

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor EP Foley – Chairperson

PA Davies	DK Edwards	N Farr	CA Green
PN John	M Jones	G Phillips	RL Thomas
C Westwood	DBF White	KJ Watts	

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Invitees:

Nicola Echanis	Head of Education & Family Support
Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Councillor Huw David	Leader
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Natalie Silcox	Group Manager Childrens Regulated Services
Sarah Keefe	Senior Development Worker - Central Hub
David Wright	Family Support Services Manager
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

231. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Officer:-

D McMillan

232. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor N Farr, personal interest in agenda item 3., in that she was a Social Worker in Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

W Bond, personal interest in agenda item 3., as a Member of Heronsbridge School governing body

233. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing presented a report, that informed the Committee of the work that has been undertaken as part of the Children with Disabilities Transformation programme, and to introduce the proposals and new models

in moving forward for specialist 52-week provision for children and young people with complex needs, and overnight short breaks services for children with disabilities.

She confirmed that the report demonstrated that good progress was continuing to be made on the back of the initial work previously carried out, as alluded to in paragraphs 3. of the report, containing background information relating to the transformation programme.

She explained that the aim for BCBC, was for children and young people to remain within their local community with friends/family, for reasons of stability and continuity in their lives , and to comply with the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the provisions of which came into force in April 2016.

There was a need to provide specialist 52 week provision available In-County for children and young people with complex needs, with the only option currently being an Out of County placement, which often proved very expensive and meant that young people were moving from their local area and their family.

An initial consultation exercise had been carried out with services users and key stakeholders etc, which confirmed that this proposal was supported, and particularly by families of children who already had been placed Out of County.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that the potential models considered for such specialist 52 week provision for children and young people with complex needs included:

- Commissioning an independent In-County provider to deliver this provision, though following market testing and detailed discussions, it had been concluded there were limited opportunities to do this at this time;
- Refurbish and utilise buildings at Heronsbridge School, in order to provide the 52 week provision, with staff there delivering the extra service. This option was not pursued due to considerable registration and staffing implications.;
- Refurbish and utilise buildings at the school in order to secure the 52 week provision (In-County), with further BCBC staff delivering and staffing the service. This was the Option that was supported and endorsed by the project team who developed the Options appraisal.

She proceeded by advising that during the last 10 years, there had been an average of 3 Out of County placements every year, at a cost of £4 – 5k a week to the Authority.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that in terms of the preferred option, a Programme Board had been established to manage the option and prepare a Business Case going forward, for which a capital bid had been approved by Council earlier this year.

She then referred to the Short Breaks (respite) service for Children with Disabilities, presently being provided through a combination of services, that included Bakers Way, Family Link (disabled respite foster carer service) and Direct Payments.

The establishment at Bakers Way, provided an overnight short break service through the provision of a 5 bedded home providing regular, planned short break overnight stays for disabled children and young people aged 0 – 18 years, together with an Outreach service.

A review of this service had been undertaken however, and this revealed that although the service provided at this location was generally effective, there were changes that if introduced, could improve provision at this facility.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, confirmed that following engagement between the relevant staff and stakeholders, an Options Appraisal was developed for short breaks for children with disabilities in moving forward. The options considered were:

1. Remodelling overnight short breaks (Baker's Way)
2. Commission the overnight service from an independent provider
3. Stop providing the overnight service from Baker's Way

A Consultation exercise was undertaken and following feedback from this, Officers developed the 'Remodelling the overnight short breaks service' option, (ie Option 1 above), and further consultation was scheduled to take place on this during July/August 2016, so that views could be invited on this new proposal.

She then advised Members of the longer term plan for short breaks services, and these were proposed in paragraph 4.24 of the report.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, concluded her submission by advising that paragraph 7.1 of the report outlined the savings that would be realised through the development of a specialist 52 week provision for children and young people with complex needs, avoiding the need for Out of County placements, whilst paragraph 7.2 of the report confirmed the savings that could be achieved through remodelling the overnight short break service at Baker's Way.

The Chairperson then opened up the meeting for questions.

A Member noted that one of the main drivers behind providing an In-house facility for children and young people with complex needs, was to ensure that the best interests of service users were met, as well as to save costs under the MTFs. He noted that mapping and profiling recently undertaken, also showed that there were a number of children/young people currently receiving other forms of care, whose needs and complexities were increasing to such a degree, that 52 week specialist provision may be required for them in the near future. Hence the change from the current 38 week provision. Considering the above against paragraph 7 of the report and the potential savings that could derive from the proposed change, he asked for clarification that such savings were being based upon 3 Out of County placements year on year recurring, with this estimated amount being provided for instead In-house at Heronsbridge school (as opposed to Out of County), at a reduced cost. He asked also if dialogue had taken place with current providers Out of County on the proposed changes and neighbouring local authorities, on models that may meet future needs of the service not just for young people in the County Borough, but those within other neighbouring authorities that could use the new service, and in doing so bring in income for BCBC per se, or through a shared service. To accommodate some of the above, he also asked if there was scope to increase the number of 3 bed units, should in future the demand arise to do so.

The Group Manager, Children's Regulated Services, explained that based on the current provision a 3 bedroom facility was being fully utilised based on the present 38 week provision. One of the reasons to extend the provision to 52 weeks, was to accommodate young people for longer periods as they became older, for example aged 15,16 and 17. The reasoning behind this, was that their parents whilst being able to cope with challenging behaviour from their children when they were younger, often struggled to do so as their child started to enter into adulthood, as they were then larger individuals and

in extreme cases could become unmanageable. A 52 week provision would also maintain a better occupancy rate than the current 38 week provision.

A Member added however, that provision for 3 placements, would only cater for what presently existed, rather for any increase in this figure.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, reiterated that the current 3 bed provision at Heronsbridge School was based on patterns that had applied consistently over the last 10 or so years, and it was estimated that, this was therefore not anticipated to significantly increase. This provision was also supplemented by a Family Link service that could support young people with complex needs and/or challenging behaviour. The situation would be monitored as developments progress, and if necessary, some modifications could be made to the proposals if or when this was required in the future.

A Member referring to paragraph 4.7 of the report, enquired if there was evidence to suggest that as part of the consultation process, efforts had been made to look at the existing service facility being provided by Out of County providers (as there was no interest In-County), or the service being provided jointly with a neighbouring authority, which would be part of a cost sharing exercise, to go toward obtaining the necessary savings required.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, confirmed that a huge piece of scoping work had been carried out in respect of options such as those referred to by the Member, including with a company called Western House who provided care support, but not to the extent for young people that required this on a specialist basis. However, this work had not proved to be successful for a number of reasons, and this was why Officers had pursued the model that had been recommended in the report.

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services, confirmed that there was very little in the way of choice of providers that would be suitable to support young people with the needs subject of those presently being supported. There had been one in Cardiff but this had now closed, and a further such facility in Brecon which had expanded to cater for an increased number of cases. She had made other enquiries in order to ascertain if an establishment to support young people with complex needs was going to be introduced In-County within the immediate or short term future, but she was not aware of any on the horizon, so therefore this meant that options were not available, and that is why it had been agreed to extend the current provision at Heronsbridge School. There would be scope to commission placements to neighbouring authorities however, such as the Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf, should places become available.

A Member noted the proposal to provide a 52 week specialist provision of support care at Heronsbridge School, as opposed to a 38 week care package, and she asked are there minimum staffing levels within which to cover this increased level of care. She also asked if the staff would be permanent, temporary or agency, and if the staffing compliment existed or was yet to be recruited.

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services confirmed that the 52 week care provision was something that was entirely new, and therefore, some new staff were likely to be introduced through the probable advertisement of posts. There was scope however, for existing staff at Heronsbridge to apply for any new jobs, should they so wish, as well as extending their shift patterns to cover the extra hours of provision. In terms of the total number of staff required to support the service she confirmed that as of yet this was not known.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing added that the Commissioning Team had been carrying out a scoping exercise regarding possible staffing proposals.

She reiterated that there was a possibility also as well as recruiting new staff, to call upon existing staff who worked in Adult Social Care and other Adult Respite Units to assist the support of service users in Heronsbridge School. The scoping exercise included financial profiling of services, and it had been established that increased savings could be made if extra resources for Heronsbridge were found in-house rather than externally or through extra recruitment of staff. As had also been discussed previously, supporting individuals in-house rather than them going Out of County, would also achieve considerable savings in itself.

The Group Manager Children's Regulated Services further added, that there were national minimum standards that had to be statutorily complied with when supporting individuals in Care Homes in terms of staffing numbers, and therefore, these had to be in place regardless of any staffing arrangements being proposed through any recruitment exercise.

The Chairperson asked the Invitees when the Project at Heronsbridge School was due to go live.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that that the new provision would hopefully be up and running by the next financial year.

A Member referred to paragraph 3.1 of the report, where reference was made to it being identified that local delivery, instead of Out of County placement for delivery of Autistic Spectrum Disorder provision, was identified as a potential source of savings. He understood that savings had to be made within different Directorates under the terms of the MTFs, but hoped Officers were making plans to realise these, without any compromise to the safety and wellbeing of young people that relied on long-term and sometimes specialist support.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that the wording of the above paragraph of the report did possibly give rise for Members to think that the changes proposed both at Bakers Way and Heronsbridge were purely due to a cost cutting exercise. However, she gave an assurance to Committee that this was far from the case. It was incumbent upon her to achieve the savings that the Council had required her to make under the MTFs, but these savings would be achieved through methods that would not in any way compromise young people who required specialised care.

There was considerable work in progress to achieve the above, and not implement changes proposed to Bakers Way and Heronsbridge School, but also to look at the way in which other types of care packages are provided. One of these proposals, was to see if there was any merit in combining some respite services for adults and children together/young people entering adulthood, and possibly looking to engaging support for this outside of the Authority, ie through commissioning an external provider and firstly establishing if this was financially viable. These were longer term options with regard to care packages the Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing added, and that more work would be carried out on this in the autumn, especially in respect of different methods of care support for adults.

A Member, whilst noting that one of the reasons proposed for bringing young people out of an Out of County placement, was due to the fact that they could be closer to their family and friends which would benefit all parties, in that the young person was nearer to home. However, he felt that Invitees should note that some individuals may wish to remain Out of County due to them being settled in an environment which was familiar to them and one which they were happy in.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that all Out of County placements would be assessed, in order to ascertain issues such as that which the Member referred to, and the extent of their individual needs, taking into account their state of health. She added that continuity in terms of support was very important in young (and older) people with autism for example. Care requirements were also examined to establish if any changes were required, during transition from children to adults.

A Member referred to page 6 of the report and paragraph 4.20, which advised that a public consultation had been undertaken in respect of the changes to Bakers Way Care Centre, ie to invite views on the proposal to review short breaks services at this establishment, to which 71 responses had been received. He asked what the percentage was of these responses compared to the number of people who accessed the services. Also, with reference to the type of questions that were asked as part of the consultation exercise, for example those listed on page 21 of the report's Appendix, he felt that some of these questions were very personal in their nature and he wondered whether this was both suitable and relevant. He hoped that any information completed as part of the consultation remained confidential, and that this could not be accessed by departments other than Social Services.

The Cabinet Member Children's Social Services and Equalities advised that this information was retained as confidential information, and that people who completed the form did not have to fill in those sections of this that they weren't comfortable completing, for example, the disclosure of very personal information. The form was completed also for Equalities monitoring purposes she added, and information submitted by persons who completed the form was also used to establish or amend certain Council policies. It was not mandatory that the form be completed at all she further added, it was down to the individual if they wished to complete this. She proceeded by advising that the first consultation undertaken, was carried out in order to shape what changes were required along the lines outlined in the report and supporting document, and what clientele would be affected by these changes. She would ascertain from Officers what the 71 responses equated to, in percentage terms when compared with the number of people who received services, and provide this figure to the Member outside of the meeting. A further consultation was also due to be initiated and the Council's Marketing Engagement team had been involved in these consultation exercises, the results of which when fully known, would be made available with certain information also being placed on the Council's web site.

The Member felt that a considerable response was required from service users, in order that their views and observations could be considered fully, with regard to any future re-shaping of services along the lines detailed in the report.

The Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing, confirmed that there had been both considerable and meaningful consultation and engagement with families that would be affected by changes in the way services would be provided in the future at Heronsbridge School and Bakers Way, and this would be continued and widened as further proposals were made and subsequently consulted upon.

This concluded debate on the above item, and therefore, the Chairperson thanked the Invitees for attending and responding to questions on this item.

Children with Disabilities Transformation Programme

Specialist 52 week provision

1. The Committee asked for further information on the staffing numbers required for the additional weeks under the new 52 week provision proposed for children with disabilities, as well as detail of where these staff will be coming from and how they will be funded?
2. The Committee concluded that there was insufficient evidence of dialogue with the current providers out of county as well as other Local Authorities on models that would meet current and future needs. Members questioned whether three places would be sufficient given that there could be opportunities for income generation from other LAs utilising more spaces.

The Committee also questioned how savings could be identified despite not knowing the cost of the future provision. Members asked for clarification and evidence of where the projected savings were coming from and what information has been sourced from current providers and other LAs.

Short Breaks (respite) Services

3. The Committee expressed concern over the presentation of the consultation data in that it was reported that there were 71 responses but no detail as to how many people were consulted in total. The Committee asked for further detail of the number of participants, who they were and how they were consulted.
4. Members queried the changes to staffing in Bakers Way in that the plan was to look to existing staff to extend their shifts. Members questioned how agreeable staff had been to this in the consultation and expressed concern over whether agency staff could have to be utilised to meet the minimum requirements under the legislation. The Committee asked for clarification including the associated costings.

Further comments

5. The Committee commented on the need for caution when asking for generic personal information in consultation exercises to ensure that potential consultees are not deterred from participating. The Committee proposed that enhanced confirmation be incorporated within any consultation document that the information is strictly confidential.

234. PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

The Chairperson welcomed the Invitees to the meeting in order to discuss the above Strategy (attached at Appendix 1 to the report), and Members proceeded straight into a question and answering session.

A Member referred to page 24 of the report and paragraph 4.3, where it made reference to the Bridgend Youth Council being supported by staff within the Integrated Working and Family Support Team, which will be recognised as the platform through which all children and young people throughout the County Borough will be encouraged to influence positive changes within services and decisions which will affect them. It also stated, that the Youth Council will be the primary platform through which children and young people may engage in the democratic and decision making processes that affect them. He asked Invitees how this intended to be both delivered and sustained, given the budget cuts that the Youth Council had faced in recent years under the Council's MTFs. He added that page 29 of the Strategy, confirmed that participation was the active involvement of children and young people in making decisions about the services that

affect them or which they use, including involvement in decision making processes, and giving feedback on how their contribution has made a difference. He questioned in practical terms if this was tokenistic or realistic. The Member also referred to page 35 of the Strategy where it quoted that encouragement should be given to ensure young people have an involvement and input within the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. He also noted from page 37 of the Strategy, that it made reference to there being good opportunities for young people to have their say in the decisions that affect them. He asked what evidence there was of this, ie possibly through case studies or the like.

Finally, he referred to page 32 of the Strategy, and that the level of involvement of children and young people will increase as the Participation Strategy is developed. He referred to the 'Ladder of Participation' produced by UNICEF, which measured the involvement of children and young people. He asked Invitees what rung of the ladder young people in the County Borough were currently on.

The Head of Education and Early Help, advised that statutory guidance had been issued by Welsh Government to local authorities, to promote and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions that may affect them.

Within the necessary guidance, there was an emphasis on the role of the young person in implementing the 7 wellbeing goals through inclusion in the decision making process. There were also some further recommendations for local authorities to adhere to, and to the National Participation Standards (shown at Appendix 2 to the report), which will ensure effective working practices are followed.

She added that Bridgend would deliver its commitment to embedding the participation agenda in all aspects of the delivery and reviewing of services through the implementation of the Strategy, in line with the 'Shared Purpose: Shared Future' Core Guidance, which has encompassed the National Participation Standards and the commitment in Wales, to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). A self –assessment within Bridgend would take place, and would be guided by the National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Toolkit, attached to the report at Appendix 3.

In part response to the Members questions, the Head of Education and Early Help confirmed that a dedicated post had been introduced to drive forward a lot of the work that would be involved in the development and progression of the Participation Strategy.

The Head of Education and Early Help confirmed that as the Participation Strategy was still work in progress, no case studies had yet been undertaken that would evidence or otherwise that young people have had their say in decisions that affect them. However, page 33 of Appendix 1, outlined and gave examples of instances whereby participation in the Strategy would provide wide ranging benefits for children, young people and their families, as well as for the organisations working with them and for the communities they live in.

There is a standard paragraph in all reports that are submitted to Committee meetings of the Council detailing whether or not an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had been or would be carried out in respect of the topic the report related to, it is intended that in the future a Child Impact Assessments would also be undertaken in addition to the EIA in respect of all proposed policy changes.

Officers were also going through an exercise whereby different schemes led by the Council and its key stakeholders ie relating to children and young people were being looked at to see if they could have an active involvement in these schemes in order that

they may 'have their say'. This could mean anything that the Council as a whole are involved in, and not just something that emanated from the Children's and Families Directorate.

In response to the Members point with regard to young people having an input in any work generated from the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Head of Education and Early Help confirmed that there was a considerable amount of work arising from this legislation that would involve children and young people. The reason for this, was that work within the Directorates of Adult Social Care and Children's did overlap to a degree, particularly with regard to engagement in the early intervention and prevention agenda.

A Member felt that it was important for Members to be reminded of the key provisions of the above Act, and how these impacted upon any of the work to be considered in the future, by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member, Children's Social Services and Equalities, confirmed that the Cabinet Committee Equalities would assist in monitoring the above, including looking further at the subject of Child Impact Assessments as part of Equality Impact Assessments, in respect of issues that directly affected them, including those that are incorporated in the Future Generations Act.

She added that a 'Girls Network' had been established, which comprised of primarily young women who held workshops where adults were invited to. These workshops included sharing what activities these individuals were involved in, and new ideas for what type of health and wellbeing activities they wished to pursue, including as part of school's curricula. She further added that sport involving females at school particularly within comprehensive and secondary schools, had increased since teachers had involved asking pupils what activities they wanted to do, as opposed to telling them.

A Member advised that in future, he hoped to see evidence through case studies and the like, of the extent that young people become involved in with regard to future work that comprises the Participation Strategy. He added that currently the Youth Council were involved in developing 6 different Strategic Work Plans.

The representative from the Youth Council reiterated that the level of involvement of children and young people would increase as the Strategy developed further. That said, there were already a number of youth-led activities in being, where there was little or no input to these from adults.

The Senior Development Worker added that the local authority were looking to second extra roles within the Youth Council, to give increased support to the agenda of the Participation Strategy. There was also a proposal she further added, to place young people on Public Service Boards being established to sit under the Future Generations Act.

The Family Support Services Manager also added that work would be progressed with Unicef, to further establish the rights children have while being educated in school.

A Member noted that much had been made of the Strategy, including explaining how it would develop. There was reference in the report to the support of the Strategy by the Youth Council. He asked however, what work had been carried out if any, to engage with young people through other partner and outside organisations, as only a minority of young people within the County Borough were represented by the Youth Council.

The Head of Education and Early Help stated that Officers were aware of the fact that the Youth Council was not the voice for all young people situated within the County Borough. She added that recently an open day for young people had been convened, where individuals who attended had been advised of the avenues they could pursue if they wanted their voice to be heard, through different initiatives such as the Participation Strategy, in order that there was increased involvement in work relating to the development of this, and other newly developed legislation that may affect people's lives at a young age. She further reported that representation at that event was from a very wide range of children including children from vulnerable groups.

The Senior Development Worker added, that there was a Participation Strategy Network that was made up of various different stakeholders, who had a connection with young people over and above the Youth Council. This Network also encouraged the participation within it of disabled young people. Further work was being carried out with a view to developing the rights of young people, through appointing Champions through Youth Clubs and other Associations, once more to increase and encourage the involvement of young people in the development of youth led initiatives. Further to the last point made by the Member, she would arrange for an audit to be undertaken in order to ensure that there were no 'gaps', in terms of trying to engage with all young people to this end.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that the topic under discussion was a Strategy rather than an Action Plan, but a primary aim of the Strategy was to ensure that better outcomes are delivered for children and young people, and to achieve this they needed to be involved more in what key organisations such as the local authority were doing. He was happy for a report to be produced for the Committee annually on the work of the Strategy as it developed further. He added that schools had been made aware of the Strategy, so therefore, a considerable number of young people would have been made aware of it together with its aims and objectives, as well as through organisations such as the Youth Council.

A Member asked if there was any work ongoing in the County Borough with children aged 0 – 10.

The Senior Development Worker replied that work was ongoing with Unicef, with a view to setting-up a project in 5 primary and 5 secondary schools, specifically designed for young children over 5 years of age, to look at ways within which very young children's rights could improve in terms of their participation in things that affect them. If this exercise proved useful, then the intention was to expand it further to other schools. A Service Level Agreement was currently being developed with Unicef, and the work it was anticipated, would commence in September 2016.

The Deputy Leader explained that the voice of a student had expanded in Bridgend County Borough in recent times. An example of this, was that in some schools there had cases of pupils being included in the appointments of teachers and headteachers. All schools as far as he was aware, had also set-up a School Council, where they could become involved in a number of different issues, including examining issues of accountability in the Education Authority. Children at schools were also now as a matter of course, consulted upon when there were plans to amalgamate schools they attended under the Council's School Modernisation proposals, including any views they had on issues such as this, being taken on board just like any other consultees would. He added that appropriate sections within other Directorates would need to be signed up to commit to the Strategy, more particularly Parks and Playing Fields, Highways (specifically public transport), as opposed to just the Children's Social Care and Education Department's.

The Cabinet Member Equalities and Children's Social Services advised that a training programme would be rolled out in the Authority over the next few months, with a view to increasing the quality of Environmental Impact Assessments.

A Member who was on the Board of Governors at Brynteg Comprehensive School, commented upon the fact of how little he was in contact with students.

The Chairperson replied by stating that things would improve to that end through initiatives such as the Participation Strategy, which as well of encouraging more participation from the younger element of society, would hopefully also lead to increased engagement with them. He added that it was positive news in hearing that the representative of the Youth Council at today's meeting (who was also the Youth Mayor of BCBC), was providing an active role in School Service Boards. He suggested that he also attends at least one School Governing Board meeting serving each of the Schools in the County Borough, together with a meeting of the Bridgend Governors Association to advise of and reinforce the Participation Strategy.

The Youth Council representative confirmed that he would be happy to go along with these suggestions.

The Deputy Leader concurred, and added that ideas such as those mentioned above, would be an important voice for the changes in curriculum.

A Member referred to Appendix 1 of the report at page 61, where reference was made to the Participation Consortium which was a multi-agency strategic body working at a national level, to develop capacity and practice in terms of the Participation of children and young people in decision making in Wales. She asked how many young people under 25 years of age were involved with this.

The Senior Development Worker confirmed that the majority of young people involved in the Consortium were under 25, as it was specifically designed for 0 – 25 year olds, and usually connected with various Youth Council's. She added however, that the National Participation Network was much more productive than this all Wales initiative.

She added in response to a follow-up question, that she was not totally au fait with all the groups that comprised the membership of the Consortium, though she was familiar with one or two, for example Funky Dragon, who were a very effective youth support group.

A Member closed the debate on this item by asking how far advanced the Participation Strategy currently was.

The Head of Education and Early Help, advised that the Strategy was presently in its infancy stage and that the Action Plan was an important component, in that the aims and objectives of this would assist in terms of populating and developing the Strategy further.

Participation Strategy

1. The Committee recognised the work that was being undertaken in relation to the participation of Children and Young People but commented on the lack of detail of this within the Strategy and the need for the Strategy to be sold more widely .
2. The Committee expressed concerns over the lack of detail for engagement of children and young people outside of the youth council such as those hard to

reach or considered vulnerable as well as primary aged pupils. Officers reported that work with Unicef for example was being undertaken, working with primary aged pupils.

3. Members were also concerned over the lack of monitoring or evaluation of participation work and commented that if this information is not consistently gathered it would prove difficult to provide it when needed; for the purposes of the self-assessment.
4. The Committee commented that the strategy is not written in a user friendly manner for children and young people and that this, along with the lack of detail in terms of 'how' children and young people can get involved, makes it difficult for them to access and understand how they can participate.
5. The Committee noted the comment from Officers on the need for other Directorates to take on the Strategy but suggested that in order for this to happen the Strategy needs significant expansion and detail to enable other Directorates to sign up to it.
6. Following their conclusions, Members recommended the following changes to the Strategy for incorporation in the final text:
 - a) That more information on other organisation involvement be incorporated into the strategy;
 - b) That more examples of the 'How' aspect be incorporated into the strategy;
 - c) That the strategy be more accessible and user friendly for children and young people;
 - d) That the strategy recognise and evidence more the importance of engagement with other children and young people outside of the Youth Council and detail how this this is going to take place;
 - e) That the action plan be incorporated within the strategy to evidence how the work is being targeted, monitored and evaluated;
 - f) That the action plan be expanded for the whole Authority to incorporate other Directorates.

Further Comments

7. The Committee were delighted that the Youth Council was to be represented on the Public Service Board.
8. The Committee asked that the Bridgend Governors Association be contacted and asked to raise with all Chairs of Governors the requirement for pupil representation on Governing Bodies.
9. The Committee commented on the need for Scrutiny to engage with more youth organisations; getting more young people to attend Scrutiny Committees or provide written evidence. Members stressed that this needed to be taken forward across all Scrutiny Committees.

The Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services submitted a report, the purpose of which, was to present the items due to be considered at the Committee's meeting on 13 October 2016, and seeking confirmation of the information required for the subsequent scheduled meeting to be held on 15 December 2016, and finally, present a list of further potential items for prioritisation by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED: That the Committee:-

- (1) Noted the items due to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on 13 October 2016, as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report, as well as the Invitees for this meeting.
- (2) Noted the items to be considered at the subsequent meeting scheduled for 15 December 2016, as outlined in paragraph 4.2 of the report, and the suggested Invitees for this meeting.
- (3) Further noted the remaining items to be considered as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme going forward, as recommended in paragraph's 4.3 and 4.4 of the report.

236. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm