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GOHEBIAETH YN DILYN CYFARFOD Y PWYLLGOR

Pwyllgor PWYLLGOR CRAFFU PLANT A PHOBL IFANC

**Dyddiad ac amser
y cyfarfod** DYDD LLUN, 26 CHWEFROR 2024, 4.30 PM

Gweler isod gohebiaeth anfon gan Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor ar ôl y cyfarfod , ynghyd ag unrhyw ymatebion a gafwyd

Am unrhyw fanylion pellach, cysylltwch â scrutinyviewpoints@caerdydd.gov.uk

Gohebiaeth yn dilyn Cyfarfod y Pwyllgor(*Tudalennau 3 - 26*)

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol

Date: 28 February 2024

My Ref: CYP/Ed Collab&Fed Strategy – February 2024



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Councillor Sarah Merry
Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 FEBRUARY 2024 -
CARDIFF EDUCATION: COLLABORATION AND FEDERATION STRATEGY**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to provide us with the opportunity to consider the draft report on the Cardiff Education: Collaboration and Federation Strategy, prior to Cabinet on the 29 February 2024. Please also pass on our thanks to officers and the Executive Head, Sarah Coombes for sharing her experiences with us.

There are several key issues arising from the consideration of this issue that we recommend the Cabinet responds to. The following issues were discussed and agreed during the Way Forward and we require a response on all the issues raised.

Timing of the Strategy

The committee was extremely disappointed at the timing of this pre-decision scrutiny. We felt that, bringing this strategy on the same day as the budget strategy (when discussing huge financial constraints in this area), is very regrettable. Given that this was described at the meeting as a ten-year strategy we remain unclear about why there was the urgency to bring this report forward at the same time as considering a challenging budget.

We also wish to strongly state that we believe that this scrutiny committee should have been involved at a much earlier stage. Earlier scrutiny intervention would have assisted the whole policy development in collaboration with the service area.

It was stated that the aim has been to be more transparent about the strategy. However, this has not been helped by including scrutiny at the last minute. The questioning required to flesh out so much additional information proved to be problematic.

We were concerned that the presentation lacked balance. It focused very much on the potential benefits of collaboration and federation and could have given greater insight into the challenges. There was little information during the meeting from the panel about how the strategy has been received by headteachers. Several committee members referred to concerns that they had heard on the ground.

The committee is aware that the Welsh Government's guidance and related legislation provide a detailed framework within which to develop the strategy. This emphasises the importance of preparation, consultation with all stakeholders and sets out expectations about how the development of collaboration and formal federation arrangements should proceed. While this was recognised and referred to during the discussion, the committee was, nevertheless, left with the impression that what is a very significant step was being rushed.

The Director referred to the fact that the opportunity to consider collaboration and federation in particular circumstances is an integral part of the Cardiff 2030 Vision. However, the fact that the education department has felt the need to bring forward the Collaboration and Federation Strategy in its own right has given the approach much greater emphasis and prominence.

The committee recognised that there have been several initiatives involving some primary and special schools in collaboration and federation in recent years. The presentation by the Executive Headteacher gave valuable insights into the good work that has been done to date involving two schools working together in collaboration. Further insight into the work of schools working through a formal federation would also have been helpful but this did not form part of the meeting.

The Strategy

The papers describing the strategy outline four approaches to federation: a reactive approach, a proactive approach and two other approaches which are local authority led. The strategy sets out several trigger points for a local authority-led federation. These indicate that a local authority-led approach to federation could be occasioned by: consideration of school size; schools in budget deficit without an agreed medium term plan; headteacher/ deputy headteacher vacancy; schools receiving intensive education support; consideration of the availability of school places; schools that are part of the School Organisation Programme or receiving capital funding. Despite assurances at the meeting that federation would only be considered in partnership with schools, the committee is concerned that the extent of these triggers risks undermining or distorting how federation may be perceived.

The committee sought clarification about many aspects of the strategy, including:

- Whether this was an “opt-in” model.
- The drivers behind the development of the strategy.
- Job security.
- Support for schools who may not wish to follow this model
- The location of certain schools and whether distance would be a barrier to a federation.
- The extent to which consideration has been given to the circumstances of Welsh-medium schools including geographical location.
- The extent to which the strategy has been discussed the Roman Catholic and Church- in-Wales Diocesan Authorities.
- The impact of federation in addressing the need to address challenges such as improving attendance.
- The demands that ALENCos would need to address across more than one school.
- How federation is approached when it involves schools operating in different socio-economic contexts and with different starting points in terms of school improvement.

Overall, the committee felt that, as this had the potential to represent a significant change to the model for how schools might be organised in future, further thought should be given to whether there is a need for a stronger mandate to underpin the strategy.

Therefore, we **recommend** that a further review of the strategy and its contents be undertaken, in consultation with this Scrutiny Committee before being taken forward.

The committee would also welcome further information on the development of **Federations of schools** already in place.

Communication and a Communication Strategy

It was disappointing that it was felt the committee had misconstrued the focus and emphasis of the item being considered. The committee itself was exercised by the fact that misunderstandings and misconceptions about what the strategy is intended to achieve may already be evident in the response of key stakeholders. The committee considered that this could have been avoided had greater thought been given to the communication process with the committee itself as well as with headteachers, chairs of governors and elected members. How the strategy is communicated to the school community and beyond is critical to its success. It was agreed that school leaders, their governing bodies, parents and carers and other stakeholders will need a strong sense of ownership of the strategy and how it affects them.

We therefore **recommend** that a detailed communications strategy be developed, with the media and comms team, and implemented at the earliest opportunity. Without this, the committee feels that the risk of misunderstanding is increased and this should include the following:

- Clearly identifiable stakeholders/constituencies - as a minimum - headteachers, chairs of governors and elected members.
- Clear information about the strategy, its purpose, the process, the difference between collaboration and federation and the role and constitution of governing bodies.

- Clear information on whether this is intended to be a significant potential contributor to future arrangements with schools.
- The nature of the advice and support that would be available to governing bodies and schools' leaders in their communication with parents when considering collaboration or federation.

Recommendations following the scrutiny

To summarise, the Committee makes two formal recommendations as set out below. As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could, for each recommendation, state whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted, or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet's response. If the recommendation is accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet.

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Action Date
1. That a further review of the Collaboration and Federation Strategy and its contents be undertaken, in consultation with this Scrutiny Committee before being taken forward.				
2. That a detailed communications strategy be developed, with the media and comms Team, and implemented at the earliest opportunity, and this should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identifiable stakeholders/constituencies – as a minimum headteachers, chairs of governors, and elected members. 				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear information about the strategy, its purpose, the process, the difference between collaboration and federation and the role and constitution of governing bodies • Clear information on whether this is intended to be a significant potential contributor to future arrangements with schools. • The nature of the advice and support that would be available to governing bodies and schools' leaders in their communication with parents when considering collaboration or federation. 				
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Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN

Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members
 Melanie Godfrey - Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
 Richard Portas - Programme Director for the School Organisation Programme
 Brett Andrewartha - School Organisation Programme Planning Manager
 Michele Duddridge-Friedl - Operational Manager, School Organisation Programme Strategy
 Sarah Coombes – Executive Headteacher Llanishen Fach and Pentyrch Primary Schools

Claire Deguara – Cabinet Support Office
Adam Foster – Head of Cabinet Office
Helen Eager - PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Paula Williams – PA to the SOP Director
Tim Gordon and Jeremy Rhys – Media and Comms
Gavin McArthur – Chair, Governance & Audit Committee
Cllr John Lancaster – Group Leader
Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader
Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader

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Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance,
Room 519,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.

Dear Councillor Weaver,

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 26 February 2024

On behalf of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you, Councillor Lister, Councillor Merry, Cllr Bradbury and officers for attending the Committee meeting on Monday 26 February 2024 to consider the Draft Budget Proposals 2024/25 and Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2027.

The meeting initially considered the Corporate Overview and was followed by scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and sections of the draft corporate plan relevant to the terms of reference of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. The comments and observations made by Members following this item are set out in this letter.

❖ Corporate Overview

In terms of your Portfolio, Members felt there were a number of issues that would require your input and commitment going forward and would appreciate your views on.

Firstly, the Committee wish to commend you and Cabinet colleagues for the commitments given to budgets in Education, Children's Services and the protection of the Youth Service budget. The uplifts were very welcomed particularly with regard to Children's Services where the uplift amounts to more than 12%. Notwithstanding the 4.3% uplift to the delegated schools' budget, the committee expressed concerns about the pressures on schools' budgets and the predicted significant deficit position in 2024/2024. We will support you in ensuring Directorates are achieving their

commitments and priorities and budgets are used effectively across all Directorates that fall within this Committee's Terms of Reference.

During our questioning, we asked you about the following issues and noted responses:

- The resilience of the budget and the robustness of the financial strategy, particularly in terms of protecting services
- The nature of any dialogue between Welsh Government and the Council given the predicted budget gap of £142.3 million over the next three years and the risk this poses to the delivery of services in the short and medium terms.
- The extent of collaboration in the provision of services across the region currently and in the future and the relationship between this and the potential for making efficiency savings that could then be devoted to the delivery of front-line services.
- Clarification around the use of the Financial Resilience Model
- The uncertainty surrounding the funding of the increased costs associated with the teachers' pension scheme and the significant implications should this not be fully covered.
- Reassurance that the teacher's NJC pay awards over the last two years have been covered in full and that this will continue for future awards.
Reassurances also with regard to the pay awards for non-teaching and support staff.
- The key challenges to the budget across the Council
- Issues in relation to particular KPIs

In addition, we asked questions on the following areas. We request a response to these.

- In the corporate overview and across individual portfolios, we asked questions in relation to the national context, particularly around grants. We **request** a response on what the administration intends to do in its dialogue with Welsh Government about grants, particularly the short and medium term position, given the very significant concerns about the coming year and the next 2-3 years; and how grants to schools will be distributed, as officers stated that this was an area that still required detail from Welsh Government.

- In the corporate overview and across individual portfolios, we asked questions in relation to KPIs. This resulted in us asking about results against these KPIs. We therefore **request** that going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios.
- We asked a question in relation to medium term financial forecasting and were pointed to the Medium-Term Financial Plan Annex 1, and you kindly provided a copy of this document to us via email before the end of the meeting. You also stated that detailed questions on this issue would be welcomed during the year. Therefore, we would like to take up this opportunity for issues within our terms of reference; and therefore, **request** that you provide us with suitable timelines of when we could do this, and we will add to our work programme accordingly.
- We also asked a number of questions seeking clarity around school budgets - both deficits and surpluses. We voiced our concerns around a potential £10m deficit, and how the Council is responding to, and supporting schools. Whilst we noted the responses received, officers stated that there needs to be a conversation between finance and education on this issue, particularly around ALN. Therefore, we **request** further clarity and information be provided on how this will roll-out over the coming months. In addition, we **request** that the response includes further information on how the local authority is going to work with schools to successfully manage deficits in a way that does not damage the quality of education, given that schools are facing very significant demands on a number of fronts.

❖ **Children's Services**

The Committee welcomed the over 12% net increase in the Children's Services budget for 2024/25 and would like to thank the Cabinet for continuing to support this area.

We welcomed news from Councillor Lister that the innovations in Children's Services were coming to fruition, and we will look at this issue in detail at our meeting on the 7 May 2024.

During our questioning, we asked you about the following issues and noted responses:

- Youth Justice Service Restructure
- Assurances that the Service can meet demand.
- Ensuring that the safeguarding self-assessment and the recent inspection have been reflected in both the budget proposals and corporate plan
- Risks relating to placements
- Spend to save issues in relation to employees
- The impact of national strategies and policies going forwards (such as eliminating profit from care etc.).

Budget Proposals

During the Q&A session, we asked a number of questions on the budget, particularly around what the service wishes to deliver with additional funding; the potential impact of efficiency savings proposed; and the review of the business support service. We noted the responses given.

Corporate Plan 2023-26

In relation to the Corporate Plan, Members asked a number of questions in relation to commitments and KPIs. This included new KPIs and awaiting targets to be set; sought assurances that current KPIs could be met; and whether the Cabinet Member and officers were confident that the KPIs (K1.19 – 1.24) on external placements would be met. We also asked a question on new KPIs on the family advice service, which we will address more fully below.

Family Advice Service

We asked about the progress of the service review in this area, and we heard that a service area alignment review was commenced; that an external company undertook a review (which revealed that clients were being referred to the MASH, rather than early help); and plans for a triage system. There was also a suggestion that bringing those two services together could improve preventative services and offer potential efficiency savings, and that some detail of this could be brought back to this scrutiny committee. We therefore **request** that this be done and that a timeline is provided for consideration by this committee.

Demand on Services and Complexity of Demand

Members noted the range of reasons given for the complexity of cases coming into the service. We acknowledge the issues affecting the children & young people themselves such as poor mental health across all age ranges which is placing pressures on Children's Services and schools; the increase in children with neurodiversity issues, and difficulties in accessing services; and complexities around very young children and babies with complex needs and disabilities and meeting their needs.

We also note the wider complexities associated with poverty and parents' ability to support children; the increased impact of poor mental health on parents, including substance abuse and domestic violence; and we understand that Children's Services are trying to understand the impact of the significant change in the environment – pre-pandemic to now. We will continue to look at ways in which we can support this; as well as review these issues going forward.

Children's Services General

As we have done at previous meetings, the committee would wish to seek reassurance regarding the efficiency savings and demands on the service. We would therefore **request** further information on this, particularly ensuring that there will not be any adverse impact on service delivery.

We also note that there are numerous discussions taking place (or planning to take place) between the Council and Welsh Government on a range of issues that affect Cardiff. We note that legislation on eliminating profit from care is imminent; and this could throw up more challenges for the Council. We also note and support Cllr Lister's desire for any conversation between Welsh Government and Council Leaders includes experiences of practice staff. If this scrutiny committee can support these discussions, we would welcome this opportunity.

Education & Lifelong Learning

Notwithstanding the concerns expressed about the pressures on schools' budgets, members of the Committee would like to again commend the Cabinet for the continued priority given to education as set out in the Corporate Plan and in the budget proposals.

During our questioning, we asked you about the following issues and noted responses:

- Performance in relation to specific KPIs, including school meals
- Deletion of a post in School Admissions
- Capital Programme, especially around school organisation planning
- Alternative funding for areas such as sports facilities

Budget Proposals

Much of the discussion on overall budget proposals have already been addressed earlier in this letter. However, further questions were asked in the following areas:

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Members asked a number of questions in relation to the funding of ALN, including seeking assurances that interim funding is available and on the Council's radar; whether ALN additional funding has been clearly communicated; what support is being offered in understanding when schools can approach the Council for financial assistance; and the overlap between ALN, with Children's Services and School Transport.

We also asked for clarity on the numbers of those children who have Individual Development Plans and noted that 8% of the current school population have them, which has a knock-on effect in terms of demand and need for provision for complex needs. We would seek assurances in this area and therefore **request** that further information be provided.

Active Travel

Linked to discussions on ALN, Members asked whether there were funds in place to shrink the radius from schools (currently 3 miles for Secondary schools and 2 miles for Primary schools) – both in the short time and into the longer term. The Head of Finance stated that he could provide further information on this issue. Therefore, we **request** that this information be provided.

Education Psychologists

Members asked about the deletion of vacant posts in this area. (Appendix 6a in scrutiny papers) We heard that the rationale for deleting these posts was that they

were long standing posts that were named on the system, but the structure had moved on and that there was a full complement, and no reduction in service. The Director suggested that she could clarify this position; and we therefore **request** further information be provided on this proposal.

Single Sex Toilets

Members asked for the number of single sex toilets in schools and whether there had been any issues in schools in relation to this. The Director of SOP responded that he had not had any issues brought to his attention but could find more information/ further clarity on this. Therefore, we **request** further information be provided.

Supporting Young People

Youth Service

Members have, at previous meetings of this Committee, championed the work of the youth service and would wish to state that it fully supports the work that Cllr Bradbury and officers are aiming to achieve in this area, and progress to date.

As with previous years, this Committee wishes to again strongly advocate a move towards sustainable core funding; and consider putting the service on a statutory basis – reducing the reliance on grant funding. We agree with Cllr Bradbury's desire to move from a 50/50 budget split to a 75/25 split. We would therefore **request** your thoughts on this and a commitment from the administration to work towards this in the coming years.,

As Members stated that the meeting, youth services do not just offer activities to young people in their areas; but also have a community cohesion role; provide mental health and well-being support; and tackle criminal exploitation.

We strongly support Cllr Bradbury's vision to rebuild the service; support the locality approach and would wish to offer our support in discussions with Welsh Government on this issue.

To recap, the Committee is requesting the following information:

Corporate

- A response on what the administration intends to do in its dialogue with Welsh Government about grants, particularly the short and medium term position, given the very significant concerns about the coming year and the next 2-3 years; and how grants to schools will be distributed, as officers stated that this was an area that still required detail from Welsh Government.
- Agreement that, going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios.
- Provide us with suitable timelines of when we could ask questions relating to progress against the MTFP during 2024/25.
- School budgets – to provide further clarity and assurances on discussions relating to ALN, and how this will roll-out over the coming months. We also request that the response includes further information on how the local authority is going to work with schools to successfully manage deficits in a way that does not damage the quality of education, given that schools are facing very significant demands on a number of fronts. We would also welcome an in-year update, at the appropriate time, on the schools' budget deficit position and how this is being managed.

Children's Services

- Family Advice Service – that the results of any reviews of the family advice service be brought back to this scrutiny committee and that a timeline is provided for consideration by this committee.
- Children's Services General – provide reassurances regarding the efficiency savings and demands on the service; particularly assurance that there will not be any adverse impact on service delivery.

Education & Lifelong Learning

- ALN - clarity and assurances on the numbers of those children who have Individual Development Plans, and narrative in terms of demand and need for provision for complex needs.
- Active Travel – the Head of Finance provide further information on the impact on funds to shrink the radius from schools (currently 3 miles) – both in the short time and into the longer term.
- Education Psychologists - That the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning provide further information on the rationale for deleting 2 x Education Psychology posts.
- Single Sex Toilets - that the Director of SOP provide details of the number of single sex toilets in schools and whether there had been any issues in schools in relation to this.

Supporting Young People

- Youth Service – that a commitment be given towards sustainable core funding for the Youth Service; and consider putting the service on a statutory basis – reducing the reliance on grant funding.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and work with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders to provide a response to the content of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', written over a light blue grid background.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN

Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Cc: Members of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Ash Lister, Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's Services)
Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education

Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People
Councillor Joel Williams, Chairperson of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance
Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Richard Portas, Programme Director of School Organisation Planning.
Suzanne Scarlett, Suzanne Scarlett, Operational Manager – Partnerships & Performance, Education & Lifelong Learning
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities
Deborah Driffield, Director of Children’s Services
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services
Dylan Owen, Policy and Improvement
Adam Foster, Head of Cabinet Office,
Claire Deguara, Cabinet Support Office
Tim Gordon & Jeremy Rhys, Media and Comms
Cllr John Lancaster – Group Leader
Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader
Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader
Gavin McArthur – Chair Governance & Audit Committee

**SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET
CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE**

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: Budget 24.25 [CE:0047799]
Dyddiad / Date: 29 February 2024



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Councillor Lee Bridgeman
Chairperson Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
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Annwyl / Dear Lee,

**Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 26 February 2024
Draft Budget Proposals 2024/25**

Thank you for your letter received on 28th February and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 29th February 2024.

The following paragraphs address each of the Committee's further information requests:

Corporate

Request: A response on what the administration intends to do in its dialogue with Welsh Government about grants, particularly the short and medium-term position, given the very significant concerns about the coming year and the next 2-3 years; and how grants to schools will be distributed, as officers stated that this was an area that still required detail from Welsh Government.

This Council along with all other local authorities will continue to undertake dialogue with Welsh Government at all levels and stress the need for early indications of changes in grants and levels of funding. I recognise that grants are a significant factor in the funding for schools and I have been assured by officers that as funding information is received it is passed out to schools.

Request: Agreement that, going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios.

We note your request that, going forward, the Corporate Plan includes current performance, not just in this area, but across all portfolios. I would remind the committee that the Corporate Performance Dashboard has been developed to provide performance data on all Corporate Plan KPIs. This includes information on performance over time and

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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 oedl.

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The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



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Tudalen 21



against target. These KPIs can also be viewed by Well-Being Objective, by Directorate as well as by Scrutiny Committee based on their Terms of Reference. The dashboard can be accessed [here](#) and further training on its use can be made available should members find that useful.

Request: Provide us with suitable timelines of when we could ask questions relating to progress against the MTFP during 2024/25.

The Cabinet will receive an annual Budget Strategy Update in July that will provide a refresh and a strategy update for 2025/26 and the Medium Term. I am happy to attend your Scrutiny Committee during 2024/25 at any time. If the Committee wanted to explore further the process by which specific service area calculate expected future demand, for example Children's Services, you may want to invite the Cabinet Member and an officer for that service area as well, who may be able to discuss this with you in more detail.

Request: School budgets – to provide further clarity and assurances on discussions relating to ALN, and how this will roll-out over the coming months. We also request that the response includes further information on how the local authority is going to work with schools to successfully manage deficits in a way that does not damage the quality of education, given that schools are facing very significant demands on a number of fronts. We would also welcome an in-year update, at the appropriate time, on the schools' budget deficit position and how this is being managed.

It is the responsibility of the Individual School Governing Body to set a balanced budget based on the financial allocation provided from the formula, grants and any other income available. Individual schools are best placed to make decisions for their children, and we understand that there will be difficult decisions to make. However, this is one of the reasons why a deficit budget maybe required in the short term if there is a view from the Director of Education that educational outcomes would otherwise be severely compromised. Deficits will need to be managed and no school will be allowed to simply increase its deficit year on year.

Officers in Education and Finance work with schools to support them setting their budgets and will continue to do so over the coming weeks and months, and groups of Headteachers will be meeting as 'Efficiency Boards' to collaborate and support each other and help identify savings and best practice that will help schools set and manage their budgets. Regarding ALN, I think this may be best addressed in a detailed session with the Cabinet Member for Education and her officials, though if there are specific finance elements, I'd be happy to try to answer any questions the Committee has.

Children's Services

Request: Family Advice Service – that the results of any reviews of the family advice service be brought back to this scrutiny committee and that a timeline is provided for consideration by this committee.

There is a review of the interface between Early Help and Children's Services at the point of first contact which has commenced, and I have asked officers to provide the Committee with updates as it progresses. No review of the Family Advice Service is currently planned.

Request: Children's Services General – provide reassurances regarding the efficiency savings and demands on the service; particularly assurance that there will not be any adverse impact on service delivery

It is a very challenging budget and along with all services Children's Services have looked to see how we can deliver some efficiencies in line with the direction set out in the Children's Services strategy. We will strive to ensure that any impacts are kept to a minimum and that over time will lead to more sustainable service delivery.

Education & Lifelong Learning

Request: ALN - clarity and assurances on the numbers of those children who have Individual Development Plans, and narrative in terms of demand and need for provision for complex needs.

We currently have 3196 Individual Development Plans (337 are local authority maintained for the following cohorts: Children Looked After, Elective Home Education, Early Years, Education other than at school, Dual Registered, Detained, the rest are school maintained) for learners identified as having ALN (under the new ALN system).

5,554 currently are recorded as having SEN (school action, school action plus and statement of SEN) or ALN.

In Cardiff we are seeing an increase in the demand for specialist provision for learners with significant and complex needs; this is due to a combination of factors including but not exhaustive to the increased identification of ALN, increased complexity of need and learners moving into Cardiff. I have asked officers to provide you with more data in this regard.

Request: Active Travel – further information on the impact on funds to shrink the radius from schools (currently 3 miles) – both in the short time and into the longer term.

Further information is provided below:

- We are targeting all ALN pupils in New Curriculum Year 9 and above with independent travel training, so that those pupils that are capable to be trained, are trained with this life-skill and reduce future transport requirements.
- For ALN pupils the distance criteria does not apply for most cases as transport entitlement is based on their individual needs in line with the Welsh Learner Travel Measure. As a result, the majority of pupils receiving transport on ALN grounds within the city live within the 2 and 3 mile criteria already.
- With more ALN SRB units being opened across the city the distance ALN pupils travel, or are transported will gradually reduce over coming years, with more pupils being able to attend more local provision. (Although demand is still out stripping supply of places)

- Provision allocation is prioritised based on the pupils with the greatest need for the support.

Request: Education Psychologists - further information on the rationale for deleting 2 x Education Psychology posts.

These posts have been vacant for a long period of time and the service is able to deal with the current capacity of cases without them. Whilst additional resources would be welcome, it is incumbent on all services to make efficiencies where they can.

Request: Single Sex Toilets - details of the number of single sex toilets in schools and whether there had been any issues in schools in relation to this.

We do not hold the information that breaks down into unisex or single sex toilets in schools.

Supporting Young People

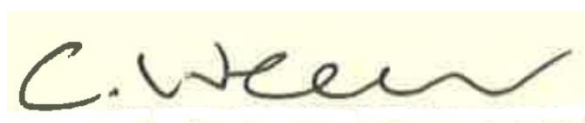
Request: Youth Service – that a commitment be given towards sustainable core funding for the Youth Service; and consider putting the service on a statutory basis – reducing the reliance on grant funding.

The Welsh Government's Youth Work Strategy Implementation Board is currently reviewing the Legislative basis for Youth Services in Wales, and is overseeing an Independent Review of funding and expenditure on youth work services. Cardiff Youth Service is actively represented in the Strategic Participation Groups involved in this work. We will continue to work towards a sustainable model for youth work in Cardiff, building upon the imminent changes agreed by Cabinet in November 2023, whilst working alongside the national review team to set the direction for the future.

The financial picture for the Council going forward is challenging, and there are potentially difficult financial decisions that will need to be made, so in this context any consideration of additional base budget funding, for any service area, will be considered each year alongside the need to set a balanced and sustainable budget. I am pleased however to reiterate that we have not proposed any cut to Youth Services this year, and we recognise the value and importance of this service.

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely,



Councillor / Y Cyngorydd Chris Weaver
Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance

Cc:

Members of Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ash Lister, Cabinet Member for Social Services (Children's Services)

Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education

Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People

Councillor Joel Williams, Chairperson of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources

Ian Allwood, Head of Finance

Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning

Richard Portas, Programme Director of School Organisation Planning.

Suzanne Scarlett, Operational Manager – Partnerships & Performance

Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities

Deborah Driffield, Director of Children's Services

Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services

Dylan Owen, Policy and Improvement

Adam Foster, Head of Cabinet Office,

Claire Deguara, Cabinet Support Office

Tim Gordon & Jeremy Rhys, Media and Comms

Cllr John Lancaster – Group Leader

Cllr Rodney Berman – Group Leader

Cllr Andrea Gibson – Group Leader

Gavin McArthur – Chair Governance & Audit Committee

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol