

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD BY ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH 2024**

Present:

County Councillor L Roberts Vice Chair

County Councillors: D Bebb, AW Davies, B Davies, D Meredith, G Morgan, S
McNicholas, G Preston & C Robinson

Co-opted Member: K Chedgzoy, S Davies, M Evitts.

Cabinet portfolio Holders in Attendance:

County Councillors:

P Roberts, Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys

D Selby, Cabinet Member for a more Prosperous Powys

Officers: Lynette Lovell Dir. of Education and Children's Services, Georgie
Bevan, Head of Schools Service, Marianne Evans Service Manager for Schools
Transformation.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from
County Councillor - Gwynfor Thomas, as on other Council business.

2. DISCLOSURES 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. MINUTES

Documents Considered:

- Minutes of the 15th January 2024 & 9th February 2024

Minutes agreed by Committee members present as a true and accurate
reflection of the meetings and ratified accordingly by the Chair.

Committee also noted the minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting of
the 28th February 2024.

5.	JOINT LEISURE WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET REPORT
-----------	--

Background

Chair of the Joint Scrutiny Working Group Cllr Gareth E Jones thanked those Members of Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee who were part of and assisted in the Working Group.

An outcome report was attached within the agenda for the Scrutiny Committee for comment, whilst it was noted the paper had been presented to Cabinet earlier this week.

Cllr D Selby thanked the Working Group for the thorough, well researched and fair approach, and believed that this process had assisted in collating the necessary data to be considered in the review.

Cllr P Roberts echoed sentiments by Cllr Selby and added that the Working Group had given the Cabinet the confidence that the data is sound and has been thoroughly reviewed.

Points raised by the Panel:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members.
When was the Leisure Review expected to conclude, which would enable schools to plan for the future.	The answer is quite complex as the Review falls under the Sustainable Powys work. Small pieces of outstanding work will continue, however there is not a final date as other decisions from Sustainable Powys work may affect the work of the Leisure Review.
There were budget savings predicated on the Leisure Review outcomes as well as the Bro Hyddgen development, assurance was requested that as work progresses, opportunities would not be missed through the lack of thorough and quick decisions being made.	Another complication was the savings that the Schools Service were making on the particular element of the contract. Collation of data was being progressed to allow for decisions to be made, whilst not officially part of the Leisure Review, it would affect the future of the service moving forward.
In terms of transportation to and from leisure centres for swimming, had this been reflected in the School Funding Formula.	No, not at all.
	A recommendation from the Joint Scrutiny Working Group was for a figure to be identified in relation to transport costs incurred.
	In Wales it is not compulsory that children learn to swim, as an LA it was felt this was an essential life skill. We have tried to determine the amount of swimming time with the Leisure team, but the autonomy sits with each individual school for planning the

	curriculum and the travel to and from centres.
--	--

6.	COMMITTEE DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO SCHOOL VISITS AND DEEP DIVE WORK
-----------	---

Points raised by the Panel:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members.
PRU working group or a deep dive given the significant savings within the budget, and to understand the impact on the provision provided. How the potential plan of working closer with schools and on schools sites would work in practice and it was important to have a clear plan before changes were implemented.	
Visits to schools that have provided Trochi immersion education, either through the Trochi Working Group with invite extended to other Committee Members.	Officers were happy to support in arranging this as felt would be beneficial for the working group to see first-hand the Trochi provision, and report findings back to the Scrutiny Committee.
There have been some new build all-thru school across the border in Carmarthenshire, would be beneficial to discuss pro's and cons of the design, to ensure similar issues or problems were not made and give assurance to the well-being and safety of our learners. The Committee need to have assurance and understand the impact that tight budgets had on the options that were available through the Transformation programme, a separate session or deep dive on this would be appreciated.	It would possibly be helpful for Members to see conditions of some of our School estate buildings, to compare the learning environments to our new builds. The additional challenge and pressure this presents not only to teaching staff but to those who were managing budgets in the current financial situation, alongside the transformation agenda. The Offer post 14 moving forward could have potential impact on funding whilst also need to ensure that the service and curriculum was meeting demand of the learner.
Aware Members of the group had in previous meeting expressed concern on Early Years provision, especially with links to the ALNET Act.	A National agenda item is the Community Schoos agenda, what a Community School looks like and what role does it play. The Schools Services has used grant funding to employ Family Liaison Officers to support our Community Schoos, agenda which forma part of the WH National Review, with Powys being used as a case study. The Committee may wish to

	contrast and compare our Community and non-Community schools provision.
	Committee may also like to have a working group on the Multi Site schools, the problems and challenges they had faced over the 4-6years they have been operating, especially if the Council were to be considering establishing more.
It has been a year since we had a very positive presentation in respect of the Music plan in Powys, to boost the instrumental music played in schools, was there any further update available.	Lynsey MCCrohan, the Strategic Lead for Music and Expressive Arts would be happy to come back to Scrutiny Committee and inform of the significant progress made through presentations to WG and other LA's.
Need to look at the current funding formula in particular across ALN students. There still remain major issues with the funding formula which cannot be left drift and needs to be looked at to ensure it is fair across the board	The school funding formula has recently been reviewed and brought to Scrutiny and Cabinet, the changes in direct response to the new ALNET Act and included provision for Deprivation, meaning that less funding remained centrally.
	ALPS data analysis could be shared via a Committee development session.

7.	PROGRESSION AND LEARNING
-----------	---------------------------------

Points raised by the Panel:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members.
Teaching was a main theme under the recommendations.	Agreed it was a significant area, 13 out of the 27 recommendations across all of our schools highlighted teaching as requiring improvement. For this reason, the service focussed on teaching for the Autumn term visits, the quality of teaching at those schools and input support where required. For most schools they were able to evidence that the quality of teaching was good. Where inconsistencies in teaching were identified, support processes had been input. SIA support was deployed to schools where analysis had not been thoroughly undertaken. The Service is now in a much stronger position to understand the quality of teaching, following the recommendations received from Estyn last year, which should have a knock-on effect on the standards.
Has the focus of Estyn inspections	No, there was not a National issue that

<p>changed over the last year in comparison to previous years from results to teaching.</p>	<p>teaching came out as inconsistent, which was mainly around the self-evaluation process which wasn't picked up in Powys as being an area of significance.</p>
<p>The point has been made that if teaching was deemed satisfactory, the same would be reflected in standards. There were 5 inspection areas, would they all have the same weighting, even for those peripheral elements i.e., wellbeing that were not the core like teaching. Was there any suggestion that the peripheral elements had sufficient staffing, yet teaching did not.</p>	<p>Estyn have all areas of an inspection as equal. Since Covid Schools have placed an emphasis on wellbeing, which has to remain so that the children can learn in that environment. Would a greater emphasis on the wellbeing of the child mean that teaching was not in place that we would want it to be. We have evidence of good teaching practice within the schools of Powys; however we would have to go back and examine reasons why this has happened. An issue raised by Estyn was around whether there was enough challenge to push learners on, and this has been challenged by the Service to schools.</p>
<p>In terms of Leadership, was this in relation to schools without permanent Leadership staff in place.</p>	<p>This point was not specifically about acting or new leadership it was more in terms of the quality of leadership. What was the impact inside the school, was the school and strength of the school understood, if area of improvement were required were these realistic and in place. Estyn picked up that in some cases school had not been specific enough and at times were over generous in their judgements.</p>
<p>The literacy and numeracy point score of Powys was closer to the Wales average compared to that of the eFSM LA average and the all-Wales eFSM score, was there a reason for this greater disparity.</p>	<p>There are quite marginal differences in the of scheme of things, we must be aware that Powys' eFSM pupils compared to all Wales is lower</p>
<p>If undertake benchmarking of our schools with similar eFSM etc., is the same benchmarking completed for similar LA's.</p>	<p>This could be something pulled out of the data, which is available in the public domain and available on: www.mylocalschool.gov.uk Whilst we were not provided with the data on other LA's directly this site would give the opportunity to look at other schools. Schools were given, to use as a comparison tool, the All-Wales Schools Data Pack, within which they are placed into a family of similar schools, with a family average and could therefore</p>

	benchmark to similar schools in similar contexts.
Did the service compare the “families” and compile the data, rather than a catch all of the all-Wales average.	The Service only has a high-level overview as per 3.13. On average the Capped 9 scores in Powys were 3.9 points behind similar schools, which equates to approximately half a grade across all 9 of the qualifications.
How would Powys address this gap and what were the projected timescales.	<p>This forms part of the Secondary Strategy with a strong focus on improving teaching and learning in schools and on improving the curriculum offer and the ways in which schools can support learner progress the best way they can and ultimately aspire to be in line with similar schools.</p> <p>In terms of timescales the work was ongoing within the Secondary Strategy, spanning a minimum of 3 years, during which we would expect to see significant improvements.</p> <p>SIAs were aware of the family data for the schools, and work through the data with the school leaders. The Schools Service did not collate nor analyse the data internally. One of the themes in line with this report, was to prioritise self-evaluation, for schools to be able to accurately reflect and there had been significant improvements made in the evaluation of teaching and learning. Data is very different now and it would possibly be very beneficial for Scrutiny Members to have a data session to understand how it was used and analysed.</p> <p>We have invested in ALPs at Key Stage 5 and are considering for Key Stage 4 as it is far more informative than a Capped 9 score when looking at value added, not just about hitting average but the value that we add to our learners to take them above their potential.</p>
Clarification sought on the Capped 9 score and the links to the scores within the first table. Literacy appeared to be performing on average in Powys with numeracy slightly below.	<p>The table 3.6 showed that each GCSE grade equated to a score.</p> <p>The LA average was 41 for literacy which equated to just over a C Grade. Across the board with numeracy the score equated to just below a C Grade. With the Capped 9 score they take the best 9 grades across qualifying</p>

	qualifications – including English/ Welsh (dependent on language medium), Maths and Science which contributes to the Capped 9 score. It must be noted than the score can alter year on year.
Could 3.13 be incorporated into table 3.10	Unfortunately, it was not possible to include 3.13 into the table 3.10 as the data does not compare directly. Each school has a different family and therefore there is no overall figure for Powys schools.

Actions:

Learning and Skills Committee Members to have a development session on data including the ALPS data for Key Stage 5.

8. THE OFFER FOR KEY STAGE 4

Background

- The purpose of the report was to examine the current provision of qualifications on offer in schools across Powys.
- Aim to highlight strengths and areas where provision was strong, but also sought to identify areas where development was required.
- To support schools in preparing for the changes being made to the 14-16 qualifications in Wales.

Points raised by the Panel:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members.
Question raised as to why Welsh Literature was, and English literature was not noted on the list, both subjects are surely equal, also why were the GCSE's shown for the 4 core subjects but the Welsh equivalent was not. Whatever the language medium they should be treated equally throughout.	Welsh literature is an option, even in the Welsh medium settings. Colleagues in the WESP were also consulted as to the best way to present the information. There is a full list which could be shared. The curriculum offer of subjects including vocational subjects was being presented, the Core subjects are those taught regardless of the medium through which a young person is taught. There could be an argument for Triple Science to be included as not an option as such.
Could the report show just one figure for the number of pupils sitting GCSE's in one year.	Yes, the data is available and could be shared.
Had provision been made for the more able and talented pupils, the expectation until recently was that schools provided for those pupils.	The more able and talented pupils have access to the Seren programme which had recently re-commenced. The Level 2 additional Maths has not

	had a great uptake recently as a bridging qualification between GCSE and A Level.
How can there be equity in subject offer across Powys, in both financial terms and staffing resource.	It was an incredible challenge, particularly in the present financial climate. However, work would continue to be aspirational in what could be offered, ensuring a broad balanced and inclusive range of qualifications.
In terms of the Welsh Medium Provision why were there numbers of pupils who were following courses through Welsh medium or bilingual, as these could be included with the English stream information. Bilingual classes do not experience a Welsh medium education as the teacher may not be able to complete the class or provide necessary resources. The table gave the impression that Welsh Medium education was catered for. It would be beneficial to know exactly what subjects were taught through Welsh Medium or taught Bilingually.	The Service would be more than happy to look at a better way of capturing the data which would satisfy Committee Members requirements.
Delivery was key, throughout the Secondary phase, how many options do learners have at that Key Stage. In addition, would the number of options or choices vary across the Sector and what was the average cohort within a school or class size required to provide that provision within a school.	In terms of viability it would be great to offer all subjects in all mediums to all learners, yet all tied to budget. The data was available, we have a range from schools offering one sort of qualification to the widest of 6 /7 subjects outside of GCSE. The schools with lower offers may link more with a college.

9.	WORK PROGRAMME
-----------	-----------------------

Items to be included in 2024-25:-

PRU Working Group.

School Visit Programme – including Trochi Working Group visits.

Community School comparison Visits plus non community schools.

Condition of School Buildings visits.

Music Plan update.

Data Analysis member session.

School budgets / Funding Formula – ALN /PRU.

New National 14-16 Qualifications (Vocational Certificate Secondary Education)
– Sept 2027.

Estyn reports to be a standard agenda item quarterly (where available).

L. Roberts (Vice Chair)
County Councillor