

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: County Councillor A W Davies (Portfolio
Holder for Finance and Transport)

Officers: Geraint Rees (Education Consultant), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and
Head of Democratic Services), Huw Foster Evans (Education Consultant) and
Delyth Jones (Challenge Advisor)

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor K Roberts Jones
and A Davies Co-Opted Member, as well as from County Councillor P Davies
(Portfolio Holder for Education and Property)

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

3.	DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP
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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.	WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP)
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Documents Considered:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Property – Welsh in
Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022 – 2032.

Issues Discussed:

- This is a draft document, and part of the national framework. What has
changed is that this is a ten year plan with constant monitoring during that
period.
- In the past they were three year plans with authorities not able to deliver
within the timescale due to other pressures. As a strategic document this
can be seen as part of the overall plan to change education in Powys.
- There are seven specific outcomes set out in the document which
includes increasing the numbers of staff who can teach through the
medium of Welsh.
- Welsh Government have placed all authorities in categories to assess
what targets would be reasonable for them. For Powys this means a
significant increase over the period from 22.2% of Year 1 pupils being

- taught through the medium of Welsh in 2019/20 to between 32 – 36% taught through the medium of Welsh in 2030/31.
- The document will be developed to become the finalised consultation document and the post consultation WESP will be considered by the Cabinet and if approved submitted to Welsh Government.
 - Once the WESP comes into force (anticipated September 2022) the authority will be required to submit an annual review report to Welsh Government by 21 July each year.
 - Some of the data is currently not available but by the time it is submitted for consultation the 2020-21 data will have become available.
 - A question for scrutiny is what should the percentage be to ensure continuity of education through the medium of Welsh from primary to secondary.
 - Currently it is only over 82% of pupils who are taught through the medium of Welsh at primary level and then study through Welsh Medium streams at secondary level. This means we lose around 20% of all pupils at 11 years of age who move from Welsh Medium streams to English Medium streams.
 - Another question for scrutiny is what the growth rate should be from Year 6 at primary level and Year 7 at Secondary level. Should we be aiming at more than 100% growth.
 - There are examples of effective Immersion programmes (Trochi) elsewhere where pupils between Years 6 and 7 can decide that they wish to be fully bilingual, can follow the programmes to develop language skills and become fully bilingual. The question is how many opportunities we should give to 4 and 11 year olds to have bilingual skills through an Immersion process.
 - The Council also needs to consider how to develop its staff who want to work bilingually to do so.
 - Questions:

Outcome 1 (Nursery / Three Year Olds):

<p>Looking at actual provision of education and heavy reliance on Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM), are we going to have sufficiently robust agreements with MYM around the ongoing provision and particularly developments of new provision where there is no provision now.</p>	<p>Many of the outcomes cross. This is beginning of the journey towards bilingual education. The authority works closely with MYM and they also want to improve the provision available in areas. The report shows the current provision and the numbers that transition from early years to Welsh language education. In addition, there are the Cylch Ti a Fi groups providing the opportunity for parents to socialise and learn Welsh at the same time as their children. The Council has a need to develop other courses such as BTEC in childcare to help develop staff. What the Council is seeking is to develop more Welsh language</p>
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	<p>provision in specific areas set out in the document. In addition, there needs to be greater development of Welsh Language early years provision in areas.</p>
<p>Is there confidence that MYM and Cylch Ti a Fi can develop into areas where there is no current Welsh provision. Are we confident the voluntary sector can deliver the expansion that we require.</p>	<p>This is a significant challenge. There are some areas in Powys where there is no current Welsh Language primary provision. Therefore there is a need to link this to wider transformation strategies. There is also a need for innovative approaches such as the pilot being undertaken at Ysgol Cribarth in other areas.</p>
<p>Whilst MYM are the main provider currently, is the authority looking at options for more provision through the primary school network as well as MYM to expand the offer.</p>	<p>If there is no primary provision the question is why would you put in a nursery provision. MYM is the partner the authority would go to as they have a national profile, tried and tested processes, training programmes in place. If we want nursery provision where there is no primary provision the authority needs to say what we will provide for the transition of pupils.</p>
<p>We all agree the targets and eventual aims. We've just heard about areas where it will be difficult to start provision. Do you feel the targets of 14% after 10 years are challenging enough. Does not the Welsh Government plans for 1million Welsh Speakers by 2050 mean that all pupils should be receiving bilingual education, as this plan will not achieve this aim by 2050.</p>	<p>Welsh Government has looked across Wales and set varying targets for Local Authorities depending on where they are now. They recognise that Local Authorities previously set unreachable targets. It would be nice to go faster but this is set according to what Welsh Government thinks would be a significant step for Powys.</p>
<p>Staffing is key to all future developments. Do we have the numbers of students for this year undertaking BTEC level 3 through the medium of Welsh, and which colleges are they attending.</p>	<p>Enrolment and induction only happened recently. Will have to come back with this information. Workforce is the absolute key to deliver this. This is educated, trained and working in Powys which is an important development for a number of reasons.</p>
<p>Support getting children involved at an early age in Welsh Language.</p>	<p>The proximity of facilities in England being closer to border towns in</p>

<p>Concern about children in the area going to playgroups across the border. How would this pan out as Powys does not have any influence over this.</p>	<p>Powys is always an issue. This is about redoubling efforts to make sure what we provide in Powys is improved.</p>
<p>Are there no Wales wide funding opportunities to help set up Welsh Language playgroups where there is currently no provision</p>	<p>MYM is a national body which has a close relationship with Welsh Government and hopefully they will have support to be able to increase the provision. They have also been stakeholder partners in the discussion about the WESP.</p>
<p>Consultation - how are we going to ensure that all socio-economic groups in Powys are included in the consultation and especially trying to get more governors to respond. Need to encourage greater governor responses in education consultation.</p>	<p>There is guidance around who are statutory partners in consultations which includes governors. However, the authority did not achieve the transformation strategy without wider consultation. There is a massive upturn in the numbers of responses to consultation proposals due to online consultation and this needs to be publicised. With the issue of diversity the Welsh Language needs to be owned by everyone. The Service will be discussing the communication of the consultation with the Communications team as this is part of awareness raising as well as consultation.</p>

Comments:

- There was no increase with previous strategies and targets were not met.
- There are some inconsistencies in some of the tables. Can this be clarified for Cabinet. With regard to a setting in Oswestry this could be a Cylch Ti a Fi Group.

Outcome 2 (Reception Class / Five Year Olds):

- The model which is successful in authorities is to have an Immersion (Trochi) centres where children have lessons and activities through the medium of Welsh. This is happening in schools but the provision needs to be developed. There are officers who are starting to provide this and it is hoped to have a pilot in one school in North Powys to develop this further.
- Within 5 years it is hoped to develop more Welsh Language provision and better transition from primary to secondary. It is ambitious but there is a need to increase the numbers receiving bilingual education.

The authority is also looking to develop a Welsh class in schools providing an English medium provision only currently. The Council has been advised by Welsh Government that there is £2.4m available for Immersion for authorities.

<p>In the table at the beginning of Objective 2 contains medium term PLASC data and for dual stream schools it would be useful to have data for the English stream as well to understand the potential in these schools to increase numbers, and also, information as to where new Welsh speakers will come from.</p>	<p>That information can be added. Taking the example of Rhiw Bechan there are far more pupils coming into Welsh stream and so the balance is changing. There are also similar patterns in other schools.</p>
<p>In terms of targets it seems there is less scope for expanding Welsh provision in those streams improvements and more scope for establishing new provision in those areas where we have none at all.</p>	<p>The Council wants to increase the provision in those catchment areas where there is currently no provision.</p>
<p>On page P22 it talks about a new Welsh School on the north Powys border. There is a concern that Welshpool has a new Welsh Stream school with an English Stream School. The concern is that parents on the border will look for a choice between a Welsh and English school within Powys could move their children over the border for their education.</p>	<p>This is an issue around the normalisation of provision and the Council is a long way from there. Pupils with bilingual skills naturally lead to multi lingual skills. This is a challenge to ensure that children do not migrate out of Powys and can access bilingualism. This needs to be addressed in partnership with MYM to raise the awareness around bilingualism, and needs to be seen as an opportunity not a threat.</p>
<p>There is concern about the website and the impact on parents in persuading them to pursue Welsh Language education. There is a need for something more imaginative on the website to persuade parents.</p>	<p>The website is one of many things which will be used, and the Council will have a social media presence, and use ambassadors, case studies, and have information in the admission packs to promote the benefits of bilingualism. There is also a need to develop learners so they understand the advantages of bilingualism.</p>
<p>Can you expand on the Immersion pilot project being proposed for Newtown. Will it be an unit and will only children from the Newtown area attend or will it be open to children from a wider area such as north Powys.</p>	<p>The pilot centre will be for children years 3 to 6. It will be as wide a catchment as possible for pupils dependent on the travelling distance from the home school to the centre. Pupils will go to their home school and then be transported to the</p>

<p>Are these primary pupils or primary and secondary pupils.</p>	<p>centre. There is also an online system to support other pupils as well. The pilot will start from the autumn half term until Christmas and then pupils progress will be assessed. The children will be attend the centre all week at the beginning. Follow up provision can then be provided for pupils at their home school or continue with the Immersion Centre after Christmas.</p>
<p>In relation to moving dual stream schools along the language continuum - if all current dual stream school moved to being bilingual schools it would contribute about 8% towards the 14% target at the end of the ten years. How quickly can this happen and what power does the authority have to do this or is it a matter of persuading each school governing body. Could the consultation process start with all schools this year.</p>	<p>The authority cannot move quicker than the school can make the change. We need to make sure we have the staff and that this all fits together in terms of numbers as well. Schools can come and speak to the Authority, and having a consensus is the best way forward whilst meeting the expectations of parents and pupils.</p>

- Comments:
- Whilst the outcomes and flow of the document is aimed at measurable outcomes, there might need to be more narrative included that Welsh Medium education / bilingualism is a benefit or a need to articulate the evidence better.
- The Committee recognises this is a step forward in terms of ambition. However, there needs to be more clarity in the document around how these numbers will be achieved and where this is going to be achieved in future. The targets in the document are realistic targets but maybe not stretch targets.
- The document identifies areas where there is no provision currently and where there is ambition that it can be developed. It also identifies where there is provision and it can be extended. The authority cannot go further than that and also cannot identify any individual schools.
- This is a ten year plan. The Council is working with the parameters set by Welsh Government. Is there enough stretch in the targets, this is at the top end of what Welsh Government think the Council can reasonably achieve. It is interesting that the Committee thinks that more stretch would be beneficial.

Outcome 3 (Transition):

<p>It has already been identified that there is quite a lot of leakage from primary to secondary in terms of</p>	<p>Outcome 3 is about securing that children who have had Welsh Language provision earlier in their</p>
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<p>pupils not continuing their education in Welsh. How is this to be addressed and what are the targets for reducing leakage.</p>	<p>educational career can continue that provision later in their education. Therefore, there is a need to reduce leakage and secure improvement. The largest problem is in the secondary sector. The numbers accessing Welsh medium provision in Year 6 (2020) was 226 and numbers who continued to access this provision in 2021 was 187 , a transfer rate of 82.7% meaning a reduction of 40 pupils over the period. Therefore, there is a huge challenge that the authority is losing the gains already made.</p> <p>There are steps which the authority needs to implement including improving the transition process from years 5 to 8 and ensure specific transition plans are in place. Accepting that the transfer rate is currently 82.7% in the first five years of the plan the aspiration would be that the transfer rate would 100%, but practically this may need adjusting. There will need to be an annual audit of numbers as well as the development of staff. It is suggested that by 2032 the authority should be aspiring to a transfer rate of 105% using immersion and other measures. This would mean that if the authority is making progress the transfer rate in the first five years should have increased from 82.7% to 90%.</p>
<p>Have exit interviews been undertaken as to why pupils are not going into Welsh Medium secondary education, what are the reasons and how are these going to be addressed in the plan.</p>	<p>Officers are working with schools and have identified a number of issues including the distance that some pupils need to travel to secondary provision outside their areas. Others may feel that the provision is not what they want i.e. a bilingual / Welsh Medium provision.</p> <p>When the consultation was held prior to bringing forward the transformation strategy in 2020, learner voice opportunities were held. Some pupils cited a lack of choice as secondary level and</p>

	<p>therefore it was difficult for pupils to maintain their bilingual skills. There is also an issue about opportunities for progression from primary to end of school provision. Some parents may also think that pupils receiving Welsh Medium education at primary level is sufficient.</p>
<p>PLASC data is often used in the document. It refers to pupils studying through the medium of Welsh as a first language. There is consultation with schools, but could there be consultation direct with pupils about pupils' experiences of lessons through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Is the statement in the document that what's provided through the medium of Welsh is actually being delivered totally through the medium of Welsh in its entirety or is it a mixture of Welsh and English resources.</p>	<p>This needs to be included in the consultation. The authority does look at the data from examination entries which looks at exactly what language the children have sat their examination in and that is often a better reflection than the description of the provision by schools.</p>

Outcome 4: (More learners studying for assessed qualifications in Welsh)

<p>As the authority moves through the learning journey the uncertainties increase. There are challenges accessing Welsh Medium education at this stage which are recognised in the document. All the new provisions identified have a degree of uncertainty. Therefore there is a concern about signing this draft plan off due to a degree of uncertainty and a lack of clarity about the deliverability of the proposals tied into transformation.</p>	<p>There is no way the authority can tackle this outcome without tackling the challenges around the lack of Welsh Medium Secondary provision. There is a need to state in the document what the authority's ambition is, but recognising there are practical challenges, but unless it is stated there is little hope of delivering that aspiration.</p> <p>What is being set out in the document is possibilities. Learner entitlement in secondary provision is not currently being addressed. There are suggestions in the document of things which could move that forward. Expectations have been limited to where we are today. There is a need to revisit how this is worded as it is helpful to</p>
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	<p>identify areas to help the Council resolve this, it needs to be clear about how we achieve it.</p>
<p>There is a distinct challenge in Mid Powys to create a viable solution unless the numbers of pupils in primary being taught through the medium of Welsh is increased.</p>	<p>There is a need to recognise the authority's Welsh Medium secondaries as a network with an active networking of provision and locations co-dependent on each other for high quality teaching.</p>
<p>The Council needs to run some hypothetical scenarios around these projects as this is complex. It would be useful to have conversations in clusters and catchment areas and with feeder primary schools around Welsh Language provision. An assurance about how the dialogue with schools will happen may be worth including in the document.</p>	<p>Because of the situation the Council is in being off the pace in terms of the all Wales setting, what we are being asked to do is to set an ambition. However, the document is a ten year year kick start, and this agenda needs to collectively moved forward in all parts of Powys. The complexities and challenges are what the transformation process is looking at currently. The Cabinet has given a commitment to engagement in the Mid and South of Powys in respect of the Welsh Medium provision.</p>
<p>Page 31, first paragraph, expresses positivity where this is none. The paragraph needs to be more realistic. The reality is only 20% of first language Welsh speakers managed to complete their GCSE courses completely through the medium of Welsh i.e. 4% of Welsh speakers.</p> <p>The proposal for a Welsh Medium secondary school in North Powys prevents the development of Welsh Medium education st secondary level in North Powys. There are other options for another area (Severn Valley) for a Welsh Medium secondary school in North Powys.</p> <p>The report suggests a leakage of pupils and money across the border post 16. The idea would be to keep the money in Powys schools in sixth forms. The review of the tertiary sector from the perspective of pupils</p>	<p>The local authority has jurisdiction over schools and has been looking at leakage of pupils over the border post 16. The provision needed is far broader than what schools can provide, and are not looking for schools to provide courses which they are ill equipped to run. The Council is reliant on its partners to deliver these other areas of work. The establishing of the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership will assist this development. The Council is also behind the curve on vocational provision and work based learning as well as Welsh Medium provision. There is some provision but it is not what it needs to be and there is not sufficient variety either.</p> <p>The element around Post 16 in the document does need strengthening. The issue is not around where the provision is or where pupils are going but in relation to learner</p>

<p>is better rather than from coffers of secondary schools in Powys. This section in the document therefore needs to be rewritten.</p>	<p>entitlement. The post 16 review has been a learner centred and learner entitlement exercise.</p> <p>In respect of the Welsh Medium Secondary School there is active dialogue taking place to ensure an improvement in the offer. The Transformation team is working with the governing body for Llanfair School to resolve this challenge. In relation to the issue of leakage one concern is the leakage of pupils from Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd not transitioning to Welsh Medium secondary provision.</p>
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- Comments:
- Some narrative about why around 20% of pupils are dropping out of Welsh Medium education would be welcomed in the document.
- As this is the starter document, and what will become the WESP will be following a consultation. Perhaps this information could be obtained during the consultation as to why pupils dropped out.
- There is more work to do on secondary area. The Committee would challenge officers to use the consultation to explore the possible distribution of Welsh schools into the future. With regard to the concern regarding the leakage from Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd, the consultation could be used to find out why this is happening. The consultation also needs to provide strong evidence that the proposals in the WESP are those we should be taking forward in terms of Welsh Medium Secondary education.

Outcome 5 (Opportunities for Learners):

<p>There does not seem to be much included in this objective about informal activities going on which could help pupils converse in Welsh outside the classroom. The references are to courses and more formal activities.</p>	<p>Many activities are fun such as Eisteddfodau. The five elements of the Siarter Iaith do have fun activities embedded in them. There is a need to get secondary schools on board in using the Siarter Iaith.</p>
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Outcome 6 (ALN) and 7 (Workforce):

<p>How are we going to make sure we have sufficient qualified staff to deliver ALN and Welsh Medium provision to Welsh speaking families..</p>	<p>This is not for Welsh speaking families but for those learning through the medium of Welsh. Authorities are working together to tap into expertise elsewhere. Ultimately the Council needs to build</p>
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	<p>its own workforce and retain young people and attract others in. The Service looking to increase the numbers of training opportunities for trainee teachers. ALN and the broader workforce are on the same journey.</p>
<p>ALN is dependent not only on the Education Service but also other services outside the school e.g. Educational psychologists and other support which needs to be provided through the medium of Welsh. These services are not available currently. This is a major concern when talking about ALN.</p>	<p>This is where the ALN strategy goes hand in hand with this strategy. The Council recognises the need and the shortfall and this is being tackled through the ALN Strategy which is being worked on with the Council's partners.</p>
<p>In relation to costs, there are some example costs in the paper but no overall projected costs. The paper suggests that costs would be covered through the transformation fund. How long would it be for funding to come back to the service once services were embedded. The target in the plan is 14% increase as the absolute maximum. However if the Council decided on a 10% increase what is the additional cost or is it a diminishing return on any additional percentage increase to be achieved.</p>	<p>Many of these activities and the growth have a declining marginal costs the more you grow. To go for 10% instead of 14% would be no real cost saving. The cost of teaching through the Medium of Welsh or English is the same. It is change and transition which brings a cost except for Trochi which would be a permanent and lasting cost to ensure that learners make the transition. However, that service needs to be tempered around future demand. Covid is also causing a move of families from towns to country and the Council needs to be mindful of that.</p> <p>Some of the elements of the discussion with the Committee can go into document prior to consultation and some will need to be teased out following the consultation.</p>

- Comments:
- There may be a need for more cross referencing between the WESP and the ALN Strategy in the commentary in the document.
- Working with social care and health specialists through the medium of Welsh - if a child need to be assessed, it often has to be done through the medium of English due to lack of language skills by those specialist staff. Therefore, the Council and partners need to be smarter in delivering services through the medium of Welsh.

The Committee had a number of concerns around the document including the need for more discussion, information, and consultation. There is nothing in the document to cause the Committee to suggest that more work is needed before consultation. More information needs to be included e.g in tables.

Outcomes:

Outcome 1.

The Committee:

- accepted that the document was an initial draft and would form the basis of the consultation document, following which the Strategy could be developed. It was further accepted that whilst some of the data was available and would be included in the draft document, some was not currently available.
- expressed concern regarding inconsistencies in some of the tables for Outcome 1 which need to be clarified for the Cabinet.
- although understanding that the target of increasing the number of pupils being taught through the medium of the Welsh Language by 14% over ten years had been established as a result of guidance from Welsh Government as to what would be a significant step increase for Powys, questioned whether this was a sufficiently ambitious target.
- asked that the Cabinet when consulting on the draft Strategy to:
 - ensure that all socio-economic groups were included in the consultation process
 - seek to encourage more governors to respond to the consultation

Outcome 2

- The Committee suggested that:
 - in the table of Total Welsh Medium pupils (PLASC) – it would be helpful to have the data for English Medium provision as well as where the new Welsh speakers will come from.
 - the document needs to include more narrative around the benefits of a bilingual education as well as the inclusion of evidence to support this.
 - that the targets in this section were realistic but not 'stretch' targets.
- The Committee recognised that this is a step forward in terms of ambition, but that there is a need for greater clarity as to how and where these increases will be achieved.

Outcome 3

The Committee:

- expressed concern regarding the reduction in pupils continuing their studies through the medium of the Welsh Language from primary school to secondary school, but noted the need to improve the transition between years five and eight.
- commented that some narrative about why pupils were not continuing their education through the medium of the Welsh Language in the document would be welcomed, and noted that this could possibly be collected as part of the consultation.

Outcome 4

The Committee:

- welcomed the suggestion that this section be revised to identify what the Council can resolve and also be clear as to how it will be achieved, to include post sixteen education.
- accepted that there was further work to be undertaken around Secondary Welsh Medium provision.
- expressed concern regarding the lack of narrative and evidence in the document supporting the change of location on the proposed Welsh Medium Secondary School

in North Powys, particularly in view of the numbers of pupils from Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd who were not choosing not to continue their secondary education through the medium of Welsh.

Outcome 5

- The Committee commented that more detail could be included in this section regarding informal and vocational activities as this was too focussed on courses and formal activities.

Outcomes 6 and 7

- The Committee suggested that cross references to the ALN Strategy should be included in this section

There were no recommendations to the Cabinet.

5.	WORK PROGRAMME
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The Committee noted the details of forthcoming meetings. It also noted that it would continue to consider school transformation proposals.

County Councillor P Roberts (Chairman)