

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/MJH

13 December 2016



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Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member - Education
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
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CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you for attending the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 6 December 2016, to introduce **the Effectiveness of School Governors, Quarter Two Corporate Performance Report and Cardiff 2020 reports**. The Committee welcomed your statements and answers to Members' questions. I would also like to thank Nick Batchelar and Jackie Turner for the presentation of the reports, as well as the answers they gave to Members' questions. During the Way Forward section of the meeting the Members raised a number of comments and concerns for your consideration, which they asked me to write to you about.

Effectiveness of School Governors – progress report

The Committee was very pleased to see that all the inquiry's report's recommendations had been addressed. Members did however feel that although the progress report explained in some detail what was being done, it didn't reflect the reality of what was happening in individual school governing bodies. In particular, the difficulty of getting long term commitment from business people on governing bodies.

The Members also expressed their concern that a number of Governors had found that the expectations of Challenge Advisors, during meetings with Governing Bodies, far exceeded the abilities of the Governors, and did not reflect the level of expertise that the Governors training modules had provided.

The Committee will be responding to the Welsh Government consultation on "Reform of school governance: regulatory framework".

Finally, the Committee requested details of the number of school governors who had resigned, during the past 12 months, as Members considered that the additional pressure and work being placed on these volunteers could be making them reconsider their appointment as school governors.

Quarter Two Corporate Performance Report

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to review and assess the quarter two corporate performance report.

The Members again expressed concern at the high level of sickness in the Directorate, and inquired as to what actions were being taken to reduce the level of sickness. Members also asked for an analysis of the sickness rates by section, to help them identify which areas of the service had the highest level of sickness.

Finally, the Committee requested a briefing paper on the re-modelling of the Out of County service together with the work being undertaken by the post jointly funded by Education, Social Services and Health.

Cardiff 2020

The Members welcomed the development of performance baseline positions against the desired outcomes and success measures against the five key goals. The Committee noted that the Council's Education Development Board would be receiving regular reports providing an overview of progress against each of the performance measures.

The Committee understood that the achievement of the five key goals was dependent on the actions of a number of agencies working in partnership, however they expressed some concern that there was not a partnership coordinating body in place to ensure that everyone was working towards the achievement of the five key goals. The Committee therefore recommended that the Council, through something like, the Public Services Board, organise a partnership monitoring body for the implementation of the Cardiff 2020 actions, thereby ensuring that all partners work effectively to achieve the five key goals and desired outcomes identified in the strategy.

The Committee then took the opportunity to reflect on the Pisa results, which had been published on the day of Committee. Members acknowledged that there should not be a knee jerk reaction to these disappointing results, but more needs to be done to improve the educational attainment of pupils. The Committee therefore requested that you liaise with the Consortium to provide a briefing on how you are going to analyse, and respond to, the Pisa results. Together with any additional actions being undertaken, to improve the quality of teaching, leadership and the shape of education in Cardiff, in light of the Pisa results.

I hope that these comments, advice and requests for information detailed above will be of use and support in improving outcomes for Cardiff's pupils. The Committee looks forward to receiving further briefings, requests for information, and as such the Members require a formal response to this letter within the next month.

To recap, this letter requests several actions, requests for information and recommendations, as follows and requires:

- Details of the number of school governors who had resigned, during the past 12 months;
- An analysis of the sickness rates by section;

- A briefing paper on the re-modelling of out of county service together with the work being undertaken by the post jointly funded by Education, Social Services and Health;
- Recommended that the Council, through something like the Public Services Board, organise a partnership monitoring body for the implementation of the Cardiff 2020 actions; and
- A briefing paper on the Education Service/Consortium response to the disappointing Pisa results for Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cook', with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD COOK
Chair – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: Nick Batchelar, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Jackie Turner, Assistant Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
Suzanne Scarlett, Head of Performance