

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT: County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)
County Councillors J Berriman, B Davies, S C Davies, D R Jones, E Roderick, L Roberts, R G Thomas, and Co-Opted Members A Davies, S. Davies, M Evitts and G Robson

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: County Councillors P Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education and Property) and A W Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport)

Officers: Lynette Lovell (Interim Chief Education Officer), Geraint Rees (Education Consultant), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services), Caroline Rees (Education Consultant) and Jennie Spraggon (Finance Business Partner)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from H Smith (Interim Senior Manager; Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members relating to items for consideration on the agenda.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

The Committee did not receive any 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 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS / ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS IN POWYS STRATEGY

Documents Considered:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Education – The Future of Special Educational Needs / Additional Learning Needs in Powys Strategy.

Issues Discussed:

- Consultation exercise undertaken followed by the development of the draft Strategy. ALN / SEN being progressed in conjunction with all the other Transformation projects.

- Questions:

What confidence is there in being able to deliver these changes tied into the wider ALN proposals on a Welsh level	There is confidence. Consultation on a new staffing structure has been completed. Estyn identified that the core corporate team was not large enough. The new structure will provide new posts, so once people
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	<p>appointed to posts the Service will have the staff resources it needs. In terms of finance, work is ongoing with the Finance Service to identify funding streams. Additional funding is available in the current year from Welsh Government to continue with work this year and other funding streams being identified to ensure that the Council can deliver what is needed. This is also an invest to save strategy as it is not a "quick fix" e.g. developing a multi agency model for early years and if this is effective then some of the pre-school centres that exist currently may not be required in future.</p>
<p>Will the strategy be made public. Could definitions be included of items such as School Action Plus. Also could the location of schools be identified in the document. Can the document also be proof read. The base map in the document also does not identify Ystradgynlais.</p>	<p>Yes it will be made public once agreed by Cabinet. An appendix with the terminology can be added to the document and an explanation of where the location of schools are.</p>
<p>There are 3545 pupils in SEN / ALN in Powys. This number as well as those Looked After by Powys seem to be expanding. What is the total number of pupils in Powys schools currently.</p>	<p>20.1% of pupils are on the SEN register.</p>
<p>Where is Powys in the national percentage of children who are in an SEN category</p>	<p>The Wales average is 22.2% of pupils. However you need to be careful with the figures although this is the published data.</p>
<p>How we compare with the family of authorities. Where does Powys compare by comparison to England.</p>	<p>The figures are quite similar, but they do vary. It also depends on the number of special schools a local authority has as you do not have to have a statement unless you are in a special school e.g. Carmarthenshire has no special schools. The Service does not have the comparative figures for England but they can be obtained and circulated following the meeting.</p>
<p>The 22% does seem to be quite high</p>	<p>These figures do include School Action i.e. any pupil that needs additional help. 22% is the average and Powys is typical in terms of numbers.</p>
<p>Around two thirds are School Action,</p>	<p>Powys is fairly similar. One concern</p>

<p>is this typical across Wales.</p>	<p>is that too many pupils are put on School Action Plus too early rather than being dealt with at a school level. School Action Plus should be when there is a need for an ongoing intervention. With the ALN act School Action and Schools Action Plus are going to be disappearing.</p>
<p>Does the Act provide better clarity in comparing information moving forwards.</p>	<p>In the current system pupils have a statement or those without a statement have an individual education plan, In the new system nearly all pupils with SEN will have an individual development plan (IDP), and for those with more complicated needs the IDP will be owned by the Local Authority (similar to the statement) and for lesser needs the IDP will be owned by the school. What is currently being developed is an electronic IDP which will save the Council money and will assist multi agency working and be more effective.</p>
<p>Could we have the numbers of pupils in a category as the numbers of pupils in Powys schools are falling but the numbers in a category are rising</p>	<p>The percentage of pupils with statement across Wales is 12.7%, in Powys it is 11.8%. The Portfolio Holder commented that the important thing for Powys is to make sure that we have the appropriate provision for pupils Powys.</p>
<p>Vision is excellent. Concern is that the strategy is aspirational, can we deliver it. Also there are a number of strands that need to come together at the same time. Is there adequate support for main stream schools as well.</p>	<p>The Transformation Programme has 4 work streams one of which is ALN. The strategy is aspirational but Powys is starting from a low base. Under the ALN workstream there are 4 projects and these are multi agency teams working on these projects. Through this process the Council will make progress but there is confidence that once the new staffing structure is in place this can be delivered. With the funding being available this year, work has already progressed on aspects of the work prior to the draft strategy being developed. Once these pilots have been undertaken they can be rolled out to other areas. 14 teachers in specialist centres have enrolled on</p>

	<p>post graduate diplomas. Once trained they can be used to provide outreach elsewhere in the county. Headteachers from the pupil referral units have been providing basic training on behaviour to other schools and advanced training will be provided to schools where it is required.</p>
<p>The speaker at the beginning referred to SEN as a service which is added on at the end of other things, the same is true for SEN provision through the medium of Welsh. Most of the 20% with SEN needs probably are in mainstream schools. Is it Welsh medium schools (primary and secondary) that are needed as a network to attract appropriate staff.</p>	<p>Welsh medium has been added as a 7th priority in the strategy document. However, it will be necessary to work out the numbers of pupils who are Welsh speakers and what is their needs. The issue is not to make pupils travel too far. The commitment in the WESP is to roll out Welsh Medium in a more ambitious way than previously. There are some areas in Powys where there is no primary or secondary Welsh Language provision.</p>
<p>It appears that the special schools would be clustered around high schools that can attract the staff, is this the ideal. The hope is to upskill staff so that the 20% of pupils in Welsh Medium schools can get an appropriate education.</p>	<p>In relation to special schools, reference has already been made to satellites, with staff from special schools running the satellite in a mainstream school. What will be required is staff who speak Welsh who can go to the mainstream school and run the satellite, as there are insufficient numbers of Welsh speaking pupils with complex needs to require the building of a specialist Welsh Medium special school.</p>
<p>Will the money follow the pupil to ensure that satellites are properly funded.</p>	<p>Specialist centres or satellites work well. Currently provision is not consistent across Powys. The delegated ALN funding budget and for specialist centres is being reviewed. Where pupils are in split placements then funding will need to be reviewed to ensure that its in the right place.</p>
<p>Post 16 – this has been under developed. Will the transformation address the issues for 16 to 25 year olds.</p>	<p>Research has been undertaken recently on what provision is available to 16 to 25 year olds and what are the gaps in that provision. That paper is being considered by the Post 16 workstream and will be circulated to headteachers to obtain further information. One question</p>

	which has arisen is why those post 16 pupils with special needs are not staying on in sixth form. More information can be fed back to the Committee as work progresses.
The strategy will raise expectations when published and Powys will have to deliver on those expectations. Powys will need a rural model. Some reference to timeframes need to be included in the document. Can the Council afford this and deliver it in a reasonable timeframe.	Work is currently ongoing, and it will take time to deliver this. This is aspirational but it will be better provision than currently provided. Funding streams are being sought to ensure that this can be delivered. The Council is also looking at ways that it can interact with parents in relation to the proposals.

- A timeline and milestones would be helpful for the committee in giving confidence on the delivery of the proposals.

Outcomes:

Scrutiny make the following observations:

- The strategy document would benefit from the addition of a glossary of terms (e.g. meaning of school action plus) and details of the location of schools (Page 6 – Strategy document), to assist clarity for the reader.
- The map should include Ystradgynlais (Page 5 – Strategy document).
- The Committee commended the vision.
- The Committee welcomed the progression of the electronic IDP (individual Development Plans) for pupils.
- The Committee would appreciate sight of comparative figures for ALN / SEN numbers in other comparable Welsh Councils to Powys as well as figures for England.
- The Committee would welcome sight of a timeline and milestones / targets to assist it in monitoring the progress of this project.
- The Committee agreed that satellite sites as proposed were the way forward. However there was concern that appropriate funding would need to be ensured for all sites where the provision was made.
- The Committee would welcome the opportunity to scrutinise the proposals for Post 16 SEN / ALN provision once that work had been completed.
- The Committee was concerned that although the plan was aspirational, a number of strands would need to come together to ensure that this was delivered in terms of improvement to buildings, upskilling staff and support for mainstream schools.
- The Committee was also concerned about ensuring that sufficient funding was identified to ensure that the strategy was deliverable.

Scrutiny's Recommendation

- 1 That the strategy document include a glossary of terms, details of locations of schools and that the map be updated.**
- 2 That the Committee be provided with comparative figures for SEN / ALN in comparable Welsh Authorities and in England.**
- 3 That the Committee be provided with a timeline with milestones and targets to assist it in monitoring the progress of the project.**

5.	SCHOOL BUDGETS 2020-21
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5.1. Delegated School Budgets 2020-21

Documents Considered:

- Briefing Paper – Delegated School Budgets 2020/21

Issues Discussed:

- Due to Covid there have been some extensions to schools in setting their budgets. Deficit budgets in schools was also a recommendation from Estyn. Work has been ongoing with schools to assist them in preparing their budgets.
- Primary schools historically has built up surpluses which will reduce this year. Prior to Covid schools were bringing forward proposals to resolve any budget issues. However, due to the Covid pandemic there has been a moratorium on staffing changes so that schools have not been able to make adjustments. Specialist schools are in a break even position. Secondary schools have the greatest deficits. It was hoped that the position with secondary schools would have improved this year but due to the pandemic this has not been possible.

- **Questions:**

Can some of the school additional costs / loss of income be recovered from Welsh Government	Claims are being submitted to Welsh Government for both Covid and loss of income which are being paid.
What degree of assurance is there that school budgets and the formula is accurate and that the pandemic position is a one off position.	Powys has a formula to make sure that all its schools can survive. However, with the transformation programme and the levels of investment suggested the positive aspects of reorganisation will outweigh any negative aspects.
Are there more numbers staying on for sixth form provision this year which will give greater financial provision from Welsh Government.	Sixth form numbers have increased and this will affect the budget in 2021-22. However this must not be seen as a reason to do nothing in relation to Post 16 transformation. There has been greater collaboration between high schools this year. The position in relation to pupil numbers may also only be due to the pandemic for this year and it may not last. Therefore, there is a need to make sure there is a significant change to the sixth form offer.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

5.2. Exempt Item

RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

The Monitoring Officer has determined that category 3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules applies to the following item. His view on the public interest test (having taken account of the provisions of Rule 14.8 of the Council's Access to Information Rules) was that to make this information public would disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

These factors in his view outweigh the public interest in disclosing this information. Members are asked to consider these factors when determining the public interest test, which they must decide when considering excluding the public from this part of the meeting.

5.3. Draft School Budgets 2020-21

The Committee considered the Draft School Budgets for 2020-21.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that the dates for future meetings were as follows:

11 November 2020 – 2pm

16 December 2020 – 2pm

County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)