
EDUCATION & SCHOOLS PANDEMIC RESPONSE - UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides Members with an update on progress in relation to Education & Schools Pandemic Response, and includes at **Appendix A**, a Cabinet Report on the Council's response and immediate issues and actions, which includes details of re-opening of schools and re-engagement of pupils.

Background

2. 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*. Arising from this meeting, (which included comments from CYP Members) the Panel commented that they were welcoming measures to prioritise health and safety when pupils returned to school; and further comments on the TTP effort in Cardiff¹.
3. 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. At this meeting, it was also agreed that the 5 standing scrutiny Committees reconvene, with CYPSC to include this issue on its agenda.
4. At its meeting on the 30th July 2020, CYPSC considered a briefing and presentation on:
 - Schools provision for summer 2020; and
 - 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.

¹ [Agenda for COVID-19 Scrutiny Panel on Tuesday, 23rd June, 2020, 2.00 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk)

5. At this meeting, Members specifically examined:
 - Youth Service provision over summer
 - The safe operational management of schools from September 2020;
 - Catering arrangements; and
 - School transport.

6. In this fast changing landscape, Members of this Committee agreed that Education/Schools Recovery be a priority topic for CYPSC 2020/21. See paragraph 9 and “**Previous Scrutiny**” section in this report for further details of work to date.

Issues

7. Attached at **Appendix A** is a Cabinet Report, dated 25th February 2021, which sets out an approach responding to the urgent issues facing the city as lockdown restrictions are eased. Relating to this Scrutiny Committee, this included:
 - *Ensuring the safe reopening of schools to all learners; re-engaging pupils; and maintaining access to learning and building the physical, emotional and mental well-being of children and young people.*

8. Members are requested to consider the issues relevant to this Scrutiny Committee **only**, which are set out in the following paragraphs of the Cabinet Report:
 - Re-opening schools for all learners and re-engaging children and young people Overview – *paragraphs 25 – 26;*
 - Reopening Schools safely – *paragraphs 27 – 35;*
 - Examinations and Progression Post 16 – *paragraphs 36 – 37;*
 - Next Steps in relation to re-opening and re-engaging– *paragraphs 38 – 45;*
 - Re-engaging children and young people – *paragraphs 46 – 61;*
 - Next steps – *paragraphs 62 – 68;* and
 - Continuing to support businesses and workers impacted by the pandemic – *paragraphs 73 - 74; 78 - 80.*

9. Since July 2020, this Scrutiny Committee has provided a number of comments, observations and views on the following issues. Links to relevant letters and papers can be found in the next Section of this Report:

- Learning and attainment for all
 - Ensuring all schools work to similar standards and approaches – learning from best practice etc;
 - Pupils who had disengaged with learning and the knock-on effect this may have in relation to their individual achievement and attainment;
 - NEETS;
 - Post 16 learning;
 - Digital Deprivation & Inequality;
 - Support for vulnerable learners;
 - Non-Formal education settings

- Planning/Preparing
 - Use of Welsh Government Funding – where is it going, how will it be used?
 - Summer Provision 2021.

- Health and Well-being
 - School Based Counselling and Pupil Wellbeing;
 - Mental health services and capacity for children & young people;
 - Staff Health and Well-being.

- Examinations and Assessments;
- Inspection Activity;
- Consultation and Engagement with Children & Young People.

Previous Scrutiny

10. This Scrutiny Committee has considered this topic on the following dates:

- 30 July 2020²
- 12 October 2020³
- In December 2020, Members of this Scrutiny Committee were sent a further briefing via email on further updates in relation to education recovery – dated 15 December 2020. This will be redistributed to Members prior to this meeting.

11. Members have also raised issues on this topic when considering the following issues:

- Child Friendly City Agenda Item – 19 January 2021⁴
- Corporate Plan and Budget Scrutiny – 23 February 2021⁵

Way Forward

12. The following witnesses will be in attendance at this meeting to provide Members with an update and to answer any questions:

- Councillor Sarah Merry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Education, Employment & Skills;
- Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning;
- Mike Tate, Assistant Director Education and Lifelong Learning;
- Neil Hardee, Head of Services to Schools; and
- Suzanne Scarlett, OM Partnerships and Performance.

13. Members will be able to agree any comments, concerns or recommendations that they wish to pass on to the Cabinet Member during the Way Forward.

² [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 30th July, 2020, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

³ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 12th October, 2020, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 19th January, 2021, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Agenda for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 23rd February, 2021, 10.30 am : City of Cardiff Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

Legal Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make 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 Cabinet 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

15. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make 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 will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

That Committee considers this report, its appendix and information provided at the meeting and agrees any recommendations, comments or advice it wishes to offer to the Cabinet Member and Director of Education & Lifelong Learning.

Davina Fiore

Director of Governance and Legal Services

9 March 2021