heard that a piece of work in relation to teenagers on the edge of care was a priority, and would wish to be kept informed of this, or would alternatively wish to offer our support in undertaking this piece of work. Please advise.

To recap, we request the following information from you:

1. **Recruitment and Retention of Staff** – commitment to feedback on ongoing discussions with Welsh Government on this matter, including conversion degrees. We would also be interested to be kept abreast of any dialogue with local universities on this issue.
2. **Engagement with Parent Voices Wales** – update the Committee on whether any engagement has taken place.
3. **Action Plan** – agreement that this Committee is included at the development stages of the Action Plan – whether this be at formal committee, or in a more informal “task and finish” setting. We would request your commitment to be given in response to this letter and indicative timescales of when this will happen.
4. **Innovations in Children’s Services** - Please could you indicate the most appropriate time for this to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee and we will programme into our calendar of meetings as appropriate.
5. **Linking Innovations to the Action Plan** - we would also welcome some narrative on how the innovations implemented into the Services will fit into and inform the action plan.
6. **Foster Carers** – commitment to be kept informed of “teenagers on the edge of care” work, including any support the committee can offer in undertaking this piece of work.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

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

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

Sarah McGill, Corporate Director, People and Communities and Director of Social Services

Deborah Driffield, Director of Children's Services

Liz Williams/Debra Willis, PA to the Corporate Director

Jennifer Goss, Cabinet Support Office

Kim Thorpe, PA to the Director of Children's Services

Jo Watkins, Cabinet Support Manager

Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms

Cllr Adrian Robson – Group Leader

Cllr Rhys Taylor – Group Leader

Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader

David Hugh Thomas – Chair Governance & Audit Committee

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## SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM49019  
Eich Cyf / Your Ref: CYP/CSS/Jan23  
Dyddiad / Date: 15 March 2023

Councillor Lee Bridgeman  
Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear Lee,

### **Re: Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 16 January 2023 – Draft Children’s Services Strategy 2023-26**

Thank you for your letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> January on behalf of the members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee following its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January. Your feedback is appreciated, and I am pleased to offer the update below for members, as requested.

**Recruitment and Retention of Staff – commitment to feedback on ongoing discussions with Welsh Government on this matter, including conversion degrees. We would also be interested to be kept abreast of any dialogue with local universities on this issue.**

We are committed to continuing our work to improve recruitment and retention and our plans for the coming year will be set out in our Workforce Action Plan. We will ensure that Committee are kept up to date in relation to developments, including work with both the Welsh Government and local universities.

**Engagement with Parent Voices Wales – update the Committee on whether any engagement has taken place.**

We are in the process of developing a Participation Strategy. The strategy will set out how we will strengthen our current opportunities for children, young people, and families to be involved in decision making and service development planning. The strategy will

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#### GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

#### WORKING FOR CARDIFF, WORKING FOR YOU

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also set out how our children, young people and families would like to be involved in service and policy development in the future. An initial meeting with a range of different directorates across the authority has taken place to drive this work forward.

We will have a series of planning and engagement events with children, young people, and families to help shape and develop this strategy, which will include engaging with a range of parent and family groups over the next few months. Planning sessions are underway to ensure that these events are well attended. We will ensure that Parent Voices Wales are fully involved in this piece of work.

The Participation Strategy and the involvement of our care experienced young people and families in service development will be monitored by our Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee.

**Action Plan – agreement that this Committee is included at the development stages of the Action Plan – whether this be at formal committee, or in a more informal “task and finish” setting. We would request your commitment to be given in response.**

All the aims and commitments set out in the new Striving for Excellence in Children’s Services Strategy will be set out in the Children’s Services Directorate Delivery Plan. This will take account of the feedback that we received from Committee Members in response to the Local Authority Social Services Annual Report. If members have further views that they would like to share, I would be keen to hear them at the next Children and Young People’s Committee Meeting so we can feed them into the development of the Directorate Delivery Plan.

**Innovations in Children’s Services – Please could you indicate the most appropriate time for this to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee and we will programme into our calendar of meetings as appropriate.**

We are very keen to share an update with Committee about innovations in Children’s Services and would respectfully propose that this is scheduled for the Committee Meeting in September.

**Linking Innovations to the Action Plan – we would also welcome some narrative on how the innovations implemented into the Services will fit into and inform the action plan.**

The innovations in Children’s Services will be reflected in the Directorate Delivery Plan which will set out our planned implementation milestones. Regular progress updates will be provided.

**Foster Carers – commitment to be kept informed of “teenagers on the edge of care” work, including any support the committee can offer in undertaking this piece of work.**

Thank you for your offer of support in relation to work with teenagers on the edge of care. We will keep Committee updated in relation to developments in this area and will certainly let Committee know of any support that could be provided.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ash Lister', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

**Y Cyngorydd / Councillor Ash Lister**  
**Yr Aelod Cabinet dros Wasanaethau Cymdeithasol (Gwasanaethau Plant)**  
**Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's Services)**

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Date: 18 January 2023

My Ref: CYP/SOP\_CSC/Jan23



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Neuadd y Sir  
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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 – 16 JANUARY 2023 –  
SOP ANNUAL REPORT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRESENTATION**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of SOP Annual Report; and the presentation made by colleagues in the Central South Education Consortium (CSC). Please also pass on our thanks to Mel Godfrey; Geraint Lewis and Kate Rowlands from the CSC; Richard Portas; Michele Duddridge-Friedl; Jennie Hughes and Brett Andrewartha.

The Committee commends the SOP Annual Report to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on the 19 January 2023.

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

**School Organisation Planning - Annual Report on Investment in the Education Estate**

**Band B moving into Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme**

We asked whether current Band B projects would remain a priority and would not be affected in terms of both timing and funding. Whilst we were satisfied that funding would be available, we were concerned with the response that the current Band B projects may be subject to change in terms of timelines, should another project become more of a priority. We would therefore seek assurances that the rest of the

Band B projects remain on time as per current arrangements, with the more flexible approach be applied when new projects come on board.

### **SOP Strategy**

Members would like to reiterate their desire to be part of the development of the SOP Strategy and would seek agreement on this.

### **Review of Catchment Areas**

The presentation outlined there potentially being a Catchment Area Review and we would wish to be kept informed of progress in relation to this, as this is something the Committee has requested to take place a number of times. We seek further information on this, including any timescales for development and implementation.

### **Energy Efficiency**

We were pleased to receive the data arising from the K2N Partnership. Richard stated that this information would form part of future analysis, and we would therefore ask you to report back in 12 months to let us know how this data has been used within the 12-month period and any changes that have arisen from the use of such data.

### **Birth Rates/Projections/Surplus Places**

We asked a question on birth rates and projections, particularly whether analysis was showing areas of the city where there is likely to be a rise in demand or areas that may see a drop in demand. Whilst we do not want to generate work for the Team, a clearer picture of areas of the city (for example at ward level) where demand is looking likely to rise or fall would be very useful information for us. If you were able to provide a map, or a list of this information, it would be very welcomed. If any information on where projected surplus places will be, that would also be very helpful.

### **Additional Learning Needs**

Members asked for some information on whether demands in ALN were due to a general increase or whether there were other factors driving this. We were satisfied with Jennie's response on this issue and agree that it's a complex picture. We will continue to monitor this with you at future meetings.

We also asked about demands on clinical services, such as speech and language and OT, and whether health (who have their own demands and challenges) was

equipped to deal with this or whether other clinical provision was being sought to fill the gaps and a plan on how this will happen. We would like to request some further information on this issue.

### **Welsh Government School Improvement Guidance: A Framework for School Improvement**

Whilst the intention of this Item was to brief Members on the issue, during the Way Forward, Members considered the implications of the information they received via the presentation and of your concerns raised verbally, which the committee strongly supports.

We were very pleased to receive the presentation by colleagues in the Central South Education Consortium and thank them for their attendance. We were satisfied that CSC are meeting their roles and responsibilities in the new framework.

However, we too remain sceptical about changes being introduced. We agree that there needs to be some framework in place to be able to measure the progress of individual pupils achieving the best they can. Without some kind of framework, we agreed that we are not delivering for those children.

We were concerned that the Data Finance Report is not yet available and would appreciate CSC giving us an indication of when this will be available and any early hints on what is likely to be contained in it. We believe that this report will be critical in explaining what Welsh Government expects, as there is currently an absence of clarity on how it will work in practice and a potential step back on not knowing what is happening.

We also shared concerns relating to those individuals on governing bodies not having the professional expertise, and what training (if any) was being offered to support school governors. Members also shared concerns about interrogating a head teacher, and the difficulties of governors having to take up a challenge role.

We also agree with your concerns regarding the diminishing role of the local authority in education. We were very heartened to hear at our December meeting that both primary and secondary heads were praising the greater partnership between the LA and schools, and we would be very concerned if the new framework would affect this relationship.

We are also uneasy about what this means in terms of accountability. It appears that the new framework would result in the Council being one step removed. As already highlighted, there is currently a lack of data threads, and guidance on how we will measure "success".

We share your concerns about how we are going to look after those groups of vulnerable pupils within individual schools and across schools in the region and across Wales; and what happens if schools are not performing and ensuring that we get in there early?

Equally of concern, we would ask who is making the governing body accountable as this is not currently explicit. The new arrangements appear to rely on school's Senior Leadership Teams informing the Governing Body of what will be reported and the expectations. In the wider context, whilst we acknowledge the new arrangements are cluster driven, what about those in other clusters? If there is no baseline and guidance to work from, there will be differing measurements of "success" that may not be satisfactory – schools working to differing principles.

Overall, the Committee wanted to support you on the concerns and challenges you have raised both at this committee and at Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. If we can be of any further assistance in discussions with Welsh Government etc, please let us know.

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

**Band B Projects** - assurances that the rest of the Band B projects remain on time as per current arrangements, with the more flexible approach be applied when new projects come on board.

**SOP Strategy** - Members would like to reiterate its desire to be part of the development of the SOP Strategy and would seek agreement on this.

**Catchment Area Review** - further information on this, including any timescales for development and implementation

**Energy Efficiency** - agreement to report back on this issue in January 2024 detailing how the K2N data has been used within the 12-month period and any changes that have arisen from the use of such data.

**Birth-rates/Projections/Surplus Places** - provide a map, or a list of this information at ward level. If any information on where projected surplus places could be reported, that would also be very helpful.

**ALN** – information on demands on clinical services, such as speech and language and OT, and whether health (who have their own demands and challenges) was equipped to deal with this or whether other clinical provision was being sought to fill the gaps and a plan on how this will happen.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

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

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  
Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
Richard Portas, Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme  
Brett Andrewartha, School Organisation Programme Planning Manager  
Jennie Hughes, Senior Achievement Leader Inclusion  
Geraint Lewis, CSC  
Kate Rowlands, CSC  
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Officer Manager  
Melanie Jackson, PA to the Deputy Leader  
Helen Eager, PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
Paula Williams, PA to the Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme  
Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms  
Cllr Adrian Robson – Group Leader  
Cllr Rhys Taylor – Group Leader  
Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader  
David Hugh Thomas – Chair Governance & Audit Committee

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

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM49042

Eich Nghyf / Your Ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 15 February 2023



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

Annwyl / Dear Lee

**Scrutiny - Sop Proposals**

Thank you for inviting us to present to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2023, and for the opportunity to provide further information in relation to the requests of Members outlined in your letter of 18 January 2023.

I welcome the Committee's support for the publication of a SOP Annual Report and for the School Improvement presentation made by colleagues in the Central South Education Consortium (CSC). I appreciate your comments, observations and recommendations made regarding the report.

The Committee specifically requested further information on the following areas:

- **Band B Projects**
- **SOP Strategy**
- **Catchment Area Review**
- **Energy Efficiency**
- **Birth-rates/Projections/Surplus Places**
- **ALN**

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**GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI**

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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I understand you would like a reply addressing these requests in good time for the Committee meeting of 20 March 2023. I have asked officers to investigate the requests and I will provide a substantive response in advance of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee in March.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Merry". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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