

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 JULY 2021

Present: Councillor Bridgeman(Chairperson)
Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Joyce, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips,
and Singh

Mia John, Karen Dell'Armi, Matthew Richards and Patricia
Arlotte

50 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mia Rees and Carol Cobert.

51 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

52 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on the 11 May 2021 were approved as a correct record of that meeting as proposed by Karen Dell'Armi and seconded by Councillor Bablin Mollik.

53 : SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING: EXPANSION OF PENTYRCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills), Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education & Lifelong Learning), Michele Duddrige-Friedl (Operational Manager, Planning & Provision), and Richard Portas (Programme Director of School Organisation Planning) to the meeting.

Councillor Merry was invited to make a statement during which she referred to the draft report for Cabinet and its recommendation to go to consultation on the expansion of Pentyrch Primary School.

Members were advised that Section 106 funding had been allocated to the proposal and that the village school would benefit from the proposed expansion and nursery provision.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification as to whether the projected surplus of places in English medium provision would be taken up by the new housing developments in the wider area. Members were advised that there was confidence that the places would be required in the short term. It was difficult to predict longer term trends with certainty, although a decrease in the birth

rate was expected. Nevertheless the development was a prudent one which would stabilise provision in the locality.

- Members sought clarification on the accuracy of the projected figures for English and Welsh medium demand, and the difference between the catchment areas for English and Welsh medium schools. Members were advised that the numbers were not yet confirmed and would continue to be considered projected until the figures from PLASK had been verified. The catchment areas were wider for Welsh medium schools and there continued to be lower take-up for Welsh medium education. Projected figures were based on historic take-up. It was likely that catchment areas would be reviewed in the future.
- Members enquired as to the plans for Welsh medium education in relation to the Plasdwr proposals. Members were advised that engagement had commenced in relation to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan and different models of provision. The aim was to expand Welsh medium provision but that had to be balanced against declining birth rates. The Plasdwr proposal is a hybrid model with one form of entry English medium and the other 50% Welsh. The new model is intended to increase English speakers' confidence in using Welsh. The Welsh medium classes at Creigiau and Gwaelod are not full.
- Members sought clarification on whether the proposed development encompassed plans to improve the condition of the school. Members were advised that issues relating to the condition of the school would be addressed and resolved in due course and the money available be used to greatest effect.
- Members sought clarification on the arrangements being sought to federate the school. Members were advised that similar arrangements are already in place. Support is being given by Llanishen Fach Primary School. No decision has yet been taken about which school would be most appropriate to federate with. The Council has supported Pentyrch over a number of years as intake and standards have fluctuated. A sustainable model for the long term is required. The governing body is bringing forward the proposal proactively. It needs to consider it beneficial. There are several federations that are already operating very successfully. It is difficult to attract and retain high quality headteachers for smaller schools. Staff in both schools have benefited from working together.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

54 : SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLANNING: SPECIAL RESOURCE BASE PROVISION

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills), Melanie Godfrey (Director of Education & Lifelong Learning), Michele Duddrige-Friedl (Operational Manager, Planning &

Provision), and Richard Portas (Programme Director of School Organisation Planning) to the meeting.

The Chair and Councillor Joyce declared a personal interest as councillors for Llanrumney.

Councillor Merry was invited to make a statement during which she referred to the draft report for Cabinet and its recommendation to go to consultation on the proposals to transfer, expand and redevelop The Court Special School and the proposed establishment of specialist learning resource provision at Moorland Primary School.

Members were advised that the proposal regarding The Court Special School is one of a series of measures planned, and that £1.3m funding has been allocated to supply Flying Start provision.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members were concerned about whether the proposals were sufficient to meet anticipated growth in need for specialist learning resource provision. Members were advised that it was important to understand the position in relation to need including to complex learning, emotional health and wellbeing and that the current proposal was only a starting point.
- Members sought clarification on the total expected capital and revenue costs of The Court proposal and the extent to which capital receipts from the sale of The Court site were factored into the calculation, and the financial relationship between the acquisition of the Ty Glas site and The Court proposal. Members were advised that the proposal is funded within the capital envelope of the Band B programme. The scope of the programme has changed over time but the affordability is the same. There is no relationship between The Court proposal and the Ty Glas acquisition. The receipts from the sale of The Court site feed into the overall capital position of Band B.
- Members sought clarification as to how The Court would be managed across two sites, and whether the full primary age range would be accommodated on each site or whether the different sites would accommodate different age groups. Members were advised that conversations had begun with the school and that staffing and governance changes associated with the split site arrangement were required. Few children from the Foundation Stage are enrolled at The Court and while the full primary age range would be present on both sites it would mostly be children from the older years. The two sites are carefully located near to primary schools so there should be good inclusion and benefits across Fairwater and Penybryn.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director & Director of Social Services), and Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services) to the meeting.

Councillor Hinchey was invited to make a statement during which he outlined the data presented within the Children's Services Quarter 4 Performance 2020/2021 update.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification on how services maintain contact with care leavers particularly post-16, in relation to the high percentage of CLA and care leavers recorded as NEET (54% in January 2020, 34% in January 2021). Members were advised that the reduction was promising but still not where the Council wanted to be. The Council has a statutory duty to maintain contact with young people in full-time education until the age of 25. There is a Personal Advisor Service additional to the Social Workers and young people have Pathway Plans which identify their aspirations and who will work with them. The Council has been working on identifying the available partners for local training and employment opportunities. The aim is for all young people to have opportunities for employment and training.
- Members enquired as to the availability of data on the proportion of young people who have benefited from the Cardiff Commitment. Members were advised that officers did not have the data to hand but would report back. The data is available but the people who have benefited would potentially be those who have had a significant intervention from the Personal Advisor Service and Into Work. The data needs to be examined.
- Members sought clarification on which categories within the Child Protection statistics had seen the largest change. Members were advised that there has been a significant increase in neglect cases, linked to increasing deprivation and child poverty whether generational or experienced for the first time. Domestic abuse cases have increased significantly either because there has been an increase or because people are reporting more. There is increased surveillance and awareness of the signs of physical abuse. Officers are concerned that sexual abuse is not being detected. The Council is part of pilot project to retrain social workers to listen to children and ask the right questions.
- Members sought clarification on what sits within the Exploitation category. Members were advised that there has been a significant rise in criminal exploitation, which until recently was on a similar trajectory to child sexual exploitation. Work is underway to move young people from Child Protection and identifying issues such as contextual safeguarding. There are issues around forced marriage and child trafficking which are emerging themes.

- Members enquired as to whether there was the capacity to deal with the rise in Child Protection cases. Members were advised that there was insufficient capacity to manage Child Protection investigations. Managers have reported that their teams are unable to cope with the number of cases. Workers have been brought in from other teams to assist with investigations, with impacts on those other teams. Too much time is being spent on investigations and too little on support. Political support is required to change processes and structures.
- Members enquired as to how the partnership with Education was working. Members were advised that there are monthly meetings with Education colleagues, a joint recovery plan, and there has been a move into locality working. There has been a revival of working in joint assessment teams (or teams around the family). Officers are working closely with Education colleagues on supporting the mental health of young people.
- Members requested information on the steps that were being taken to engage with communities, carry out preventative work and address mistrust. Members were informed that the increase in numbers supported by Family Help indicated the more diverse ways the Council used to communicate with people, partly due to the pandemic were presenting opportunities to the service. There are opportunities to learn about virtual ways of engagement and reach higher numbers at the preventative end. It is important to engage other professionals across the system to free up social workers to perform their essential tasks and ensure the right intervention at the right time. Children's Services is only able to respond to statutory requirements. It is hoped it would be possible to build links with communities in the future when there is a return to localities.
- Members enquired as to the risk to the wellbeing and retention of Social Workers and to the quality and timeliness of investigations and decision making affecting young people due to staff being under pressure. Members were advised that the work of Children's Services is under continuous review. Managers meet daily to review cases. Remuneration of agency staff has been increased to attract more experienced social workers. There is a national shortage of social workers able and willing to undertake investigations because of low remuneration. The effect of the market supplement has worn off as other local authorities have introduced it. Longer term solutions such as revised career pathways and pay structures and a Training and Workforce Academy are being investigated.
- Members enquired as to whether the increase in the budget for Social Services was sufficient to cover the greater demands upon Services than anticipated at the start of the financial year, and whether there was the political will to address any shortfall. Members were advised that there was a better-informed collaboration with Finance colleagues in attempting to understand the uncertainties within the current financial year. The key uncertainty is around the funding support from Welsh Government. The pressures on Children's Services will be significant and long term. Detailed monitoring allows quick action to mitigate pressures or call upon the Contingency Fund.

Going forward there may be a need for greater reserves in Children's Services.

- Members enquired as to the how well Children's Services would be able to prevent breakdown when children are reunited with their families due to better practice. Members were advised that intensive support over the long term was necessary for some families, but that currently there is a lack of resources for such long-term support. A proposed Interventions Hub is being developed bringing together different services to support families for a period. For some families it will be necessary to buy in services because they lack their own support network for the longer term.
- Members discussed how vulnerable groups had been particularly badly affected during the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

56 : LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director & Director of Social Services), and Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services) to the meeting.

Councillor Hinchey was invited to make a statement during which he outlined the information presented within the Local Authority Social Services Annual Report 2020/2021.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members debated the decline in wider support services over recent years. Members were advised that recent experience had shown what could be achieved when there was unanimity across organisations about what needed to be done.
- Members considered there was a need for a greater focus on prevention. Members were advised that early-stage intervention results in a reduced need for high-cost intervention to deal with crises at a later stage.
- Members were advised that Cardiff Council has provided more early-stage intervention than other local authorities and that other authorities are approaching Cardiff Council for advice.
- Members sought clarification on how the Council planned to ensure young people remained at the centre of delivering the goals and objectives of the strategy and ensuring effective monitoring. Members were advised that the Mind of My Own app would allow Children's Services to get the views of children directly. Feedback indicates young people are more comfortable

using the app than in face-to-face encounters. The Participation Framework would be at the forefront of making sure children's voices are heard. Young people are involved in commissioning and youth justice workshops. Resources have been put into Life Story Workers, who work with young people to help them understand their life journey.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

57 : YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director & Director of Social Services), Deborah Driffield (Director of Children's Services), Graham Robb (Independent Chair, Youth Justice Board), Angharad Thomas (Operational Manager, Youth Justice Service), and Hannah Williams (Probation Service, Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership Subcommittee) to the meeting.

Councillor Hinchey was invited to make a statement during which he outlined the information presented within the Youth Justice Service Update.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification on the priorities for action if the anticipated risk of more children coming to the attention of the Youth Justice Service post-pandemic is borne out, whether there is good collaboration with the Education Department's Youth Service and whether the Youth Service has the capacity to deal with a possible increase in demand. Members were advised that an increase in the amount of people coming to the attention of the Youth Justice Service is envisaged. Partnership working with other services is key to managing the increase in demand.
- Members sought clarification on how partnership working had impacted on the trajectory of individual cases. Members were provided with an outline of a case where partnership working had resulted in a successful outcome.
- Members enquired as to the extent to which substance misuse was a factor in the young people coming to the Service's attention, and how far the Service was able to work with partners in educating young people and contributing to prevention. Members were advised that there had been a decrease in the number of young people being referred to Substance Misuse Workers. There appears to be fewer young people using substances although there had been an increase in the numbers possessing and dealing them. There has also been a shift in the type of substances being used. There is work underway with schools to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the wider community.
- Members were concerned about the number of young people who are criminally exploited who are not engaged with education. There is concern that

young people who are not engaged with schools do not appear on the Vulnerable Assessment Panel list and are not open to interventions. Members were advised that additional funding has been secured from the Pupil Development Grant to look at gaps in service provision. It has been suggested that extra work be done around young people who are not accessing the full timetable. It is recognised that young people who are not accessing the full timetable are more vulnerable to criminal exploitation. The work will allow an evidence base to be built.

- Members were concerned about young people who are unknown to Education and other services.
- Members enquired as to whether the reduction in reoffending indicated a long-term trend. Members were advised that this year has seen a very large reduction in both reoffending and first time entrants, however there is a small cohort who reoffend frequently.
- Members enquired as to the usefulness of comparison with other local authorities. Members were advised that local authorities helped each other in various ways and shared good practice.
- Members were advised that key partners are committed to driving forward the work of the Youth Justice Service, scrutinising data regarding service delivery and providing solutions. The benefits of the group approach are beginning to be seen.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

58 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were tabled at this meeting.

59 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is on Thursday 16th September 2021 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams.

The meeting terminated at 8.07 pm