

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 DECEMBER 2016

Present: Councillor Richard Cook (Chairperson), Councillors Boyle, Chaundy, Joyce, Murphy, Dianne Rees and Lynda Thorne

Co-opted Members: Patricia Arlotte (Roman Catholic representative), Carol Cobert (Church in Wales representative) and Karen Dell'Armi (Parent Governor Representative)

39 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gordon.

40 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

41 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

42 : CENTRAL SOUTH EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member, Education), Nick Batchelar (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning) and Jackie Turner (Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong learning) and Hannah Woodhouse, Managing Director Central South Education Consortium to the meeting.

Members were advised that this report enabled the Committee to receive a briefing on the Central South Education Consortium's Estyn Inspection report, published in May 2016, together with the progress being made in responding the inspection's recommendations and a briefing on the Consortium's plans for the future and to further develop a self-improving system for schools across the Consortium's area.

Members were advised that an Annual Performance report would be brought to Committee in February.

A survey of Head Teachers and Governors had been undertaken; the response rates were 50% for Head Teachers and 30% for Governors.

Members were advised that there were some very positive areas in the strategy and vision and that very positive feedback had been received in relation to the Challenge Advisors and consistency of improvements as well as positive comments regarding the scope and scale of school support; there were 4 recommendations for further work which were outlined in the report.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members were concerned that the Challenge Advisors expectations of knowledge and training of Governors was higher than the reality; Members were advised that there is a broad training programme across Wales, and some training across the region, it may be that this is not meeting the needs and that bespoke training may be required, the Challenge Advisors should be identifying this need. Members further added that the electronic/online training was of poor quality and not a feasible option and were advised that this would be looked at.
- Members discussed the dilemma of having to identify failing schools, and whether too many identified would reflect on the work of challenge advisors. Members were reassured that it was not a performance measure to reduce the number of red/amber schools; schools can themselves identify additional needs/change of need, which in turn changes the category. The measure was in fact Free School Meal Children's performance in challenge advisors' schools.
- Members noted the comments from Professor Reynolds that had been released and asked if the consortia agreed with them. Members were advised that Professor Reynolds held strong views on quality, especially in relation to initial teacher training. It was noted that work with universities was important with an improved schools based element as there did need to be a strong focus on high quality teaching in schools.
- Members asked whether the 4 consortia share success/problems and if so how it is tracked and measured. Members were advised that they do and that they meet monthly and each consortia leads on an element of joint work such as challenge advisor training, post 16 performance and Welsh BAC. It was added that the 4 consortia are very different in their governance and arrangements as each local authority have different requirements. It was added that best practice is shared as there was a commitment to delivering a self-improving system which was a key approach in the region.
- Members noted the importance of having strong links with HR to keep up with the pace of change and identifying reducing performance. Officers stated that Head Teachers have the right tools at their disposal and are empowered to use them; it was also important that consistent and robust advice is given.
- Members asked whether a worse report was expected after the next inspection as this report shows improvement yet the PISA report did not. Members were advised that the PISA report was based on all Wales data and regional information cannot be extracted from it; all schools would have had their results. In the region Cardiff had the fastest improvement, there was more to do on performance but processes needed to be embed; a major change in strategy now would not help. Members added that there had been no improvement since 2006 and that the report is not time reflective.

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.

43 : QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE - EDUCATION AND CARDIFF 2020. A REVISED VISION FOR EDUCATION AND LEARNING IN CARDIFF - PERFORMANCE BASELINE SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member, Education) and Nick Batchelar (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning) to the meeting.

Members were advised that the first part of this report provided the Committee with the Education and Lifelong Directorate's Corporate Performance report for Quarter 2 2016/17, following its consideration by the Cabinet on 21 November 2016.

The report provided the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with a baseline performance position against the desired outcomes and key goals of the recently published Cardiff 2020 strategy, as at the beginning of the academic year 2016/17. This baseline was provided to support Members in their role in scrutinising the performance of Education services and outcomes for children and young people. The report also outlined how performance against the strategy will be governed and monitored.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement in which she said that many indicators had improved to above the Wales average, improvement was at a faster rate than the rest of Wales, both of which were very positive. She also added that measuring emotional wellbeing was an interesting topic and it would be difficult to measure outcomes on this.

The Director stated that the PISA report had some caveats including caution in taking wide ranging comments as it was a snap shot in time. He added that the results for Wales would lead to real concern, and there would need to be a focus on training/leadership/governance; it was important to do really well on these rather than react to the report results.

It was noted that the Cardiff 2020 strategy was a high level strategy with various operational plans sitting below it.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members on Corporate Performance:

- With reference to reshaping, Members asked if there had been any difficulties or examples of improvements. Members were advised that there had been lots of change and progress, one key area was the admissions service, there had been a consultation on coordinated admissions; change in admissions information and parents having rights to exercise preferences.
- Members referred to Inspire to Work funding and asked for clarification on this. Officers advised that if this funding was taking then they would be unable to draw down other elements of funding, so a decision was taken to not go ahead with the Inspire to work funding.
- Members sought clarification on why Free School Meals pupils was 50%, and why it wasn't the same as all other pupils. Officers explained that the position wanted was no gap but targets needed to be set that were aspirational yet achievable; in some schools the gap is very narrow. There was a lot of work

being done with pupils in financial hardship including interventions, support, tracking, providing experiences outside of school that they wouldn't have access to otherwise; all these help narrow the gap and increase aspirations.

- Members noted that SEN pupil data would fall within the Free School Meal pupil data and that this should be disseminated from the data for those in financial hardship; officers advised that they work with the Vale on SEN provision, they were not making the savings they wanted to make and saving had been downscaled; one key factor in the medium term is the remodelling provision in Cardiff to use resources better to meet the need.
- Members asked for more information on the top quartile to see what we are aspiring to; officers advised that this would be provided through the scrutiny officer.
- Members asked if the improvements are sustainable and sought assurances that changes are happening. Officers advised that the Annual Performance Report would be brought in January, this would look at schools in different categories and provide more information; it was noted that the improvements are better in Primary currently.
- Members asked how the sickness absence levels are affecting the running of the department; officers agreed it was an important measure but the information was not to hand it would however be provided to Members; officers were looking at how absences are managed and the return to work process as well as the wellbeing of staff. Members were grateful for the information to follow especially in relation to spikes in particular teams. It was noted that wellbeing was not easily measured and that the aspirations need to be right for wellbeing to improve.

The Chairperson invited questions on the Cardiff 2020 Strategy:

- Members asked how the Council would manage the deliverability of the 2020 vision. Officers stated this would be through the Educational Development Board which was a longstanding remit; there was no single management board for this strategy; the operational element sits in various areas such as the consortium/education/economic development; SEN provision in the Vale and with Health etc. the Directors direct responsibility was to ensure that the directorate delivers then also how to influence others through higher education/Cardiff and Vale College; therefore it was a considered approach.
- Members asked if there were any improvements in the Free School Meals/LAC/NEET groups; officers advised that NEET would be lower than last year, there were improvements needed in LAC and work was being done with Children's Services on this; the work on Free School Meals had been discussed.
- Members asked for more information on Improving the Learning Environment and whether in reality this support could be delivered. Officers stated that they were coming to the end of Band A in the school building improvement programme; there was informal discussion around a funding model for Band B; officers had conducted a refresh survey on schools estates and a schools

stakeholders group would be established in January for the analysis to be done.

- Members asked for clarification on the baseline information and were advised that some of this data is from 2014/15 as the Welsh Government do not publish some information until 18 months later.
- Members discussed the removal of school places, it was noted that when parents remove pupils from schools for long periods of time, the issue of places being kept/removed needs to be looked at.

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.

44 : EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member, Education), Nick Batchelar (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning) and Jackie Turner (Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong learning) to the meeting.

The report provided the Committee with an updated progress report on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations following the Cabinet Members positive response to the Inquiry report.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Merry to make a statement in which she said that there had been a big change since the introduction of the appointments panel, the calibre of applications coming in had shown it to be a success. Governors were now also asked to identify a skill set on the application form and this could be matched to schools that needed these skills. It was added that Governor Services was doing a good job at this.

The Assistant Director acknowledged the support she had received from Governor Services in preparing the report. Members were provided with an outline of each of the recommendations from the report and the next steps.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments on the report from Members:

- Members asked if this was being facilitated in conjunction with the LGA and were advised that officers had met with the LGA and had had a good discussion, the LGA will write to the Welsh Government next and it was hoped that the Local Authority would respond fully to the recommendations.
- Members asked what the outcome would be in reality, whether people were being asked to do more even though not being paid, would there be more governors etc. officers advised that the pressures on Governors is immense therefore there would be improved and increased support for new governors as the role can be intimidating; it was added that scrutiny could respond independently to the report and reflect on such pressures.
- Members asked if Governing Bodies are assessed on performance and if not how are they measured for effectiveness. Members were advised that they

rely on challenge advisors quite a bit; there was concern over the model of governance that the WG were consulting on and the position it leaves the LA in of enacted and things go wrong.

- It was noted that parent governors should receive in house training before starting their roles. It was also noted that some training does not match the expectations of some challenge advisors especially in relation to understanding data and especially for parent governors.
- Members asked whether there had been many vacancies filled since the panel had been established; the Cabinet Member stated that the number had reduced but not by a huge amount.

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.

45 : DRAFT CABINET REPORT - FAMILIES FIRST TRANSITION ARRANGEMENT AND PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent (Cabinet Member, Early Years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader), Tony Young (Director, Social Services), Angela Bourge (Operational Manager Strategy, Performance and Resources), and Ceri George (Improvement Project Manager – Prevention and Partnerships) to the meeting.

The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Cabinet papers on the proposed interim arrangements for the transition period, which included varying some existing contracts in order to extend their initial contract terms, decommissioning some of the services and potentially commissioning pilot/alternative arrangements during the transition period.

Members were provided with a copy of a letter received from SOVA in relation to funding being ceased and service being de-commissioned.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she said that there is a report due to Cabinet in the next week; they are trying to protect transition arrangements therefore the letter from SOVA was regrettable; this had been grant funded but administered by the Council.

The Director stated that this technical report sets out the 1 year transition arrangements, they were welcome changes focussing on what can be done regarding prevention, however this would impact on other providers which was unfortunate.

Members were provided with a presentation which included information on current position, new directions, proposals, services to be extended, preparing for new commissioning and a draft timetable.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

- Members noted that the letter suggested withdrawal of funding could increase the work picked up by the team around the family and sought clarification on this. Officers advised that work was being done to identify families that need help, referring them to the right services and also working with schools. A free phone service had also been delivered which was hoped to be extended, it was noted however that improvements were needed in Step Up/Down services.
- Members noted that it was a sound report with reasons for removing elements of funding being sound but stressed that when recommissioning it was important to explore relationships with new providers rather than fall back into relationships with previous organisations. Officers agreed and explained that the new tendering process would make it clear that it was open to all, including possible in house elements; officers were looking at standing orders currently.
- Members asked if 5% was enough and were advised that it was the Welsh Government direction; they would be looking at joint commissioning for effective use of resources.

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.

46 : QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION - CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sue Lent (Cabinet Member, Early Years, Children & Families and Deputy Leader) and Tony Young (Director, Social Services) to the meeting.

Members were advised that the report enabled the Committee to monitor the performance of the service and question the service area's progress in meeting its agreed targets.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

- Members asked if the Quality Assurance Framework would be made permanent and were advised that it would be.
- With reference to the Social Worker vacancies, Members asked how much better the service would be if they were filled. Officers advised that agency staff are more expensive so if all vacancies were filled the service would be cheaper to run, in addition it would allow for more training and development, succession planning etc. Members were advised that there had been a very successful recruitment drive recently.
- Members asked for an update on a pool of social workers; Officers advised that they had got the agreement but that there was no point in progressing it until the permanent vacancies had been filled. The Cabinet Member added that they were looking at extending the notice period required to help fill vacancies as they arise.

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.

47 : CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Members were advised that this report provided the Committee with a summary report of letters sent to Cabinet Members and the responses received.

AGREED: To note the content of the report.

48 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is 10 January 2017 at 2.30pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall, Cardiff.

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.