

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT ON WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY 2020**

PRESENT :County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)
County Councillors B Davies, S C Davies, D R Jones, K Laurie-Parry, E Roderick,
L Roberts and R G Thomas

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: County Councillor P Davies (Portfolio Holder
for Education and Property)

Officers: Dr C Turner (Chief Executive), L Lovell (Interim Chief Education Officer),
E Towns (Senior Challenge Advisor), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of
Democratic Services) and H Smith (Senior Manager; Additional Learning Needs and
Inclusion)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence due to technical difficulties in accessing the meeting were
received from County Councillor J. Berriman and from Mrs A. Davies, Mrs M.
Evitts, Mrs S. Davies and Mr G Robson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest from Members relating to items on the
agenda.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member had been
given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local
Government Measure 2011.

4. SCRUTINY OF BUSINESS CRITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Committee received for information details of the business critical activities
subject to scrutiny.

**5. SCRUTINY OF BUSINESS CRITICAL ACTIVITIES - LEARNING AND
SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

5.1. Briefing Reports

The Committee received the following briefing reports as background
information:

Update Report	05/05/2020
Update Report	24/04/2020
Report – Joint Working	21/04/2020

5.2. Verbal Updates and Scrutiny of Business Critical Activities

The Committee received a verbal update on business critical activities relating to
the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee and scrutinised the following matters:

- (a) Emergency Childcare Hubs
- (b) Continuity of Learning Plans

Issues Discussed:

- Emergency Childcare Hubs
 - Hubs established within a week – originally 13 mainstream hubs, now 14 due to increased demand, and 2 specialist hubs. Work of officers in establishing hubs and teachers operating hubs commended. Hubs established on local cluster level – 13 locations with a lead Head Teacher. Rota is operational for hubs to work 7 days a week 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Hubs set up based on the needs of the children in that area.
 - Weekly discussion about arrangements with Education Service, with ability to spread good practice.
 - Questions:

Transport – who is eligible for transport?	Transport provided within policy for any children attending the hubs
Bilingual staff at hubs?	Yes, within principles for opening of the hubs.
Infection control – has there been any discussion of testing pupils taken ill and others at setting using mobile testing units?	Guidance sets out if child ill whilst at hub, isolation room at the hubs and PPE provided as well as thermometers. Children collected from hub. Some staff shown symptoms, staff tested, results so far negative.
Finance of schools – some schools mothballed with benefits to their budgets due to reduced costs, others having continued costs, how are these budgets not going to be affected?	Covid-19 costs being identified as schools act as hubs. Those costs will be claimed as Covid-19 costs. Health and safety of closed schools – safety checks still being undertaken on closed schools.
Welsh Language School at Welshpool – do those children have access to Welsh Medium education at the hub?	Teachers from that school will be on the rota so every attempt made to ensure that relevant staff are on the rota. However, these are childcare hubs, not learning hubs and this is covered under Continuity of Learning Plan.
Covid-19 in the home, how does this affect children attending hubs	Council follows Public Health Wales guidance and child will have to isolate for 14 days. Clear guidance in place for headteachers to contact Public Health Wales where there are case by case issues. Parents have to sign forms when they bring child to school to say that there are no symptoms at home.
How are forms signed when pupil is transported?	Parents can contact service or a note is sent in with pupils.

- Possibly a need for the Education Service to have a conversation with PTHB about support they can provide to hubs.
- Continuity of Learning Plans
 - Questions:

4G dongles – have they arrived and been distributed?	Not arrived as yet, due this week. First 500 allocated based on information from schools, and another 100 due following that for any additional demand.
Limited awareness of document, how can it be promoted more widely and parents access the document?	Plan been through Cabinet and now ready for distribution. Continuity of Learning Plan did not start until 20 th April. Pupils having access to digital learning has been first priority. Document to be released today, to all schools, elected Members and in the public arena through social media.
Nearly all schools supporting vulnerable learners effectively – what does this mean?	Service working with all schools and social care to support vulnerable children, keeping safe and supported. Increase in numbers of children asking for counselling which has been provided through the hubs.
Some parents refusing to engage with learning process – how is Service going to engage with these parents to ensure pupils get some form of education?	Support is on a school by school basis. Teams around the hub have been established including members of the ALN team, children's services, counsellors, challenge advisers, education welfare officers to engage with parents and families.
Staff working shifts at the hubs, how are we protecting the welfare of staff?	Staff not only working in the hubs but also providing work under the continuity of learning plans, therefore welfare of staff is very important. Likely that hubs will continue over the summer period. Forward plan is being discussed on how to move to recovery. It is possible that numbers at hubs will increase as more of the economy reopens.
If hubs continue over the summer holidays, will the free school meals voucher scheme be extended as well	Yes
Key worker expansion –are self employed included as key workers?	Need to look at national guidance
Update to Cabinet 23 rd April –	These came from Stay Safe, Stay

<p>included plan with a number of timescales – have the timescales been met or is there any slippage?</p>	<p>Learning guidance from Welsh Government. Suggested timescales inserted for schools, and these are fortnightly plans focussing on key themes. Nearly all schools are working on these plans to take them forward. This information also being discussed in cluster meetings and Service working with clusters to make sure plans are being developed</p>
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- Does the Council need to lobby Welsh Government about the importance of fibre broadband, based on the experience of the Covid-19 outbreak?

Outcomes:

Action	Action By / Completion Date
Committee to revisit issue of school budgets to make sure there is no detriment to those schools' budgets due to acting as emergency hubs.	WR – work programme
Support for all pupils – Committee to receive an update on whether all pupils are being supported.	WR – work programme
Stay Safe, Stay Learning Powys Plan – copy information to the Committee.	ET / WR

6.	WORK PROGRAMME
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The Committee noted the date of the next meeting and the proposed work programme. In response to a question about the identification of items for scrutiny, the Interim Chief Education Officer indicated that the Service's focus in forthcoming months would be the development of the Continuity of Learning Plan which would include end of year results / grading of pupils.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee congratulated officers in the Education Service and staff at schools on what had been achieved within a very short timescale, and that the Council could be proud of those achievements.

County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)