

Restart of Education

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members of the Scrutiny Committee with a briefing on:
 - i. Schools provision for summer 2020
 - ii. The restart of education in Cardiff following the Minister for Education's announcement that all children and young people can return to full time school in September.

Structure of the papers

2. To facilitate the scrutiny the following appendix is attached to this report:

Appendix A: Presentation: Provision – Summer 2020 & School Restart.

Scope of Scrutiny

3. Members will be able to review, assess and comment on the Council's plans for summer schools provision and for the full time restart of Education in September, specifically examining:
 - i. Youth Service provision over summer
 - ii. The safe operational management of schools from September 2020;
 - iii. Catering arrangements; and
 - iv. School transport.
4. The presentation attached at **Appendix A** sets the context (slide 2) for delivering education services at present, covers arrangements for the provision of youth services over the summer 2020 (slides 3-8), reports on lockdown arrangements, and on planning for the full school September restart (slides 9-12).

Background

4. At Council on 23rd July 2020 Members were advised that all schools in the city reopened on 29th June 2020 for a three-week period prior to the end of the summer term.
5. Robust health & safety procedures, including space-capacity assessments and risk assessments to establish volume, appropriate furniture lay-out, movement flows and use of external spaces were all considered prior to opening, using best practice from the Council's Hubs.
6. The report indicates strict hygiene and cleaning regimes have been implemented, ensuring good hand-washing practices, contact point cleaning and the thorough cleaning of school spaces.
7. Schools have reopened with a much reduced capacity, but all pupils have had several opportunities to attend school during this period. Initial feedback from schools has reported a high level of take up and growing confidence among staff pupils and parents about being back at school. All children have had the opportunity to attend school to 'check in, catch up and prepare' for the summer break and the new school year in September 2020. This period of opening has focused on making sure that pupils, staff and parents are prepared – mentally, emotionally and practically – for a 'new normal' in September.
8. All schools have used this time to help plan for the full return to school for the new academic year in September 2020 following the recent announcement on this, and publication of relevant guidance, by the Welsh Government.
9. In announcing the re-opening of schools on 29 June 2020 the Welsh Government Minister for Education proposed that the summer term be extended by one week, ending on 27 July 2020. She also proposed that in the next academic year beginning in September 2020, the intention was to expand the autumn half-term break to two weeks.
10. The Minister stressed that the physical reopening of schools should involve a rigorous three stage approach:
 - firstly, the school building must be inherently safe with any lapsed statutory inspections completed and water systems tested and treated;

- secondly, the implementation of safety measures for school staff to return and,
- thirdly, additional safety controls to permit children to return to lessons. Particular attention will be paid to infection prevention/control including enhanced building and personal hygiene, provision of PPE and arrangements for monitoring symptoms of the virus in staff and children. .

11. The Council's approach to date has reflected the Welsh Government's announcements, guidance and national framework for decisions relating to the operations of schools and other providers over time in response to Covid-19.
12. Restarting schools holds a number of education specific considerations requiring detailed planning, decision making and communication, including the development and confirmation of operational policies; adaptation of the curriculum and development of support for school staff.

Previous Scrutiny

13. Scrutiny of all Council decision making during the Covid19 emergency has been undertaken remotely by the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel, established by full Council on 21 May 2020. It required measured and proportionate scrutiny, tailored to meet the emergency situation. To ensure all previous scrutiny informed the internal challenge, the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel consulted with all Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee where the matter was an education item. Panel members then followed up any concerns, in line with the Panel's Terms of Reference.
14. At its meeting on 23rd June 2020 the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel considered a report to Cabinet, *Restart, Recover, Renew: Next steps for Cardiff during the Covid-19 crisis*. CYP Scrutiny Committee Members fed their enquiries into the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel, which subsequently commented to the Cabinet that the Panel:
- a. Welcomed measures to prioritise health and safety when pupils returned to school, but stressed the importance of priority in testing for Covid-19 symptoms, in antibody testing and in tracing contacts, be given to teaching and support staff;

- b. Was reassured that the Council has a positive experience in respect of testing and is at the heart of the Track Trace Protect (TTP) effort in Cardiff as a result of its positive working relationship with the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. We note that TTP is already in place and a significant amount of work has been undertaken over the last 3 weeks leading to the opening of the service. We note also that 150 Council staff have already been redeployed to the service and 300 staff in total will be deployed to support this service over a 12 month period. This gives us reassurance that the Council will be prepared by the time schools re-open.

Way Forward

15. To provide a briefing and present the Council's plans for re-starting full-time education in Cardiff, and to answer Members questions, the following witnesses will be in attendance:
 - a. Councillor Sarah Merry, Cabinet Member Education, Employment & Skills;
 - b. Mike Tate, Assistant Director Education and Lifelong Learning; and
 - c. Neil Hardee, Head of Services to Schools.
16. The Panel will meet remotely and be accessible to the public.

Legal Implications

17. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not making policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to the Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g.

Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

18. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not making policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- i. Note the Council's arrangements for youth service provision over summer 2020 and proposals for the restart of full time school in September for all children and young people;
- ii. Consider whether it wishes to convey any comments, observations or concerns to the Cabinet Member Education, Employment & Skills.

Davina Fiore

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