

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 - WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 2019

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON
WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 2019 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor – Chairperson

S Aspey	William Bond	SK Dendy	A Hussain
MJ Kearn	JE Lewis	AA Pucella	G Thomas
T Thomas			

Apologies for Absence

MC Clarke, PA Davies, J Gebbie, M Jones, KL Rowlands, D White, SG Smith, Ciaron Jackson and Rev. Canon Evans

Registered Representatives

William Bond Special School Sector

Officers:

Gail Jewell Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Invitees:

Nicola Echanis	Head of Education & Family Support
John Fabes	Specialist Officer Post 16 Education & Training
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Kathryn Morgan	Principal Educational Psychologist
Councillor Carolyn Webster	Chairperson Subject Scrutiny Committee 1
Councillor Philip White	Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

William Bond - Governor at Heronsbridge.

78. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 of 27 March 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

79. POST-16 ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) REVIEW

The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training presented the report providing an update on the review of Post-16 Additional Learning Needs (ALN) across the authority. In 2016, a strategic review board (SRB) was established and in turn, the SRB set up a Post-16 Operational Board to review post-16 provision across Bridgend County. These Boards have presented a series of reports to Cabinet. Throughout the journey, there were critical areas that required specific bespoke solutions. Due to the significant complexities around ALN provision, a specific piece of work ran alongside mainstream post-16 provision. Meetings were held with additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCoS) in schools and special schools, together with senior leadership teams, Careers Wales, Bridgend College and senior managers in the Inclusion Service, referred

to in the findings. Inclusion Service led on a piece of work funded by the ALN Innovation Fund to develop a 'map and gap' analysis, which is expected to become a set of Protocols. Much work is being driven at a regional level and local authority officers continue to engage with Bridgend College in order to develop and support provision for post compulsory school-aged learners.

Current progression routes are predominately in three settings. Heronsbridge learners progress through the school until they are 19, a cohort that attend Ysgol Bryn Castell (YBC) with the greatest number of learners attending Bridgend College. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training highlighted the need to focus on the relationship with Bridgend College and the provisions for learners with ALN. In terms of pressures from Welsh Government (WG) and the types of qualifications that the Further Education Sector (FE's) need to concentrate on, this is being monitored. Provision at YBC is well regarded with some learners on day release to College as a provision. Provision at Heronsbridge School is tailored to each cohort and focuses on work based learning/vocational skills. Due to greater clarity around placement criteria for entry to Heronsbridge School Key Stage 3 pupils have more complex learning needs and this will require the Post-16 provisions to be adapted to suit the needs of these cohorts.

The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training highlighted the work of visiting schools to identify the features that work well in successful transitions including, links with ALNCoS, connections with Bridgend College and the work with Careers Wales advisors. They also support learners in making applications, in visits and speaking with parents and co-ordinators in college, although this is a much-stretched resource. There is a need to clearly understand the students and parents view points and the aspirations they have for transition. Getting the course right is critical going forward and getting them to upskill themselves is seen as a valuable part of transition.

The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training highlighted suggestions for improvement in support for transition of ALN learners including improved early transition planning for Key Stage 4 and the importance of transition and taster sessions, especially important for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder. In addition, more frequent visits to Bridgend College during the year, not just at the end, would be beneficial.

In order to support successful transition, a number of issues were identified. Issues around insufficient dedicated funding from WG emerged, so that there was a suitable range of choices/courses for learners with ALN at the right level. WG had encouraged FE colleges to focus their resources at Level 3, Level 4 and Apprenticeships, so Entry and Level 1 courses were not being focused on, however this is beginning to be rebalanced.

In recent years there has been a greater clarity around placement criteria for entry into Heronsbridge School. This, in turn, is having an impact on the nature of the learners gaining access to Heronsbridge Schools. There is a need to carefully and strategically plan with key partners in Bridgend College the future needs of these learners aged 16 to 18.

A review of provision for learners with ALN was initiated by the Corporate Director of Education and Family Support which will conclude by Autumn 2019.

Members note that pupils from Ysgol Bryn Castell (YBC) have very complex additional learning needs and request to receive a case study from an YBC post-16 pupil outlining the benefits encountered from the provisions offered. The Member further asked what support was available for the 19 to 25 years cohort? The Head of Education and Early Help explained that they work in close collaboration with Bridgend College. With the development of the act, specific key personnel work with those aged up to 25 although acknowledged a greater understanding is needed in this area. The Principal

Educational Psychologist further acknowledged that it is still early stages in how we go from the current remit. The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help acknowledged the review of provision for learners with ALN being undertaken by the Corporate Director of Education and Family Support and informed Members that he would expect to see this as part of the report before it comes to Cabinet in October. A Member highlighted the interaction needed with Adult Services going forward.

A Member also asked to receive a case study to illustrate how a post-16 ALN learner has undertaken work experience and benefitted from the process. The Member further asked what training is given to those offering work experiences to learners with ALN? The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training acknowledged that training is not provided from the school based end, but is provided by Third Sector organisations running work experience and internships and preparing them for work in the particular sector. It was acknowledged that some learners in schools find it difficult to cope with mainstream situations, and so often the school engage on a 1 2 1 basis with an employer to create a tailored package. A conversation will be held with the employer to find value in the placement. Another facet is developing internship programmes. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training acknowledged that it takes a long time to prepare the ground to find an employer, and that the Princess of Wales Hospital was the favoured employer of Bridgend College. He informed Members that it had taken 18 months to prepare a package before the launch in September 2018 with a cohort of 9 learners from Bridgend College, hoping to gain a Level 1 qualification in three different settings across the Hospital.

A Member enquired if any relationship with local firms had been developed for learners with ALN, particularly those with ADHD or Tourette's, which could cause significant barriers? In addition a Member asked about specific placements in the Tourism Industry. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training explained that relationships were not established by the Local Authority, but by the schools themselves, but for those learners with complex needs that practice would be done through ALN Cos.

A Member raised concern about the flexibility of the ALN process and what it would look like after 10 to 15 years. The Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help acknowledged the need to plan for 10 to 15 years, but highlighted that changes will be made and that it is difficult to plan going forward. The Local Authority will try to provide every opportunity, and highlighted the success story of YBC and indicated the need to work closely with other local authorities.

A Member asked what in terms of Social Services, what does the transition look like now, what will it look like after the post 16 review and what will it look like going forward to the age of 25. The Head of Education and Early Help explained that the act does not change the responsibility but what the act does is it put far greater responsibility on education. We will need to maintain that connection with our social services colleagues and develop our relationships in adult services. The Member further asked if there is a challenge with staffing. The Head of Education and Early Help confirmed yes. As the requirement to make savings within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) continues, so everything new is a challenge and the ALN act places much greater emphasis on that. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education & Training acknowledged that this is a great opportunity for areas to come together to define elements that come into place with a good robust look at the protocols when they are available.

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support explained that they are looking at Central South Consortium (CSC) priorities in preparing us for the act. Part of this is to look at how we look at partnership working and how we interact with social services and health. The act places far more emphasis on collaborative working, which has been discussed at director level.

A Member highlighted that previously Bridgend has been a low statementing authority, which raised concern that this could be placing young people at a disadvantage. The Principal Education Psychologist explained that historically it was about being needs lead and a proactive position to be in. Currently our statements are on par but we acknowledge that we look at the needs, rather than the statutory process. The statutory process has increased the need to be looking at streamlining our process across Wales. Rather than pigeonholing students, students will have an individual plan. We are hoping to take away some of the issues that would have previously disadvantaged our learners. The Group Manager Business, Strategy explained that the Local Authority (LA) has consistently delivered 100% of statements within the 26 weeks, with exceptions to delays externally driven and that this performance indicator is measured quarterly.

A Member highlighted that parents felt it was a battle in terms of paperwork, and they need support to move on beyond this point. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing had met with Special Families Bridgend to discuss the challenges. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support acknowledged the difficulty for parents and the need to act on it and explained that the authority had provided a response to Special Families Bridgend and would be happy provide this to Scrutiny. The Principal Educational Psychologist explained that whilst we are moving forward with the reform and individual plans that part of her remit, as recently new in post, was to look at the statutory process and how we can make the process more helpful to families.

A Member asked about the effect of the cut to the Education Maintenance allowance and enquired whether there was any similar funding available. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support agreed to look into this issue and report back.

A Member asked for clarity in terms of public transport and the conclusions of the review of public transport and asked for some reassurance about those that cannot use the transport. The Group Manager Business, Strategy explained that there is no statutory duty beyond on the age of 16, even for those with additional learning needs. Bridgend have supported post 16 learners who wish to go to college and have put together bespoke packages of transport for those with complex needs. There is a need to consider that discretion going forward and the impact on how they continue their education without that specific provision. We need to be very clear through the decision-making process though, that the special need and equalities perspective is looked at against the impact of supporting those local young people. There is a quite considerable consideration to the discretionary arrangement changing in the future.

A Member asked whether the Inspire to Achieve European Social fund project could potentially be effected. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training confirmed that the project would be running through to 2021.

A Member asked for clarification on who would complete the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) outlined in item 6.2. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support confirmed that officers would carry this out.

Conclusions

The Committee request to receive a future report outlining development proposals for increasing Post-16 provisions for ALN learners aged 19-25.

Members note that Bridgend Council do not develop local firms as work placements for ALN learners but recommend that where appropriate every effort is made to expand placements to within the tourism sector.

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While discussing potential budget cuts to post-16 transport, the Committee recommend that best practice is sought from other Local Authorities who have who have already made efficiency savings in this area.

Additional Information

In order to illustrate the benefits of post-16 ALN provisions, Members request case studies from:

- A learner from Ysgol Bryn Castell (YBC), as Members are aware that YBC includes provision for learners with complex additional, social and behavioural additional learning needs;
- A learner that has undertaken work experience and benefited from the involvement.

The Committee request to receive a copy of the response provided to Special Families Bridgend in relation to support for parents who find accessing and completion of paperwork provided by Bridgend Council problematic.

Members note the cut to the Education Maintenance allowance and ask to receive details of the effect this has had on the learning provision or if there is similar funding available.

80. NOMINATION TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD SCRUTINY PANEL

The Head of Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report to nominate a Member to sit on the Public Service Board Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED: That Councillor S Dendy be nominated to sit as a Member of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 on the Public Service Board Overview and Scrutiny Committee Panel

81. CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION NOMINATION REPORT

The Head of Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report which requested the Committee to nominate a Member as its Corporate Parenting Champion to represent the Committee as an Invitee to meetings of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee.

RESOLVED: That Councillor M Clarke be nominated to sit as a Member of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 on the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting in the capacity of an Invitee.

82. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED: The Committee:

1. Approved the feedback from the previous meeting;
2. Noted that Safeguarding would be the next item allocated to SOSOC 2;
3. Prioritised Home to School Transport for the meeting scheduled for September 2019.

83. URGENT ITEMS

None