

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD BY ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY, 29 MARCH 2023**

PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors: G D Jones, A Davies, B Davies, C Kenyon-Wade, D Bebb, D Meredith, G Morgan, L Roberts, L Rijnenberg, P Lewington.

Co-opted Members: K Chedgzoy, M Evitts, S Davies

Cabinet Portfolio Holders in Attendance: P Roberts for a Learning Powys, D A Thomas, for Finance and Corporate Transformation.

Officers: Lynette Lovell, Anwen Orrells, Nicola Williams, Aggie Caesar-Homden, Wyn Richards

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| 1. APOLOGIES |
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Apologies for absence were received from:

Cabinet Portfolio Holders – D Selby for a More Prosperous Powys & J Charlton for a Greener Powys.

Officers: Dr C Turner, G Bevan.

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

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| 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.

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| 4. MINUTES |
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Documents Considered:

- Minutes 18-01-2023.

Issues Discussed:

- None.

Outcomes:

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

5. MID WALES EDUCATION PARTNERS - BUSINESS PLAN

Documents Considered:

- To receive and note the presentation on the Mid Wales Education Partners

Issues Discussed:

- Establish an understanding and full awareness of the MWEP and the Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the accountability of the MWEP for 2023-26
 - Collaborate and co-operate.
 - Ensure accountability.
 - Openness.
 - Statutory requirement and best practice.
 - Act in a timely manner.
- To Review the work and impact of the MWEP collaboration between Powys and Ceredigion Local Authorities for 2022-23
- To Provide an overview of the priorities of the MWEP for 2023-24

Questions:

| Question | Response |
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| <p>ERW supported schools prepare for Inspections, can assurances be given that have of the confidence in the officers under the MWEP, that support would continue to be given to Inspection preparation especially those schools in special measures.</p> <p>Given recent events, it is vital Education Services and MWEP, offer advice and support Headteachers.</p> | <p>Officer Response: Whilst Powys and Ceredigion retain to separate School Education Services our officers work in collaboration in the 5 areas mentioned in the presentation. The support for the curriculum for Wales is very bespoke and impacts the schools heavily, support is provided through Leadership programmes and through the work of RADY, School Improvement Advisors is a separate element of the work provided to schools and governed by the individual Local Authorities. Assurance given that have every confidence in the expertise of the MWEP officers.</p> <p>Officer Response: This is a new model, and we need to have the confidence that it provides the model and impact we require. We recognise that we have 2 Secondary schools in special measures and the support provided to those schools is vital to ensure they move forward. There are 5 Secondary school inspections scheduled through the current cycle up to the summer of</p> |

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| | <p>2024.</p> <p>The MWEP provides the support to schools, through the Curriculum for Wales and the Professional learning programmes.</p> <p>The School Improvement Advisors (SIA's) remain employed by the LA. Within the LA Education Service there is now a dedicated Secondary School Improvement Team to provide support alongside, the ALN, Foundation Phase, Welsh Advisory Teachers, Advisory Teachers Team.</p> <p>To offer further assurance the business plan, with demonstrated impact has been reviewed by WG and Estyn earlier this year reviewed the MWEP and were heartened and complimentary.</p> <p>As we move forward there would be an expectation and invitation for the Committee to offer continued challenge.</p> |
| <p>The concept of the Partnership appears as an extra tier between the Welsh Government and Schools, the £1.8m of grants for this tier, could these funds be better utilised if given directly to schools.</p> | <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>There are 3 tiers within the Education system as noted in 2.2 of the report.</p> <p>Tier 1 The WG.</p> <p>Tier 2 Regional Consortia/ LA's.</p> <p>Tier 3 Schools.</p> <p>The funding allocation (£1.8m) is given directly to Powys, previously this funding was given directly to ERW, to disseminate to LAs to share to schools accordingly.</p> <p>There are criterion to be met with funds paid to the LA, some of which must be passported directly to schools i.e., Education Improvement Grant, Pupil Deprivation Grant, Child Looked After Deprivation Grant.</p> <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>It is important to note that the WG work collaboratively with MWEP officers to design training, which is available free to every school and practitioner nationally. If the middle tier were removed the free training, development pathways and programmes, the bespoke support to individual schools</p> |

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| | <p>would not exist.</p> |
| <p>It is good to have a strong rural voice and influence at national level, with benefits from wider area under MWEP. There has been a successful start to the professional development programme, how will the quality of training impact on schools, and how will the standard of education of the children be monitored once programmes completed.</p> <p>Referring to the impact the 5 priorities, noted in the Business Plan, over the course of the next financial year, what baselines or benchmarks are being used to measure progress.</p> | <p>Officer Response: MWEP have been heavily involved in the Curriculum For Wales for national and bespoke support to schools and the design of the progression steps. Powys and Ceredigion recently attended a National Network for Schools, to share effective practice.</p> <p>The MWEP pilot, which has been endorsed by WG, to nurture, develop early career teachers through Grow Our Own programme.</p> <p>In regard to how do we measure impact and quality of our work, whilst Estyn would continue to inspect our schools on a rolling programme, we are currently working on a WG platform, around the definition of impact, who is responsible and owns the different levels of impact.</p> <p>MWEP are evaluating the immediate impact but also developing a model of reviewing impact following training programmes at 6 & 12months intervals on progress and support for staff, which will be triangulated with reports by the SIA's looking at the impact on a school level.</p> <p>Ultimately there will be onus on the Headteachers and those staff who have undertaken the various training programmes to own the impact on the ground, through the encouragement for practitioners to be allowed the time and space to attend and undertake learning & training and the autonomy to lead in their own schools and using the professional learning grant as effectively and wisely as possible.</p> <p>Paper linked with the School Improvement Framework due Sept 2023.</p> |
| <p>The true benchmark will be when schools provide positive feedback, assurance requested that Schools understand the concept and aspiration of the MWEP at this stage.</p> | <p>Officer Response: The MWEP produce regular newsletters. As of the 1st of May 2023, via the Hwb Platform, Practitioners will be able to</p> |

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| | <p>access the MWEP and all previous resources will be available from both PCC & CCC.</p> <p>The Professional Offer will be open to all Practitioners for information behind the career pathways and links to networks and support.</p> <p>Head Teacher reference group will be established to give feedback.</p> <p>The MWEP will develop an overview of schools to include areas of strengths and development, identify priorities to plan bespoke support programmes for the individual school.</p> |
| <p>In regard to the qualification progression for Head Teachers previously there was a bottleneck, is there more availability through MWEP than ERW.</p> | <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>This is a National programme, trying to identify leaders early.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers to undertake the middle leadership training programme. • Teachers aiming for Assistant and Deputy Headteacher there is a Senior Leadership programme. • With an Aspiring Head Teacher programme, which must be completed prior to applying for the NPQH. • Once passed the NPQH the expectation is that candidates would be ready and encouraged to undertake Head Teacher roles within Wales. <p>Any bottleneck should have ceased, with leaders identified and encouraged through each step of the various programmes available.</p> |
| <p>ERW was a larger consortium, Powys used to receive more than had invested due to ERW's greater "buying power" would MWEP have equity of influence.</p> | <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>Admittedly we no longer have that breadth of partners, however by working with Ceredigion we are able to identify and share expertise. In addition, we continue to have support from Partneriaeth for some of the Leadership pathways and from other regions across Wales.</p> <p>Officer Response:</p> |

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| | <p>Economies of scale, as part of ERW, was a benefit to Powys, however very keen when setting up MWEP to not become too insular, maintain relationships, working with and across the other Consortia, and retaining close consultation on the leadership programmes with the Partneriaeth.</p> |
| <p>Assurance sought that the resource is deemed adequate to meet delivery and is the MWEP operational model similar to the other Consortia or is there a uniqueness to MWEP.</p> | <p>Officer Response: Powys has used part the funding effectively to employ and support our schools with Practitioners. Across the Primary and Secondary sectors, we support and fund schools for strong individuals (Lead Practitioners) to work with the LA one day per week and to work with other schools within the networks. We meet to evaluate the work undertaken not only within their own schools but on a cluster level, sharing effective practice, adding capacity to the officers.</p> <p>CES, GWE and EAS own and run the School Improvement Model, previously Challenge Advisors owned by the Region. MWEP and Partneriaeth are completely independent, working on the bespoke support and the 5 areas mentioned earlier, with the LA employing SIA's directly.</p> |
| | <p>Cabinet Member Comment: When ERW disbanded PCC was left without representation at a national level. The formation of the Partnership has brought us to a position where we have seats at National Groups, as closer to the decision-making process, we have a stronger influence on the direction of the national initiatives.</p> |
| <p>Requested an explanation of the figures in table 2.12.</p> | <p>Officer Response: Across both LA's to support the deprivation agenda we have purchased for schools RADY – the support for disadvantaged children. The table shows the 5 different tiers of support, from the highest level where officers physically work in schools on improving and reviewing strategies,</p> |

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| | <p>through to keeping in touch, down to remote coaching and support RADY which is all resources schools have been engaging with.</p> <p>RADY's main concept is to uplift pupil target levels, identified as having a level of deprivation. This applies a higher level of challenge and expectation regardless of home or community background which historically may have been capped.</p> <p>Half of Powys schools engaged at some level with RADY last year, aim is for all schools to engage, with hopefully a further Conference in the summer on the RADY approach with Powys and Ceredigion schools, to continue the proven positive impact on deprived learners.</p> |
| <p>As a means of benchmarking Scrutiny Committee will review Table 2.12 in future meetings with the expectation that it will be more widely populated.</p> | <p>Officer Response: That will form part of MWEF's priorities for the next financial year.</p> |
| <p>How long is the funding in place for.</p> | <p>Officer Response: Funding level terms, WG are committed to the regions as far as understand there may be tweaks to the funding i.e., next year WG are hoping to place the PLG (Professional Learning Grant) straight to LA's. There is a continued commitment by WG to the Middle Tier (MWEF / Consortia)</p> |
| <p>Teachers leaving Powys and Ceredigion, does the information provided also include those that are leaving the profession altogether.</p> | <p>Officer Response: The number of teachers leaving the profession after 2 -5 years due to the pressures, gave the impetus to propose to WG, the early career teacher programme. The intention of the proposal was to nurture, develop and retain in the profession.</p> |
| <p>The pathways for training for Middle & Senior Leaders and Aspiring Headteachers is fantastic, it is stated training is free of charge to all schools, how is this prioritised are candidates identified through the Governing Bodies and or the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and are places</p> | <p>Officer Response: It is the responsibility of the Leader / Head Teacher Working with the SIA to identify the middle leaders that would benefit from courses, in addition, allow their staff the time and space to engage in the programmes.</p> |

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| <p>sufficient to cover all schools within Powys and Ceredigion.</p> | <p>Similarly for the Senior Teacher programme, identifying those members of staff who are working with the extended leadership team and finally the assistant head and deputy head teachers, encouraged when they are ready to be put forward for the Aspiring Head Teacher programme.</p> <p>Capacity is available without limit, only dependent on Head Teachers and SIA's putting those candidates forward.</p> <p>Officer Response: In relation to the free training, a positive from COVID is the plethora of professional learning that is available on-line via MWEP from TA's to teachers etc. and can be delivered in own time.</p> |
| <p>RADY is showing benefits, but how is this accessed and by what age groups. The impact on early years will have to be monitored as should provide insight for future practice.</p> | <p>Officer Response: RADY is for all age groups across all school sectors. MWEP are involved in a trial at early years provision, as proven to be most effective in later years if can impact a child as early as possible.</p> |
| <p>The MWEP presentation has given clarity to the operating model, and its aims, would this presentation be offered to schools Governing Bodies, Chairs and Headteachers.</p> | <p>Officer Response: A request has been made for a presentation slot at a future Governing Body, Chair and Headteacher briefing sessions prior to end of the summer term.</p> |
| <p>In relation to the recent white paper submitted in Cardiff, would this give the right to pupils in Powys or any other region in Wales the right to a Welsh medium education.</p> | <p>Officer Response: In the consultation of the white paper, we now have a 10year WESP, previously Local Authorities have had to put forward their own strategic paper forward then an implementation plan, under the new consultation WG will own the strategic plan overview with Local Authorities owning the implementation.</p> <p>The expectation under the white paper is that all learners regardless of school will be leaving bilingual, it is vital that every Local Authority engages with and fully supports all learners understand the options available for a fully bilingual</p> |

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| | <p>education.</p> <p>As Qualification Wales revise and change all qualifications in line with the Curriculum for Wales there will not be a second language Welsh from 2026, there will only be one exam yn Gymraeg, as the expectation as noted above is that learners, albeit at different levels, will be bilingual.</p> |
| <p>Assurance sought that the provision of training programmes and support to be provided by MWEP can be accessed through the medium of Welsh.</p> | <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>A real benefit of the MWEP would be that all professional learning is available bi-lingually. In addition, bespoke bilingual support is available, currently utilising Officers from Ceredigion in Bro Hyddgen to give the Welsh Medium level support.</p> |
| <p>The MOU is dated 2023 yet has be operating for a year, can this be explained.</p> | <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>The first MOU was just for the first year 2022-23, it was felt it beneficial for the MOU from April 2023 to run for a 3yr period.</p> |
| <p>The Welsh language objective stated in the white paper are not reflected in the MWEP.</p> | <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>The Local Authority hold the responsibility for the provision for the Welsh Language within schools not the MEWP, however, MWEP assist this through the provision of bilingual support.</p> |
| <p>Joint scrutiny mentioned in the report Committee felt would be useful and interesting to progress.</p> | <p>Officer Response:</p> <p>Presentation will be shared with Ceredigion CC and will note their response to possible Joint Scrutiny in future.</p> |

Outcomes:

Noted, however the Committee expressed concern on the following and would like the opportunity to review the MWEP in the future:

- The difference between ERW and MWEP with the previous Challenge Advisor role now under the direction of the Local Authority.
- How benchmarking would be measured.
- With regard to the equity of funding between the Powys and Ceredigion

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| 6. | REGIONAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP |
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Documents Considered:

- To receive and note the report of the Regional Skills Partnership.

Questions:

| Question | Response |
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| <p>Are Lightcast a Consultancy Organisation, if so, what were the funding arrangements, also would there have been an option to undertake this work internally.</p> | <p>Officer response The RSP have tried unsuccessfully for a year to employ a data analyst and researcher. Followed governance via the Grow Mid Wales Board (GMWB) for permission to outsource to Lightcast, who are Technical advisors, as did not have the capacity to support within the team, nor did PCC or CCC. The RSP are commissioned by WG and part of the role of the RSP is to provide labour market intelligence, data and research which is within the funding envelop given by WG.</p> |
| <p>Has the RSP commenced working in partnership with schools to inform curriculum development.</p> | <p>Officer response The RSP has set up a working group with the Heads of Education Services in Powys and Ceredigion, meeting regularly to share information for the Employment and Skills Action plans, ensuring complementary work is undertaken. The Schools Service Officers have the intelligence from within schools to assist the RSP work. The RSP do not have an operational remit with Schools and education but do have a responsibility to ensure that WG policy is filtered through, enabled, and supported. The RSP work with the 14+ team and attend various other forums.</p> <p>Officer response: The Senior Management in the Education Service are instrumental in developing the plan and reviewing the continuum for our learners with the new Curriculum for Wales and the post 16 offer.</p> |

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| <p>Information shared through the presentation is that businesses are advising the RSP of various skills gaps, can Scrutiny be advised how success in this area is measured.</p> | <p>Officer response</p> <p>Success is recorded on the Schedule 2. The RSP has to report to WG on progress 3 times per annum, in addition there is the Governance Structure under the GMWB and reporting into the Partnership Board.</p> <p>Success is about bridging those gaps, identifying priorities for regional investment, feeding into the regional teams within the GMWB portfolio, using labour market intelligence and data, sharing with partners to transfer information into applications when reviewing and applying for funding i.e., UK Shared Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>The RSP's are in discussion with businesses on recruitment, retention, and training to present evidenced data to WG Officers, leading on apprenticeships and the personal learning accounts offer, with the aspiration to change the delivery and influence the training offer to retain the workforce within Powys.</p> <p>The RSP is a high-level Strategic Board to facilitate, not an operational delivery mechanism. Schedule 2 is high level strategic outputs as opposed to KPI delivery.</p> <p>The measure would be shown in the activities progress, delivery or influence on the Employment and Skills Plan.</p> |
| <p>Aware that the RSP has a higher-level of scrutiny, could this Committee be informed as to what has been identified recently.</p> | <p>Officer response</p> <p>The RSP has not presented to the Joint Overview Scrutiny Committee for a while, awaiting notification of the forward work programme and items required for delivery. This Committee will be informed in due course.</p> |
| <p>What is the makeup of the Joint Overview Scrutiny Committee, concern held that this Committee has not yet met.</p> | <p>Officer response</p> <p>There has been a change on the Scrutiny membership since the new Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) was established. There is a sub-Joint Overview Scrutiny Committee which will scrutinise the CJC, of which the</p> |

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| | GMWB is part. The membership has been agreed, however has not met yet as the CJC has yet to be fully operational, concerns raised here will be taken back to the CJC. |
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Outcomes:

Noted

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| 7. | 2 MEMBERS TO BE APPOINTED TO THE JOINT WORKING GROUP ON LEISURE |
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Issues Discussed:

- The Economies, Resident and Communities Scrutiny Committee (ERC) is establishing a Leisure Working Group which includes 4 Members of the ERC. The ERC have primary responsibility for scrutinising Leisure Services and is inviting nominations of 2 Representatives each from the Learning and Skills and Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committees to join the working group.
- Nominations received from Cllrs RG Thomas and GD Jones, seconded by Cllrs A Davies and D Bebb.

Outcomes:

RESOLVED that County Councillors RG Thomas and GD Jones be appointed to the Joint Working Group on Leisure.

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| 8. | SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS |
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Documents Considered:

Responses from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Committee Recommendations of the 18th of January 2023 in relation to the School Catchment Area Review.

Issues Discussed:

Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their recommendations and the detailed discussions held during the Scrutiny Committee meeting of the 18th of January and the input in view of the Llangynidr / Llangors area for the community of Bwlch which was instrumental in the Officers and Cabinet Member reviewing and deciding upon a different conclusion.

Questions:

| Questions | Response |
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| Questions still exist due to the Catchment, Transport and Admission policies not being aligned. Whilst appreciating that there are issues around catchment and the desire to keep this separate from nearest school, Scrutiny requested flexibility be shown to | Cabinet Member: Currently waiting for a revised learner transport measure from the WG Minister, as any changes to the current policy would be subject to statutory consultation, which would have to be |

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| <p>give parents an element of choice where it does not increase council costs, however there is no sign that this would be incorporated, which continues to create confusion.</p> | <p>repeated if the Minister later changed the measures. Officers continue to review the terms of the legislation that has prevented the offer of a Spare Places Scheme, with the hope there may be something coming forward. Historically there has been a disconnect between the Admissions and Home to School Transport policies, which the previous administration addressed to an extent, but which continues to raise anomalies, therefore will be kept under review.</p> |
| <p>Seeking clarification on whether Bwlch learners can attend Llangors, as previously, and continue to Gwernyfed.</p> | <p>Cabinet Member: The change made, as a result of the last Scrutiny meeting and further discussion with Officers, was that the boundary be moved for the catchment of Llangors down to the river, which replicates the situation in Crickhowell, where Llangattock is one side and Crickhowell the other. In this case Llangors will be the catchment school for the north side of the River Usk and Llangynidr the catchment school for south of the river. This does not override parental choice, but where a school is oversubscribed, it defines where the catchment would be. Pupils from Bwlch would fall under the catchment of Llangors. If opt to go to Gwernyfed Secondary School, home to school transport will be provided. If opt to attend Crickhowell High School, home to school transport will again be provided as the nearest school.</p> |
| <p>With reference to how the medium of Welsh is being developed in schools, of those learners leaving feeder schools in Yr6, how many of were continuing learning through the medium of Welsh in Yr9, how many were completing their education through medium of Welsh in Years 12&13.</p> | <p>Officer response This point was raised during a Member Development Transformation session and will be reviewed, with information including retention rates, brought to Scrutiny as we move forward.</p> |

Outcomes:

- Noted

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| 9. | WORK PROGRAMME |
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Questions:

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| <p>When will the Terms of Reference be available to Scrutiny for the process required by schools to apply to the £500k monies made available by Cabinet for energy saving.</p> | <p>Officer response Property Services and Energy Efficiency officers are collating information across the Schools estates on energy consumption, buildings. On completion, this information will be brought to Scrutiny and other relevant fora for decisions on the application criteria.</p> |
| <p>Schools will be setting and signing off budgets for the forthcoming year currently, this would impact on that process and is disappointing that the information has not yet been made available.</p> | <p>Officer response Funding packs sent to school early March, finance surgeries take place throughout March and April. March 31st is the deadline for schools to submit updated draft budgets to their finance officer. With the deadline for submission of the Governing Body approved budget plans for 2023-24 and beyond being May 1st. Deadline dates are set out in the scheme for financing schools. In May and June, the Director of Education and Head of Finance will review all the budget plans and respond accordingly, bringing a report to Scrutiny in July, setting out the outturn position.</p> <p>Will take back to Property Services point raised on timeliness of information being made available.</p> <p>Cabinet Member: The work being undertaken by Property and Energy Efficiency Officers will involve more than the 500k for energy saving as have been successful in a bid for grant funding of £2m from WG.</p> |
| <p>We were not aware of this £2m grant funding at budget time.</p> | <p>Cabinet Member: No.</p> |
| <p>Is this £2m grant to be used for energy savings as with the £500k or for other uses within schools.</p> | <p>Cabinet Member It is £2m specifically for energy savings measures, Property Services are looking at the schools in most need, which is why there is so much work involved, and we await outcomes and</p> |

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| | proposals to establish where the funds will be allocated. |
| The additional £2M grant funding is available within which financial year. | Cabinet Member: Grant funding has been awarded for the financial year 2023 -2024. |
| Would it be possible to amend the work programme to incorporate Individual Schools budgets sooner. | Officer response Budgets will be timetabled for Scrutiny as soon as finalised June / July time. |
| Can Scrutiny be advised if there are any ALN legal actions directed towards PCC, could this be incorporated into the ALN session in June. | Officer response Yes, this can be incorporated into the session in June, Scrutiny will be aware that there is new ALN reform and Officers will provide a comprehensive report on the matter. |

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)