

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD AT BY TEAMS ON MONDAY, 22 JUNE 2020**

PRESENT: County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)  
County Councillors J Berriman, B Davies, S C Davies, E Roderick, L Roberts,  
R G Thomas, Mrs A Davies, Mrs S. Davies, Mrs M Evitts 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),  
Marianne Evans (Senior Manager - Education Services), Huw Foster Evans  
(Education Consultant)

<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor D Jones, and from  
L Lovell (Interim Chief Education Officer) and E Palmer (Head of Transformation  
and Communications)

<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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There were no declarations of interest from Members relating to items for  
consideration on the agenda.

<b>3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP</b>
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The Committee did not receive any 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.

<b>4. BRIEFING - TRANSFORMING EDUCATION PROGRAMME</b>
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**Documents Considered:**

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property.

**Issues Discussed:**

- A programme of governance relating to the transformation programme had been presented to the Cabinet and the appendices to the document related to the various workstreams. Work had continued on the programme despite the Covid-19 outbreak and although the work was not critical, it is important that the governance arrangements be established.
- **Workstream 1 – Primaries and all age schools.**
- There is a great deal of integration between workstreams. The primary and all age schools are linked to learner entitlement in the strategy. Wave 1 in 2020-21 would be seeking to develop 3 all through schools. It would also be considering the reconfiguration of schools. There are a number of small schools in the county and it is necessary to see how these fit into the all school age principles. PIDs (Project Initiation Documents) have been produced for all workstreams, which as live documents can be changed and approved by the Transformation Board.

- Questions:

Will there be more all age schools in Waves 2 and 3.	Yes 3 in Wave 2 and more in Wave 3.
Are all primaries to be reviewed in Wave 1 or by areas	The Council is looking at the smallest schools first as they have relationships with other neighbouring schools.
Does it make more sense to look at all schools and develop the model, as if you are just looking at smallest schools there will be a knock-on effect on other schools	The Council wants to avoid moving pupils 2 or 3 times in their educational career. Therefore, it is looking strategically at small schools but also looking at the impact on the catchment area, transport etc.
This is a huge scheme and there is a need to look on a county wide basis, but some schools are unsustainable currently. The bigger picture and clusters will need to be addressed, but there are some issues that need to be dealt with now	Wave 1 is looking at 3 all through schools and also there is a triage element to Wave 1 looking at other problems to be addressed before Waves 2 and 3.
Are the waves considering all aspects such as federation, consolidation or are there limitations as to what can be looked at	There are no limitations. Legally the Council has to look at all options especially in relation to smaller and rural schools which is set out in the legislation. The Council will also have to state why it has selected certain options and not others.
Are the timescales realistic for the number of people undertaking this work	Yes, as the Council has set the timetable. The problem has been the Covid-19 outbreak and the ability to undertake consultation with schools and others. All the workstreams have cross service input into them as it is a wide corporate programme of work.
Page 5, para 4.2 – where will the resource funding come from if not from the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century schools fund	Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government about staffing costs which can come from 21 <sup>st</sup> Century funding. Confirmation of this is awaited from Welsh Government.
Do all through schools have to be separate from federated or clustered schools and are the 3 schools proposed for Wave 1, three new schools on different sites to current schools	It depends on individual circumstances. It would be preferable to have new schools in new locations but there will need to be flexibility about this. In some places it may be 1 school on 1 site, in other areas this may not be as easy to achieve. Catchment models could work as well.
Are all options being kept open, which could be a mix of options and	Yes

have the best model for the locality	
What catchments are we looking at for Wave 1	The Service is in discussions with schools, so its not possible to disclose this information at present.

- **Workstream 2 – Post 16 provision**

- This is the most significant workstream in terms of scope and size of project. Post 16 learners will need to have access to a broad range of subjects and this needs to be sustainable. There is a need to identify the entitlement for learners and to make this ambitious.
- Delivering this will mean an enhanced collaboration between schools, blended learning, and sharing provision.
- Work has started on future provision, such as 6<sup>th</sup> form centres, Welsh Language and ALN provision. Phases 2 and 3 will include further collaboration between schools, governance arrangements, planning for 6<sup>th</sup> form centres with the new 6<sup>th</sup> form centres being implemented from 2025.

- **Questions:**

Partnerships with the higher education sector – the ambition is 6 <sup>th</sup> form centres. There is a concern that the Council does not try to do this ourselves and there should be integrated provision as there is college provision in Newtown and Brecon rather than competition between establishments. What will collaboration look like	There is no intention of the Council going it alone and no capacity for this. There is a need to have an idea of the learner entitlement and what is to be delivered in schools, by further and higher education and by vocational learning.
Why do we not have strong links with further and higher education now	The provision in Powys is currently traditional, which is A level with some vocational learning. However, the county is losing pupils out of county. There is some good collaboration now, but it needs improving.
There is a relationship with NPTC College but both types of provision need to improve, 6 <sup>th</sup> form and further education	The higher education link is missing in Powys as there is no university. There is a need to work together to improve the whole of the Post 16 sector.
How will surplus places be reduced	Part of the overall strategy is to improve the whole of the school estate
Why is there no strong pastoral links with schools	This is one of the benefits identified in the Post 16 project. The document does not state that pastoral links are not there, but the improvement is the aim to be achieved
If there are strong links, there is no need to improve them. How will this be achieved	The workstream plan breaks down the project into chunks to achieve the vision. This is an enormous

	<p>piece of work. The Service is currently trying to get everyone aligned behind the plan. Once that is in place and the entitlement identified then options can be brought forward for consideration.</p>
<p>Why wait until May 2021 to engage with Post 16 partners</p>	<p>It has been identified that this timeline is not moving fast enough. Since the document was prepared more time has gone into the planning which will be more ambitious.</p>
<p>Post 16 entitlement is currently at the minimum level, how can this be improved over the next 3 years</p>	<p>This section is split into 2 elements. The Service is currently looking at improving the offer to learners, then collaboration. There is a need to look at courses offered in more than one place with small numbers and improve that offer. There is a need to improve the offer now and also after 2025.</p>
<p>Learners may be leaving courses in Powys due to buildings or due to having no confidence in the quality of the local delivery, or the offer is not wide enough. Not all schools are offering the same level of education to pupils currently under the Covid-19 measures.</p>	<p>There is evidence of a widely varying quality of delivery. Schools are now sharing with each other post 16 results and the quality of learning. Quality indicators are to be used for future work. The entitlement needs to be Powys wide and the learner entitlement needs to be in place before there are local decisions on delivery and facilities required. There is a need to look at choice and equity for learners. There is ambition in the strategy and this is also built into the capital strategy going forwards.</p>

- **Workstream 3 – Welsh Medium**
- Welsh Language crosses over into the other workstreams. Estyn were critical of the development of Welsh Medium provision. There is a target to develop new provision and the Service is looking at where this will be. It also ties into the WESP but there has been in Welsh Government requirements being made known to authorities, so no formal guidance has been received as yet.
- Wave 1 is supporting 3 schools moving to providing more of a Welsh Language offer. Immersion learning opportunities are also being developed. The work was held back due to Covid-19 but is now ongoing. The proposal is an increase in the numbers being taught in Welsh and an increase in the Welsh Language offer 11 to 16 and 16 to 19. Improving the Welsh Language skills of staff is also required which is being undertaken.
- Questions:

The Welsh Language Forum met last week	The Forum met in January and last week. It is very positive and can see what the strategy is trying to achieve.
Which 3 schools have been moved along the language continuum	Discussions are starting with some schools that are being moved along the continuum, but their names cannot be identified until agreement has been reached.
It is difficult to express an opinion on geographical location unless the information is known and that's important for scrutiny	When discussions have been completed then scrutiny can be advised of the locations
Is there slippage in the plan as the end date is June 2020	Schools have been identified and discussions started with schools.
Are these just primary or secondary schools being moved across the continuum	The Service is looking at the sector in its totality, both secondary and primary.
As consultation is occurring between September and December, will there be proposals available to discuss	This is a matter of consulting with the specific schools rather than wider consultation. There may be specific language or other issues and it's important to take communities with the service
We want to take the whole of Powys forward, these are small steps only. Has work been done on immersion in Wave 2 and what was the outcome	Immersion centres are needed, the question is where and how will they be staffed which is currently being discussed
There has been no progress on the last 2 WESPs so until proposals are known there will be no progress on the next one either	It is important to get this right and to put the time in to get it right
The provision at post 14 is variable. Is there going to be consideration of e-learning	Post 14 and 16 provision is poor. Post 14-19 Welsh Language provision is closely linked to Post 16-19 entitlement due to the small numbers of cohorts.
The recommendations of the last WESP were not addressed. Will these be addressed	There is a need to look forward and develop a ten year WESP. The discussion with Welsh Government is about looking forwards.  The Chair commented that the Committee could look at what was outstanding from past WESPs and challenge this when considering the new WESP.

- **Workstream 4 – ALN Provision**
- Questions:

Page 21 – 4 or 5 areas, do we know where these are yet	Areas cannot be named at present. An engagement paper is to be issued this week.
How many 6 <sup>th</sup> form arrangements will there be	Currently there are 12 locations catering for less than 1000 learners. It is not possible to identify where future provision will be at present. It is also important to sort out the entitlement first before considering locations.

**Outcomes:**

- **Noted.**

<b>5. WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The Committee noted that the next meetings would be held as follows:

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

**County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)**