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Bridgend County Borough Council



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We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please let us know if your language choice is Welsh.



Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Dyddiad/Date: Thursday, 26 June 2026

Dear Councillor,

EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB / remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday, 2 July 2026 at 11:00**.

AGENDA

1 **Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence from Members.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008 (including whipping declarations)

3 **Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations and Expansion of Access to Free School Meals in Secondary Schools**

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Invitees:

Councillor Martyn Jones - Cabinet Member for Education and Young People

Lindsay Harvey - Corporate Director for Education, Early Years and Young People

Tanya Smith – Head of Strategy, Early Years and Youth

Robin Davies – Group Manager (Strategy, Performance and Support)

Mathew Evans – Team Manager – Catering Services

By receiving this Agenda Pack electronically you will save the Authority approx. £0.44 in printing costs

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

5 Forward Work Programme Update

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6 Urgent Items

To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you would like to view this meeting live, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal, Regulatory and Electoral Services

Councillors:

JPD Blundell

RJ Collins

HJ David

S Easterbrook

N Farr

H Griffiths

D M Hughes

J Llewellyn-Hopkins

R J Smith

T Thomas

JH Tildesley MBE

A Wathan

AJ Williams

E D Winstanley

Registered Representative:

Samantha Lambert-Worgan - Parent Governor - Special Schools

Meeting of:	EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	2 JULY 2026
Report Title:	HEALTHY EATING IN SCHOOLS REGULATIONS AND EXPANSION OF ACCESS TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CABINET MEMBER EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Responsible Officer:	ROBIN DAVIES GROUP MANAGER - STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	This report updates the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the implementation of The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Maintained Primary Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2025 and progress made towards the expansion of access to free school meals in secondary schools.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to update the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the implementation of The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Maintained Primary Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2025 and progress made towards the implementation of universal secondary free school meals.
- 1.2. The report identifies the changes, which are being made to the primary school meal menu, and the support being provided to pupils, parents/carers, schools and governing bodies to implement and work towards the proposed changes.

2. Background

- 2.1. This report provides an analysis of the local authority's transition to the updated Welsh Government nutritional standards for primary schools. The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Maintained Primary Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2025 (the Regulations) were laid before the Senedd on 17 December 2025 and are scheduled to come into force on 31 October 2026. The Regulations represent the most significant update to the primary school meal offer in over a decade, aiming to reduce health and attainment inequalities by aligning school food with the latest UK scientific dietary guidelines. The food and drink provided in all maintained primary schools must meet the new regulations. The

regulations are based on the previous 'Appetite for Life' guidelines and form part of the wider Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009 ('the Measure').

- 2.2. The regulations set out the nutritional standards for an average school lunch, as well as food and drink requirements throughout the school day. The nutritional standards specify minimum or maximum values for energy and thirteen nutrients, which apply to an average school lunch, calculated over each week of the menu cycle. The food and drink requirements describe the types of food and drink that must be provided, restricted and not permitted between breakfast and 6pm.
- 2.3. The Regulations place a duty on local authorities and school governing bodies to promote healthy eating and drinking by pupils.
- 2.4. To monitor compliance, school governing bodies are required to provide information in their annual report on the action taken to promote healthy eating and drinking by pupils at their schools.
- 2.5. Through inspections, Estyn is required to report to Welsh Ministers on the action taken by schools.
- 2.6. The Welsh Government document 'Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies', is a practical guide to implementing the above legislation. Local authorities and school governing bodies must take account of this, and if they decide to depart from it, have clear and justifiable reasons for doing so.

3. Current situation/proposal

- 3.1. The Regulations introduce profound changes to food and drink requirements, structured around the 'Eatwell Guide'.

Detailed food and drink category requirements

A. Vegetables

- Requirement: At least two portions of vegetables must be provided every day.
- Variety: Schools must offer at least six varieties of vegetables each week.
- Interpretation: This includes salad but excludes potatoes. Mixed vegetables served as a single portion count as one portion and one variety.
- Guidance: Vegetables should be promoted and encouraged. Canned vegetables should be in plain water, and baked beans should ideally be reduced sugar and salt varieties, provided no more than three days per week.

B. Fruit

- Requirement: At least one portion of fruit must be provided daily.
- Variety: At least four different varieties of fruit must be provided each week.
- Interpretation: Fruit juice is no longer permitted as a portion of fruit or as a permitted drink (except on school trips). Canned fruit must be in fruit juice only, not syrup.

C. Starchy carbohydrates

- Requirement: A portion of starchy carbohydrates must be provided every day.
- Wholegrain rule: At least one portion weekly must be pasta, rice, or noodles containing at least 50% wholegrain.
- Bread: All bread (excluding pizza bases, garlic bread, and naan) must be at least 50% wholegrain.
- Interpretation: Starchy carbohydrates do not include potatoes cooked in fat or oil. Supplementary bread must be available daily for hungry learners but is excluded from nutritional analysis calculations.

D. Beans, pulses, fish, and meat (proteins)

- Fish: A portion must be served at least once a week, with oily fish required at least once every four weeks. Combined fish products must contain at least 50% fish.
- Red meat: Restricted to at least once but no more than twice per week. This includes beef, lamb, pork, and venison but excludes white meat like poultry.
- Specified meat products: Items like bacon, ham, sausages, and burgers are limited to once per week. Ham and bacon are now newly classified as processed meat.
- Vegetarian main source: Beans or pulses must be provided as the main protein source in a non-meat/non-fish lunch at least once a week. This replaces the previous cap on cheese-based meals.
- Processed alternatives: Processed non-meat alternatives (for example, veggie burgers) are limited to twice per week.

E. Desserts and pastry

- Sweetened baked products: Limited to three portions per week. This includes cakes, biscuits, and sponge puddings but excludes ambient/chilled yoghurt.
- Fruit/veg accompaniment: All desserts must be accompanied by or contain a dessert portion of fruit or vegetables (minimum 20g for infant pupils, 40g for junior pupils).
- Pastry: Savoury or sweet pastry is restricted to once per week.

F. Drinks

- Permitted: Only plain water (still or carbonated), plain milk, and plain plant-based drinks are allowed.
- Milk: Nursery pupils must be served whole or semi-skimmed milk; others receive semi-skimmed, 1%, or skimmed.
- Plant-based: Must be calcium-fortified, unflavoured, and contain no free sugars (maximum threshold $\leq 0.5\text{g}$ total sugars/100ml).

Differentiated nutritional standards

3.2. For the first time, standards are split into two distinct age groups to reflect caloric and physiological needs:

- Infants (Nursery to Year 2): Target of 429 kcal per average lunch (range 365–493 kcal daily).
- Juniors (Year 3 to Year 6): Target of 528 kcal (range 449–607 kcal daily).

- 3.3. The regulations specify minimum/maximum limits for 13 nutrients calculated over a menu cycle:

Maximum limits (30% of daily need):

- Fat (Infants: 16.8g; Juniors: 20.5g);
- Saturated Fat (Infants: 5.3g; Juniors: 6.5g);
- Free Sugars (Infants: 5.7g; Juniors: 7g); and
- Sodium (Infants: 360mg; Juniors: 499mg).

Minimum limits (30–35% of daily need):

- Carbohydrate (Infants: 57.3g; Juniors: 70.4g);
- Fibre (Infants: 5.3g; Juniors: 6g);
- Protein (Infants: 5.91g; Juniors: 8.5g);
- Iron (Infants: 2.1mg; Juniors: 3mg);
- Zinc (Infants: 2.3mg; Juniors: 2.5mg) and
- Calcium (Infants: 157.5mg; Juniors: 193mg).

Specific nutrients

- 3.4. The standards are designed to provide steady energy to keep children alert and ready to learn with the focus on a range of nutrients and vitamins.

- Iron - essential for muscle development and carrying oxygen; deficiency leads to fatigue.
- Zinc - vital for growth, tissue repair, and immune health.
- Calcium - critical for strong bones and nerve function during childhood growth spurts.
- Vitamin A - important for vision in dim light, healthy skin, and immune function.
- Vitamin C - aids wound healing and iron absorption; lost easily in water, so steaming is recommended.
- Folate - necessary for red blood cell formation; deficiency causes weakness and appetite loss

Nutritional analysis and software procurement

- 3.5. On behalf of Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has provided to local authorities, guidance on the software required to be purchased to plan and nutritionally analyse each primary school menu.
- 3.6. Among other detailed technically specific requirements, the software must include the following core capabilities. The software must:
- track 13 specific nutrients using official UK food databases;
 - calculate data for infants and junior pupil meals separately; and it must
 - measure nutrition based on the actual portion sizes served to pupils.
- 3.7. To meet these requirements, the local authority has procured specialist software (that is, 'Saffron Menu and Wellbeing').

Implementation

- 3.8. The local authority will launch its new primary menu in-line with the WG deadline of 26 October 2026. Final national guidance is expected to be circulated to local authorities on 1 July 2026.

Implementation challenges

- 3.9. The local authority envisages the following key implementation challenges:

Marginal uptake

Universal primary free school meals (UPFSM) uptake increased by 8% (£81,820 in claimed grant value) from 2024-2025 to 2025-2026. It is important to note that an additional 20p per meal was received from September 2025 backdated to April 2025.

Procurement cost spikes

There have been significant increases in the wholesale cost of food, consumables and transportation due to international conflict in affecting fuel prices, with weekly haulage fuel costs in particular rising by 50% (April 2026).

Product availability

Sourcing products that meet the 50% wholegrain standard (for example, pasta and rolls) will impact food cost and margins, Bridgend primary schools are already compliant on wholemeal bread. Current analysis shows a 30% increase when considering the need for wholemeal pasta in the new menu required by the Regulations.

Increased food waste

There may be higher levels of waste, particularly with the mandated two-portion daily vegetable requirement, necessitating additional waste collection bins and services.

Implementation of Universal Secondary Free School Meals (USFSM)

- 3.10. Following the recent Senedd elections, Welsh Government has committed to removing the current income threshold of £7,400 per year for secondary school pupils on Universal Credit. Starting from September 2026, all secondary pupils (Years 7 to 11) whose families receive Universal Credit, will be entitled to free school meals, regardless of their household earnings.
- 3.11. While the impact of this decision is yet to be fully understood both nationally and locally, the local authority is currently working with the WLGA, other local authorities and the Local Authority Catering Association (LACA) on the following challenges in working towards implementation:

Implementation timeframe

- 3.12. With projected start date of September 2026, this leaves a short window for implementation. The majority of Catering Service senior and operational staff are contracted to work term-time only. This is also further compounded by the

upcoming regulatory deadline for the roll out of Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Maintained Primary Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2025 in primary schools.

Lack of empirical data in respect of USFSM eligibility

- 3.13. Due to a current lack of data on eligible pupils, we are currently unable to identify or predict the additional numbers of pupils who may take up the USFSM, which would be challenging for operational teams in kitchens.

Reconciliation

- 3.14. There is currently no process to correctly record who has eligibility when pupils attempt to purchase food items. This would need addressing urgently with schools and our cashless catering technology partner.

Food offering

- 3.15. There is currently uncertainty around the food offering for USFSM. In particular, whether this would only constitute the provision of a hot meal, or if other options would be available, such as more 'grab and go' food such as salads and filled baguettes.

Recruitment

- 3.16. The local authority currently has a comprehensive school Catering Service staff vacancy shortfall of 19%, which could add more pressure on the service.

Equipment

- 3.17. Following our recent kitchen audits requested by Welsh Government, £1.4 million was calculated as required to bring all nine Bridgend secondary school kitchens to standard and capacity to meet the needs of a full roll-out of USFSM.

Capital infrastructure

- 3.18. The majority of our comprehensive schools are older buildings, and any capital work will potentially have significant physical, structural and regulatory challenges beyond the required kitchen upgrades.

UPFSM

- 3.19. Since the completion of the roll-out of UPFSM, the average daily uptake across Bridgend primary schools is now 47%.
- 3.20. In 2025-2026, Welsh Government announced the increase in the meal claim price from £3.20 to £3.40 to support the additional financial challenges that UPFSM has brought. This was widely welcomed by local authorities.
- 3.21. In 2025-2026, there was an underspend of £598k in Catering Services. The underspend is based on the full implementation of UPFSM and the accompanying grant funding to support the initiative from Welsh Government. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy approved by Council for 2026-27 includes a £300k budget reduction for efficiencies in the Catering Services budget.

Current and emerging challenges

- 3.22. The initial roll-out of UPFSM was compounded by lack of heavy equipment, with up to a one-year wait for some equipment, due to all local authorities utilising the same small group of specialist equipment suppliers.
- 3.23. Recruitment has been a significant challenge, with a staffing shortfall of 30% in our primary schools.
- 3.24. A long-term financial challenge will be the depreciation of the equipment and assets purchased through Welsh Government capital grant money. With a potential operating life span of 10 to 15 years, significant investment will be needed to replace and maintain the larger kitchen assets beyond 2034.
- 3.25. Some schools still do not have the infrastructure requirements to have certain equipment installed to support the service, for example, dishwashers and electric ovens, due to the limited utility capacity in their geographical location.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1. The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the local authority must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions.
- 4.2. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impact, as a result of this report.
- 4.3. Under the Equality Act 2010, the local authority has a statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled or neurodivergent learners. The Healthy Eating Regulations must be followed unless they conflict with a specific reasonable adjustment required for a disabled learner.
- 4.4. The local authority currently manages approximately 254 individual medically prescribed menus. These cover complex conditions such as diabetes, dysphagia, Coeliac Disease, and sensory development needs.
- 4.5. Socio-economic duty - by providing high-quality free school meals, the local authority supports pupils and their families with the cost-of-living.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The well-being goals and principles prescribed for within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 connect directly to the approach to supporting children, young people and their families. The approach is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle and more specifically as follows:

Long term

The Regulation prioritises intergenerational health outcomes over short-term financial or operational ease. By mandating nutrient-dense school menus, it helps children

develop healthy eating habits that last into adulthood, giving young learners a healthy foundation protects their long-term cognitive development and future economic potential.

Prevention

The Regulation act as a critical intervention to tackle root causes of preventable illnesses like childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, and coronary heart disease. Using school food to prevent malnutrition and obesity protects vulnerable children from experiencing health inequalities later in life.

Integration

The Regulation integrates school food policies into wider public goals, including child poverty reduction, educational achievement, and environmental sustainability. It merges education, health, and local authority catering services into a single, cohesive delivery system.

Collaboration

The implementation of The Regulation relies on shared responsibility across regional governments, local authorities, and expert groups. It reflects Bridgend County Borough Council's goal of 'One Council', working well together and with partners. Our procurement and catering teams collaborate with regional supply chains to source the diverse fruit and vegetables required by the new regulations.

Involvement

The regulations focus on the lived experience of children and school communities. Schools use the curriculum to link the food served on plates with hands-on nutrition education, ensuring pupils actively understand their food options. It also drives the objective of prosperous places with thriving communities. Engaging with local food partnerships, parents, and pupils, ensures menus are inclusive, culturally diverse, and well-received.

6. Climate change and nature implications

Lower emissions

Shifting menus toward whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, while restricting processed meats, directly lowers the carbon footprint of school meals.

Less food waste

Setting precise, age-specific statutory portions may reduce school plate waste, preventing methane emissions from landfills. However, there is also a risk of the Standards increasing waste due to the potential impact of more restricted menu choices for pupils.

Shorter supply chains

Sourcing more fresh produce encourages localised procurement, cutting down 'farm-to-fork' transport emissions.

Marine protection

The Regulations mandate that all fish served must be sustainably sourced to prevent overfishing and protect aquatic life.

Deforestation reduction

Cutting back on ultra-processed foods lowers the demand for global agricultural commodities like palm oil, which drive habitat loss.

Eco-friendly farming

High demand for diverse vegetables supports local Welsh farmers using the Sustainable Farming Scheme, boosting soil health and regional biodiversity

7. Safeguarding and corporate parent implications

Combating dietary neglect

The availability of UPFSM together with mandatory nutrient standards protect vulnerable children from hidden hunger and physiological neglect by ensuring stable daily nutrition.

Eliminating stigma

The availability of UPFSM protects pupils from bullying or social exclusion.

Managing allergen risks

The local authority ensures that controls are in place to safeguard children with medical dietary needs by developing bespoke menus for each pupil.

Levelling health inequalities

As a corporate parent, the local authority uses these high-quality menus to help reverse early-life health disadvantages for care-experienced children.

Boosting classroom focus

Good nutrition directly improves concentration, behaviour, and learning outcomes for children in the care system.

Teaching independence

Linking school plates to nutrition education helps looked-after children build vital lifelong healthy habits for independent living.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The Regulations, which require full compliance by 31 October 2026, introduce substantial financial pressures for the local authority as follows:

Rising per-meal cost scenarios

Transitioning to raw ingredient scratch cooking and sourcing a mandatory minimum

of six different weekly vegetables and 50% whole-grain varieties significantly raises bulk procurement costs over cheaper, ultra-processed items.

Welsh Government subsidy adjustments

To absorb these specific market pressures, Welsh Government expanded the central UPFSM funding allocation by raising the per-meal rate paid to local councils from £3.20 to £3.40 from September 2025.

Local authority subsidies

Historically, the local authority has had to financially bridge localised funding shortfalls where the actual cost of kitchen meal provision outpaced standard national grant rates.

Replacement of nutritional databases

Welsh Government has ended central financial funding for the standard 'Saffron' school nutritional planning database. Local authorities must absorb new internal recurring licensing or procurement costs to secure compliant menu-tracking software. The current annual cost is currently approximately £6k.

Kitchen infrastructure expansion

Delivering fresh, raw menu options on a mass scale requires significant ongoing capital investments to ensure school kitchens are fit for purpose. This goes beyond the one-off capital investment provided by Welsh Government for the implementation of UPFSM.

Dedicated allergen and compliance staff

Shifting away from processed foods to complex raw ingredients creates a critical need for specialised local authority catering posts, including a dedicated allergen management role.

Workforce retraining demands

School kitchen staff require funded operational hours to undergo intensive retraining on portion tools, statutory free-sugar restrictions, and safe scratch-cooking methodologies.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- considers the contents of the report;
- provides feedback on the implementation of the Regulations; and
- provides feedback on the updates on the proposed expansion of free school meals in secondary schools.

Background documents

None

Meeting of:	EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	2 JULY 2026
Report Title:	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL, REGULATORY AND ELECTORAL SERVICES
Responsible Officer:	MERYL LAWRENCE SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER – SCRUTINY
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	The work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Council's Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing in the County Borough of Bridgend.
Executive Summary:	The Council's Constitution requires each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee. The Committee is asked to consider and agree its Forward Work Programme, identify any specific information it wishes to be included in and any invitees they wish to attend for the reports for the next two Committee meetings and identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the criteria set out in the report for this Committee.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Present the Committee with the Draft Forward Work Programme attached as **(Appendix A)** for consideration and approval;
- b) Request any specific information the Committee identifies to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wish to attend;
- c) Request the Committee to identify whether there are presently any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the

selection criteria in paragraph 3.5 of this report;

- d) Advise that the Committee's Forward Work Programme as approved will be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) for information, together with those from the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, following their consideration in this cycle of Committee meetings.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's Constitution requires each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee.
- 2.2 It also provides for the Committee to propose items for the Forward Work Programme having regard for the Council's Corporate Priorities and Risk Management framework. Where a matter for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee also falls within the remit of one or more other Committees, the decision as to which Committee will consider it will be resolved by the respective Chairs or, if they fail to agree, the Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Best Practice / Guidance

- 2.3 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the Forward Work Programme. In order to 'lead and own the process', it states that Councillors should have ownership of their Committee's work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be coordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.
- 2.4 Forward Work Programmes need to be manageable to maximize the effective use of the limited time and resources of Scrutiny Committees. It is not possible to include every topic proposed. Successful Scrutiny is about looking at the right topic in the right way and Members need to be selective, while also being able to demonstrate clear arguments for including or excluding topics.
- 2.5 The CfGS's guide to effective work programming 'A Cunning Plan?' makes the following reference to the importance of good work programming:

'Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well it can help lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.'

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Following the approval of the schedule of Scrutiny Committee meeting dates at the Annual Meeting of Council on 13 May 2026, the standing statutory reports to Scrutiny Committees of: the Corporate Plan, the Medium Term Financial Strategy

(MTFS) and Budget, Performance and Budget Monitoring, etc. have been mapped to the appropriate timely meeting dates into a Forward Work Programme.

3.2 The Forward Work Programmes for each Scrutiny Committee have been prepared using a number of difference sources, including:

- Corporate Risk Assessment;
- Directorate Business Plans;
- Previous Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme report topics / minutes;
- Committee / Member proposed topics;
- Policy Framework;
- Cabinet Work Programme;
- Discussions with Corporate Directors;
- Performance Team regarding the timing of performance information.

3.3 There are items where there is a statutory duty for Policy Framework documents to be considered by Scrutiny, e.g., the MTFS including draft budget proposals scheduled for consideration in January 2027, following which COSC will make conclusions and recommendations in a report on the overall strategic overview of Cabinet's draft Budget proposals to the meeting of Cabinet in February 2027.

3.4 An effective Forward Work Programme will identify the issues that the Committee wishes to focus on during the year and provide a clear plan. However, at each meeting the Committee will have an opportunity to review this as the Forward Work Programme Update will be a standing item on the Agenda, detailing which items are scheduled for future meetings and be requested to clarify any information to be included in reports and the list of invitees. The Forward Work Programme will remain flexible and will be reported to each COSC meeting for information.

Identification of Further Items

3.5 The Committee are reminded that the Scrutiny selection criteria used by Scrutiny Committee Members to consider, select and prioritise items emphasises the need to consider issues such as impact, risk, performance, budget and community perception when identifying topics for investigation to maximise the impact scrutiny can have on a topic and the outcomes for people. The criteria which can help the Committee come to a decision on whether to include a referred topic, are set out below:

Recommended Criteria for Selecting Scrutiny Topics:

PUBLIC INTEREST:	The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;
ABILITY TO CHANGE:	Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence, and add value to;
PERFORMANCE:	Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council is not performing well;

EXTENT: Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the County Borough, or a large number of the Authority's service users or its population;

REPLICATION: Work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

Reasons to Reject Scrutiny Topics:

- The issue is already being addressed / being examined elsewhere and change is imminent.
- The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and can be referred there).
- Scrutiny involvement would have limited / no impact upon outcomes.
- The topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial.
- The topic is too broad to make a review realistic and needs refining / scoping.
- New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year.
- The topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change / reconfiguration.

Corporate Parenting

- 3.6 Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a local authority towards care experienced children and young people. This is a legal responsibility given to local authorities by the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The Council as a whole is the 'Corporate Parent', therefore all Members have a level of responsibility for care experienced children and young people in Bridgend.
- 3.7 In this role, it is suggested that Members consider how each item they consider affects care experienced children and young people, and in what way can the Committee assist in these areas.
- 3.8 Scrutiny Champions can greatly support the Committee in this by advising them of the ongoing work of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting and particularly any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.
- 3.9 The Forward Work Programme for the Committee is attached as **Appendix A** for the Committee's consideration.
- 4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**
- 4.1 The Protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 Ways of Working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 Ways of Working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

- Long-term - The approval of this report will assist in the planning of Scrutiny business in both the short-term and in the long-term on its policies, budget and service delivery.
- Prevention - The early preparation of the Forward Work Programme allows for the advance planning of Scrutiny business where Members are provided an opportunity to influence and improve decisions before they are made by Cabinet.
- Integration - The report supports all the wellbeing objectives.
- Collaboration - Consultation on the content of the Forward Work Programme has taken place with the Corporate Management Board, Heads of Service and Elected Members.
- Involvement - Advanced publication of the Forward Work Programme ensures that stakeholders can view topics that will be discussed in Committee meetings and are provided with the opportunity to engage.

5.2 When setting its Forward Work Programme, the Committee should consider how each item they propose to scrutinise assists in the achievement of the Council's 4 Wellbeing Objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** as follows:

1. A prosperous place with thriving communities
2. Creating modern, seamless public services
3. Enabling people to meet their potential
4. Supporting our most vulnerable

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1 The Committee should consider how each item they scrutinise affects climate change, the Council's Net Zero Carbon 2030 target and how it meets the Council's commitments to protect and sustain the environment over the long term. There are no Climate Change or Nature Implications arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 The Committee should consider how each item they scrutinise affects care experienced children and young people, and in what way the Committee can assist in these areas. Safeguarding is everyone's business and means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Consider and approve the Draft Forward Work Programme for the Committee in **Appendix A**.
- b) Identify any specific information the Committee wishes to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wish to attend;
- c) Identify whether there are presently any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.5 of this report.
- d) Note that the Committee's Forward Work Programme as approved will be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information, together with those from the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, following their consideration in this cycle of Committee meetings.

Background documents

None.

Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2026-27 Draft Forward Work Programme

Monday, 1 June 2026 at 11am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
School Improvement	Arrangements into the Local Authority and future school improvement arrangements	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Cabinet Member for Education and Young People <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Head of Learning; Group Manager – School Improvement <u>Youth Council Representative</u> <u>Headteacher Nominees</u> Invitees to be confirmed <u>External</u> Representatives from Central South Consortium

Thursday, 2 July 2026 at 11am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations and Expansion of Access to Free School Meals in Secondary Schools	To include an information on Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations and an update on the Universal Primary Free School Meals Implementation. Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements), Maintained Primary Schools (Wales) Regulations 2025 and Healthy Eating Regulations 2025 Challenges of potential roll out UPFSM to secondary schools	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Cabinet Member for Education and Young People; <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Head of Strategy, Early Years and Youth; <u>External</u> <u>Headteacher Nominees</u> Invitees to be confirmed <u>Youth Council Representative</u>

Monday, 21 September 2026 at 11am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Review of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Support	To include an update on Commitment WBO4.4.2 <i>to develop a five-year plan to meet increasing demand on support services, specialist provision and schools</i> and any impact from progress against Commitments in WBO 3.4 <i>Modernise School Buildings</i>. To include an update on the progress against performance Indicator DEFS170 regarding the percentage of new local authority individual development plans (IDPs) delivered using the online IDP system.	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Cabinet Member for Education and Young People; <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Head of Learning; Group Manager – School Improvement; <u>Youth Council Representative</u> <u>Headteacher Nominees</u> Invitees to be confirmed

Monday, 23 November 2026 at 11am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Home to School Transport		<u>Cabinet Member</u> Cabinet Member for Education and Young People; <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Head of Learning; Head of Strategy, Early Years and Youth <u>Youth Council Representative</u> <u>Headteacher Nominees</u> Invitees to be confirmed

Monday, 1 February 2026 at 11am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
Close Current 3 year Strategic Plan and Open New 3 Year Strategic Plan	To include review of Post Inspection Plan	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Cabinet Member for Education and Young People <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People;

		Head of Learning; Head of Strategy, Early Years and Youth; <u>Youth Council Representative</u> <u>Headteacher Nominees</u> Invitees to be confirmed
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Monday, 1 March 2026 at 11am		
Report Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees
School Modernisation	An audit of the condition of all schools in Bridgend County. An analysis of the lessons learned from the school modernisation projects that have happened or in the process of being planned and built, including the impact of wider political and economic forces. The report would need to consider such issues as the role and value of price caps; risk management and mitigation, including the impact of ecological ones on project timing and costs; procurement; land acquisition; the impact of design changes to projects; and project management and oversight, especially in terms of the contribution made by Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board. The future demography of the County Borough, and the impact of new and proposed housing developments, and the potential knock-on impact on school catchment areas and pupil numbers. The future of school modernisation and project finance in Wales. To include an on the progress of increasing specialist provision. To include an update on progress against Commitments	<u>Cabinet Member</u> Cabinet Member for Education and Young People; Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment; <u>Officers</u> Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Corporate Director - Communities; Head of Learning; Deputy Head of Finance; Accountant – Capital and Grants; Head of Operations; Manager (Sustainable Communities for Learning); Group Manager – Corporate Landlord; Senior Portfolio Surveyor, Education and Wellbeing; <u>Youth Council Representative</u> <u>Headteacher Nominees</u> Invitees to be confirmed

School Maintenance (Communities – Corporate Landlord)	in WBO 3.4 <i>Modernise School Buildings</i> and their impact on Commitment WBO4.4.2 <i>to develop a five-year plan to meet increasing demand on support services, specialist provision and schools.</i>	
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Items to be Scheduled to the Committee's 2027-2028 Forward Work Programme

- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) – June 2027 (TBC)
- School Modernisation (New Builds) – to include a site visit – 2027 (TBC)

Information Report to be provided:

- Spring 2026 – English Language School Catchment Areas / Capacity

Research and Evaluation Panel

- TBC in 2026 - School Improvement Research and Evaluation Panel (REP)

Briefings and Workshops

Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees and Date
Support for Home-Educated Learners		All Member Briefing
New Estyn Inspection Framework / Local Government Education Services (LGES)		
Update on Effective School Governing Bodies – Appointment, Support and Funding	Invitation to be extended to Governors Association	
School Safeguarding Audits Summary		TBC in 2026
Pupil and Learner Attainment Outcomes	To include Validated Exam Results	TBC in 2026