

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 JANUARY 2021

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

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

Mia John (Youth Council Representative)

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

AGREED: To note that Council, at its annual meeting on 26 November 2020, appointed Councillor Lee Bridgeman as Chairperson of this Committee, and the following Members to this Committee:

Councillors Cunnah, Hopkins, Joyce, Melbourne, Molik, Phillips, Mia Rees and Singh;
and

Co-Optees: Patricia Arlotte, Carol Cobert, Matthew Richards and Karen Dell'Armi.

3 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

AGREED: To note that Council, at its annual meeting on 26 November 2020, agreed the following Terms of Reference for this Committee:

To scrutinise, measure and actively promote improvement in the Council's performance in the provision of services and compliance with Council policies, aims and objectives in the area of children and young people, including:

- School Improvement
- Schools Organisation
- School Support Services
- Education Welfare & Inclusion
- Early Years Development
- Special Educational Needs
- Governor Services
- Children's Social Services
- Children & Young Peoples Partnership
- Youth Services and Justice
- Play Services

To assess the impact of partnerships with and resources and services provided by external organisations including the Welsh Government, joint local government services, Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies and quasi-departmental non-governmental bodies on the effectiveness of Council service delivery.

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

To report to an appropriate Cabinet or Council meeting on its findings and to make recommendations on measures which may enhance Council performance or service delivery in this area.

4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020 were approved as a correct record as proposed by Councillor Hopkins and seconded by Councillor Phillips.

6 : CHILD FRIENDLY CITY

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills), Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning, Suzanne Scarlett (Operational Manager, Partnerships & Performance) and Lee Patterson (Community Education Officer) to the meeting.

Councillor Merry provided Members with a statement in which she indicated that one of the key areas in the report is the reference to recovery planning which, until the current pandemic, was not on the agenda. Recovery Planning is a very wide issue.

Members were provided with a brief introduction to the strategy which outlines five goals and a series of commitments to action. Unicef UK held a monitoring visit in Cardiff in January 2020 with a report being received in early spring providing an update on progress and recommended areas for actions in 2020/2021. It was noted that Cardiff had made significant progress in establishing, prioritising and implementing a child rights-based approach in the Council's culture and commitments and as a result the recommendation was for Cardiff to submit for Child Friendly City recognition in the Autumn of 2021. If successful and Child Friendly status is awarded, it is valid for period of 3 years, at which time it is reviewed.

Members were provided with details of the recommendations contained within the Unicef progress note.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification, or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members discussed whether there would be a delay in submission for recognition because of the current pandemic. It was noted that Unicef are confident that Cardiff can go ahead with the submission, this has been an opportunity to test Cardiff's resilience and there is an appreciation that implementation is now more important than ever before. Whilst Cardiff aspires to have the accreditation, every situation has to be considered as it arises.
- Members referred to the key areas of progress and queried how non-formal education settings are defined and what practical steps

are being taken. Members were advised that they refer to community settings, EOTAS provision, Youth Services, Specialist provision and Targeted groups. They would be supported through training, for example EOTAS providers have already received a suite of training, its aim to increase participation activity. Whilst the training is provided to staff, young people have been shaping service before and during the pandemic. As we come to the end of the pandemic, the aim is to have a more dynamic engagement programme about which the Committee can be updated.

- Members discussed the involvement of children and young people in webinars and online meetings. Members were advised that it is now critical that efforts to involve children and young people with council wide planning need to commence with immediate effect. The meetings that have taken place have taken various forms, some have been more formal than others. A meeting with Cardiff Youth Council is due to take place tomorrow wherein one of the questions will be about what is the best platform to engage with children and young people. Pupil Task groups have been set up through schools and a survey was produced with the Children's Commissioner; the results obtained from that survey were used to inform recovery planning. All the information obtained from the various sources was recorded and forwarded to schools across Wales. A frequently asked questions document was developed as a result which is available on the website.
- Members queried whether the diversion of resources during the Covid period has affected the ability to progress Child Friendly strategy and were advised that whilst Covid has diverted officer attending it has not affected the progress of the strategy which needs to be embedded so that it is second nature. Although it has been more difficult in terms of schools bearing in mind the challenges they are facing in delivering learning at the present time.

Members were advised that there has been progress in establishing a centralised function to co-ordinate the work. That will provide a permanent function. There has also been investment in the Rights Respecting Schools programme and that model is being evaluated February through to March.

Since March it has been possible to draw down on all the hard work that officers and directorates have done to foster the partnerships across the city, for example Cardiff University and the School of Architecture.

- Members discussed the engagement of young people in schools and on child's rights programmes and the importance of recognising that it is not just an initiative but that it is embedded across the Council and its departments. It was never about just getting a badge, it needs to become second nature.

Members were advised that there were tangible examples of the changes and improvements - children and young people and their families now make contact directly, although that is usually after they have been in contact with the Children's Commissioner. They are aware of their rights and have become more informed. Officers are also far more aware, an example of which is contact from an officer from parks in relation to the use of Section 106 monies.

In relation to the engagement of children and young people, Minecraft is a new and exciting way of engaging with children and young people; not just a game but an educational tool to enhance their learning and to provide opportunities for them.

In terms of vulnerable groups there are unprecedented challenges; the gap is getting bigger. There are concerns, and the intention is to commission a piece of work to meaningfully assess how those significant challenges are addressed.

- Members asked for clarification as to whether Child Rights Impact Assessments are routinely taking place in policy development. Members were advised that training was provided in December and that there was to be a briefing which would lead in to the launch of the portal to the Child Rights Impact Assessment in January. Whilst that launch had to be delayed, work has been ongoing with Cabinet leads to ensure that there is meaningful policy development. A policy group has been formed to support officers in this.
- Members referred to Unicef being able to review the accreditation status if there are areas of inadequate practice and queried whether there would be any effect on the pursuit of the accreditation bearing in mind the youth justice service report. Members were advised that Unicef are aware of the content of that report and there are also ongoing Estyn inspections. The authority must be acutely aware of how services are performing. There will be a pause in the process if any concerns are expressed.

The Independent Chair of the Youth Justice Board contacted the team to ensure that there was a rights based approach to the action planning which arose as a result of that report.

- Members asked whether ward based comparisons are carried out when measuring child friendliness on the ground. Members noted that this is a global programme and Unicef have struggled with this on the basis that this is the first time it has been run in a UK context. The approach is not expected to solve all the challenges and problems in a city or a community; that was not a realistic expectation. Key areas of pressure were identified to then take the child's right approach, outcomes would then be measured. It was a thematic piece of work rather than being done on a geographical ward basis. Obtaining data as to what makes a ward child friendly

would be extremely ambitious and are not expected to measure that.

- Members discussed the Princess Trust Report and the adverse effect upon potentially widening the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children and young people; Goal 5 of the strategy; and where is the support for mental health likely to feature in the planning of the recovery stage. Members were advised that there are grave concerns about the level of support that will be required; a data sweep was conducted recently which showed a 25 – 30% increase in hospital admissions of those who had pre-existing emotional health and wellbeing diagnose. It is the wider implication of recovery planning it is what happens if there is no progression route. Young people are referring to themselves as the Covid Generation. Whilst it started as shorthand it is becoming more significant. The Health Board are at full tilt, waiting lists are getting longer, there is also a back log of Court cases, young people in the system who have not been receiving support and intervention and all these issues are going to be simmering under the radar. It is going to be a medium to long term issue. Work will have to be undertaken to counter the narrative that these young people are worth less than their predecessors. The Cabinet Member stressed that the language being used is important when discussing what children and young people have gone through during this period, we should not accept that it is a fore gone conclusion that nothing can be done to address the issues. We must ensure that in our concern as to what they have been through we do not reinforce the fact that they are written off as a group of children and young people. Our mission is to provide support and not just accept that those children and young people will lose out in years to come.

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.

7 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairman agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

8 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

9 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee is the budget meeting on Tuesday 23 February 2021 at 10.30 am via MS Teams

The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm