

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY TEAMS ON MONDAY, 15 JUNE 2020

PRESENT: County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)
County Councillors J Berriman, S C Davies, K Laurie-Parry, E Roderick, L Roberts,
R G Thomas, and Mrs A Davies, Mrs S. Davies and G Robson

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

Officers: Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services), C Rees
(Education Consultant), H Smith (Senior Manager; Additional Learning Needs and
Inclusion) and Clive Pinney (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from County Councillor D Jones and from
E Palmer (Head of Transformation and Communications) and M Evans (Senior
Manager - Education Services).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members relating to items to be
considered on the agenda.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

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

4. THE FUTURE OF ALN / SEN PROVISION IN POWYS - DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER

Documents Considered:

- The Future of ALN / SEN Provision in Powys – Draft discussion Paper

Issues Discussed:

- The engagement process needs to take place with parents and all stakeholders and will run from the end of June to the end of July.
- Different options are included for discussion rather than a single model.
- One of the key elements is fulfilling the new ALN Act and there will be a need to work with mainstream provision as well as early years settings.
- Questions:

How can the engagement exercise be as widely accessible as possible especially to include pre school and 19 – 25 age groups	The Service will work with the Communications Groups that have already been established to consider various aspects of ALN / SEN. In addition, other groups such as SNAP Cymru, Autism Cymru can be engaged as well as school
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	governing bodies.
There are a large number of pupils outside school age, how will this group be engaged	Organisations such as Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and other pre school groups can be involved as well as partner agencies who the Service currently works with.
Is there sufficient resource in the service to deal with this.	There are 4 streams in the transformation programme with a programme manager for each. Therefore there is enough resource for the engagement process. The challenge will be implementing the changes and funding will be required for pupils with complex needs.
This is not about funding but also sufficient staffing resources.	A management of change process is being undertaken and a document prepared. This will need to be reviewed by the HR Service and a decision taken as to when it can be implemented.
Training and qualifications and the upskilling of staff. Where will people go for their training, including postgraduate courses and who pays for the cover required for staff whilst they are training. Account also need to be taken of those staff with knowledge and experience as they should not be lost to the Service.	Birmingham is the best place for postgraduate courses, which is undertaken as a distance learning course. Courses are paid for by the Council. There would be no disadvantage to existing staff if they commit to undertaking the qualification which would then mean they could work with pupils with more complex needs.
Upskilling of Teaching Assistants, will this training be in schools or elsewhere in Powys	The Council can provide training provided by a central team. National leadership programmes can also deliver leadership training. There is a budget to provide targeted training for schools, including teaching assistants.
Is this package of training outside of and training offered to a school identified as requiring assistance	Regardless of categorisation all schools are entitled to join leadership programmes and the training available.
Training Assistants (page 17) – who is undertaking the review and what criteria is being used	The new restructured team will undertake this as well as some headteachers. The aim is to find out how well teaching assistants are being used. Teaching assistants also need to be trained and supported so that they are more effective, and the review should also highlight good practice which can be shared with schools.

Will the new way of working reduce the numbers of current exclusions and increase assessments identifying special needs and differentiating from naughty behaviour	There have been discussions with headteachers about behaviour of pupils. Headteachers feel that currently there is insufficient support for behaviour. Foundation level support is needed so that children are coming into school ready to learn rather than get to a point where they are excluded. Headteachers would like to see more short term or part time provision in mainstream schools.
How will this work with the current school estate	It is not certain what the model will look like currently. Headteachers are encouraged to indicate a model which might work.
Children are usually taught basic skills including behaviour at home. Is there more work that can be undertaken with parents before children get to school.	There is a need to work with other partners who support families such as Flying start and Children's Services, which is where multi agency support can work. However this is an early years issue rather than ALN / SEN.
In relation to buildings and making school buildings more fit for purpose, what about schools not due for refurbishment, will this disadvantage some pupils.	A review is being undertaken with secondary schools as to what facilities should be available on sites. Pupils attending specialist centres will need more facilities in future. There is also a need to look at new builds and identify what should be available. It was suggested that all schools should have a well-being centre.
There have been accessibility issues in the past such as lifts not being repaired for some time. Where is the budget to ensure that these changes happen.	There is capital funding available and it is necessary to ensure that ALN / SEN is considered as an integral part of these projects rather than an add on.
Why is Gwernyfed High School not a specialist centre.	There is a need to make sure that specialist centres are located in the right places as there is currently no equity in Powys and some pupils cannot access centres. A review of where the need is in each area is to be undertaken before consideration is given to where centres should be located.
There is not much reference to Welsh Language in the document.	The transformation programme has 4 workstreams one of which is Welsh Language. Welsh Medium ALN / Sen is a small group of individuals but there is a need to

	ensure that there is provision in Welsh for those that require it.
A group to review ALN was established in Ystradgynlais years ago but there has been no account of that work in the current review. Also in a Welsh Medium School there is an MLD class but it also undertakes other types of provision.	This is how the provision was set up originally. What is provided at specialist centres needs to be reviewed and what centres should be providing identified. With regard to the original review, this information has not been made available to the Service and the local member was asked to forward any information that she had available to the Service.
If pupils in specialist centres are transferred to mainstream schools, how is the funding for this to be organised as those pupils are not within Local Authority funded provision currently, and schools should not be disadvantaged financially.	Specialist centres should be for those pupils that need specialist facilities and programmes. For other pupils there is a need to ensure that mainstream provision is available which is appropriately funded.
What about provision for learners from 19 to 25 years old.	A post 16 group has been established to look at this but the review is at an early stage. This is a large piece of work to be undertaken.
Following the engagement process it might be necessary to consider whether a specific consultation for this age group is needed.	The key is ensuring that all the workstreams are joined up as they do cut across each other.
For non specialist schools, will the Council be discussing the need for additional funding with Welsh Government.	The Council has already received a one-off payment from Welsh Government for 2020-21. ALN funding has also been reviewed and the way that delegated funding under ALN is allocated will be different next year, although within the same total available figure as currently.

Outcomes:

Action	Action By / Completion Date
Upskilling of staff and Teaching Assistants - Scrutiny might wish to review progress on training in the future	WR / PR
ALN – SEN workstream is integrated fully with other workstreams - Scrutiny might wish to review progress with Welsh Language ALN – SEN provision in future	WR / PR
19 to 25 ALN – SEN provision - Scrutiny might wish to also look at this	WR / PR

workstream as a specific piece of scrutiny	
Recommendations to the Cabinet:	WR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Need for the engagement exercise to be as widely accessible as possible especially to include pre-school and 19-25 age groups (b) That clerks to governing bodies and other organisations be advised of the engagement exercise (c) 19 – 25 provision - that after the initial engagement the Education Service might wish to undertake specific consultation on this single element due to its significance 	

5. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that the next meetings will be on:

22 June 2020	1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.	Item: Briefing on School Transformation
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Further meetings will be held on:

6 July 2020	1.00 p.m. – 2.00 p.m.	Item: Schools Service – Financial Out-turn
20 July 2020	1.00 p.m. – 2.00 p.m.	Item: School Budgets 2020-21

The Committee noted that an electronic scrutiny of the PIAP had started and the Scrutiny Manager would draw together Members' comments once completed.

A revised Admissions Policy would also be circulated to Members for electronic scrutiny at the end of July.

The Chair has requested that the options paper for the reopening of schools be provided to the Committee for information and the experience of the reopening of schools could be reviewed after they had been open for a month.

County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)