

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

24 JULY 2013

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Council of the proposals for the development for a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide strategic overview and accountability for the Central South Consortium and to seek Council's approval for two Members from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to sit on this Joint Committee.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 None.

3. Background

- 3.1 Under Section 58 of Part 6 of the Local Government Wales Measure 2011 there is provision to enable two or more Local Authorities to form joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The aim of section 58 is to strengthen scrutiny arrangements through the promotion of collaboration and the sharing of best practice. The Statutory Guidance issued under Section 58 of the measure states that:

'Enabling local authorities to establish JOSCs is intended to make it easier to scrutinise the delivery of providers whose services cover more than one county, or to examine issues which cut across geographical boundaries. The provision for joint scrutiny expands the options currently available to councils in undertaking wider public service scrutiny, and provides for a more flexible way of working to secure improved outcomes.

In addition, where joint scrutiny exercises have been undertaken they have facilitated opportunities to share learning and scrutiny capacity across local authorities. The harnessing of 'collective intelligence' through JOSCs is intended to lead to more effective forms of governance, and higher standards of democratic accountability.'

- 3.2 At its meeting on 8 April 2013, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report updating them on the work of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service since its establishment in September 2012. The Interim Regional Director, Central South Consortium provided a report detailing the key components of the Central South Joint Education Services as well as progress achieved and future priorities.

- 3.3 At this meeting the Committee were also advised by the Scrutiny Officer that work was being undertaken, following a request from Members, to take forward the proposals for a Joint Scrutiny Committee with the other four Local Authorities involved in the Consortium; Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and The Vale of Glamorgan; and to formulate methods of accountability for the Joint Education Consortium.
- 3.4 A series of meetings have been held amongst the Scrutiny Officers from the five participating Councils which have been facilitated by a representative of CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny) to discuss the proposed establishment of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Education Committee (JOSEC). As a result of these meetings, officers have developed a proposed way forward, which is set out in this report.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 The purpose of the JOSEC will be to provide strategic oversight and accountability to the Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee (which comprises two Executive Members from each of the five authorities) in ensuring the delivery of effective school improvement services resulting in improved educational outcomes.
- 4.2 The JOSEC will act as a `critical friend` to the Central South Consortium making sure that it is appropriately challenged in its responsibility to ensure that the Joint Education Service and the Learning and Innovation Network for Schools (LINKS) service raise education standards in the schools of the five local authorities.
- 4.3 It is important that there is clarity regarding the role of the JOSEC in relation to individual council education scrutiny committees as the establishment of the JOSEC does not seek to replicate or duplicate the role of local authority scrutiny committees. Instead it seeks to focus primarily on holding the Consortium to account for the effective delivery of school improvement services. It will not have the responsibility of scrutinising the performance of individual local education authorities within the Consortium area or the performance of individual schools.
- 4.4 However, in undertaking all or some of the functions, the JOSEC will undoubtedly consider local performance data as a means to make wider inferences about the effectiveness of Central South Consortium education services and the performance of the Joint Education Committee in ensuring the achievement of improved educational outcomes.
- 4.5 Consequently, it will be necessary for the JOSEC and participating councils to ensure they engage in two way communication with a view to developing forward work programmes that are complementary, flexible and make best use of the local intelligence that can be provided as part of elected member's community leadership roles.
- 4.6 Attached at Appendix A are the outline Terms of Reference for the JOSEC, which have been drawn up and developed through meetings with Scrutiny Officers from the five participating Councils, facilitated by a representative of CfPS. These are currently being considered by each of the five participating Local Authorities for approval.

- 4.7 It is proposed that the composition of the JOSEC will mirror the Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee in that each of the five authorities will nominate two (non-executive) Member representatives from their Overview and Scrutiny Committee that has Education as part of its remit. Following discussions with the other four local authorities, it has been proposed that the two Members nominated include the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee, and one other Member. The Guidance for the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 states that:

‘Councils will need to make attempts to ensure that member representation on JOSECs reflects the political balance represented in the relevant scrutiny committee so far as possible.’

In light of this, it is proposed that the Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, (who is a Member of the Independent Annibynwyr Group), be nominated, in addition to one representative from the Labour Group.

- 4.8 It is also recommended that the JOSEC, when formally established, appoints a chairperson from amongst its membership with a view to appointing a vice chairperson from a different local authority. These positions could be alternated on an annual basis or some other frequency as a developmental opportunity for elected members..
- 4.9 In March 2013, the Independent Remuneration Panel issued draft supplementary guidance which stated that any Chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be a paid position. The final report is still to be published, however, the draft report proposes that Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs will be paid a senior salary by their host council, but this will be additional to the maximum number of senior salaries a local authority can pay.
- 4.10 It has been suggested that the JOSEC meet four times a year as a minimum.
- 4.11 The JOSEC is initially being set up as a pilot project and is intended to be evaluated by the participating local authorities after a period of 24 months. Currently, there exists no dedicated resource allocated to supporting formal collaborative scrutiny processes within the five participating councils. Whilst CfPS will be able to support the establishment of any joint education scrutiny arrangements and provide initial policy advice and research capacity to the Joint Committee’s early meetings, its capacity to do so on a regular basis is limited by the conditions of its funding arrangements with WG.
- 4.12 The establishment of a formal JOSEC for the regional consortium represents the first project of this kind in Wales and it is therefore proposed that potential joint funding between the five authorities be sought under the Welsh Government’s Scrutiny Development Fund. The bid would cover a post of Joint Education Scrutiny Co-ordinator (JESC) and the Joint Scrutiny Committee costs for two years. This post will provide the JOSEC with dedicated analytical and project management support in helping ensure the delivery of effective school improvement services significantly improves educational outcomes. It will also be the role of the post holder to ensure that the learning and experiences of formal joint scrutiny inform the development of other collaborative accountability arrangements.

- 4.13 Initial discussions with Welsh Government have indicated that they would be receptive to funding a potential bid of this nature.
- 4.14 It has been proposed that Bridgend be the host authority for the JOSEC and the associated costs are being incorporated into the SDF bid.
- 4.15 At its meeting on 5 July 2013, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the draft Terms of Reference of the JOSEC and agreed to nominate Cllr Peter Foley and Cllr Gareth Phillips as the two Members to sit on the Joint Scrutiny Committee representing Bridgend.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 None

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no Equalities Impacts relating to this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The proposals outlined in the report are dependent on grant funding being received from Welsh Government. Should the funding not be received, the project would be unlikely to go ahead, due to the additional costs and the complications associated with sharing those costs across the local authorities that are part of the consortium.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Council is asked to note the report and approve the appointments of the following Members from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to sit on the JOSEC as representatives from Bridgend:

- (i) Cllr Peter Foley
- (ii) Cllr Gareth Phillips

Andrew Jolley

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Background documents

None