

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND ON MONDAY, 28 APRIL 2014 AT 2.00PM

Present:

Councillor E P Foley – Chairperson

D K Edwards	D G Owen	C Westwood
R M James	C E Rees	D B F White
P N John	R Thomas	

Registered Representatives & Co-opted Members:

Mr T Cahalane (Roman Catholic Church)  
Mr R Thomas (Primary School Parent Governor)  
Mr W Bond (Special School Parent Governor)  
Mr K Pascoe  
Mr I Davies (ATL)  
Mr H Daniel (NAS/UWT)

Officers:

R Harries - Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny  
J Monks - Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

Councillor H J David - Cabinet Member – Children and Young People  
D McMillan - Corporate Director – Children  
C Turner - Head of Safeguarding and Family Support  
N Echanis - Group Manager - Integrated Working & Family Support  
S Roberts - Group Manager - School Improvement  
M Hatcher - Group Manager – Inclusion  
R Hopkins - Representative - Central South Consortium  
S Tozer - Representative - Central South Consortium

101 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor C A Green - Other Council Business  
Councillor M Jones - Holiday  
Councillor G Phillips - Hospital Appointment

102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

103 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Regulatory Services submitted a report to inform the Committee that Mr H Daniel has been nominated for appointment as a Co-opted Member of the

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, representing the national Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NAS.UWT). The vacancy has arisen for a representative of the NAS/UWT union due to the retirement of the former representative, Mr H Thomas, and Mr Daniel has been nominated by the NAS/UWT for appointment as their Co-opted Member representative. It was therefore proposed that he be appointed to the Committee as a non-voting Co-opted Member.

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee would recommend to Council the appointment of Mr H Daniel as a Co-opted Member representing the National Association of School Masters/Union of Women Teachers to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a term of four years.

104 **LOCAL AUTHORITY AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2013**

The Corporate Director – Children provided a report to inform the Committee of the overall school performance at the end of Foundation Phase and key stages (KS) 2-4 for the school year 2012-13 covering the following key issues:

- Trends and current performance at the end of Foundation Phase (7 year olds) and National Curriculum (NC) assessments at KS2-3 (11 and 14 year olds) and KS4 (16 year olds);
- Results from the national reading and numeracy tests;
- Performance of vulnerable groups including those pupils entitled to free school meals;
- Comparisons with Welsh averages and other LAs;
- The outcomes of Estyn school inspection reports within the current inspection cycle;
- The Welsh Government (WG) School Standards Unit's (SSU) 'banding' of secondary schools;
- Comparisons at KS4 with Central South Consortium (CSC) trajectories;
- Category of school effectiveness based on Central South Consortium's challenge and support framework;
- School attendance and exclusions.

She outlined the report for Members and highlighted the fact that the new National Model for Regional Working clearly states that the delivery of school improvement functions now sits with the Central South Consortium (CSC), with staff no longer being retained by the LA to deliver those functions. BCBC stopped employing school improvement advisory staff last September. Furthermore, unlike some of the other consortia colleagues in the CSC, the LA do not have any school improvement advisors within their teams.

She informed the Committee that the Welsh Government stipulated that work carried out through the CSC should be on a commissioned basis, to provide school improvement services on behalf of the Authority, and the aim was for each consortium across Wales to deliver the same functions by April 2015. The Authority currently delivers Governor services and HR for schools, as well as the 14-19 functions, and over the next 12 months part of those functions will be passed to the consortium to deliver on our behalf. She advised that the Authority has an agreement as to what it expects from the consortium and also on what it delivers, with clarity over the role of the Authority. The role of the Director of Education is to intervene to use statutory powers when necessary.

**One Member referred to the maths table on page 30 of Appendix 5 and queried the low target shown for Llangynwyd Primary School, which contradicted the data provided on page 52 of Appendix A.**

The Representative - Central South Consortium (RH) explained that this was an area of some contradiction nationally and the situation was currently under discussion, with one suggestion of

providing data at schools where there is a significant proportion of children who had Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The Representative - Central South Consortium (ST) advised that the System Leader attached to the school would have an understanding of the cohort at the school and therefore would set the targets to ensure they are properly in line with the ability of the children. She informed Members that the context of this would be explained in the Annual Report. She continued by saying that the schools with lower numbers of pupils would send two sets of targets to make the data more meaningful, and in such circumstances the reason they would be included in the table would be to compare the differences between the targets and the actual scores, with schools being set aspirational targets to send the message that they are capable of reaching their targets. She agreed that the target for Llangynwyd Primary School did seem very low, and there appeared to be a lack of challenge at that school.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People commented that it was noticeable how two schools with the largest percentage difference are two of the smaller schools in the Borough with a cohort of just seven or eight pupils which meant that one child doing better could affect the average, which was in contrast to other schools with around 400 pupils where a difference would be expected.

**Another Member referred to the fact that boys' attainment lagged behind that of girls in core subjects, and asked whether any steps were being taken to separate the boys from the girls during the teaching of those key subjects and if there were any examples of this form of teaching working elsewhere.**

The Corporate Director – Children advised that secondary schools in Gloucestershire provided a number of single sex schools, and the outcome for boys had proved to be better as a result. She suggested that although the Authority may not wish to move to that system, there could be an argument for teaching more subjects separately.

The Representative - Central South Consortium (RH) advised that the gap between boys' and girls' achievements did vary and generally girls did outperform boys across the board, particularly in Key Stage 3 and 4. The gap in achieving in literacy based subjects, particularly English is widest with boys performing less well; however the gap between them in maths was much narrower.

**A Member asked if there were any active strategies to combat the differences, particularly in primary schools where there was a lack of male teachers.**

The Representative - Central South Consortium (ST) advised that it would be down to the quality of teaching. She commented that a lot of schools use School Governors as male role models, where there is a lack of male teachers and advised that small strategies could be quite proactive.

The Group Manager - School Improvement advised that in her experience, separating the girls from the boys, particularly in English lessons, does show an improvement in results for boys; however at the same time the girls also further improved and therefore it did not alter the gap between the two sets.

**A Member asked whether the use of School Governors as role models is openly shared across all schools.**

The Representative – Central South Consortium (ST) advised that as the schools in the Borough now worked in school improvement groups, that best practice would be at the forefront, and is

one of the priorities for the Welsh Government. However, it would be the decision of individual Head Teachers to make that decision.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People informed Members that schools in the Borough had a good cluster arrangement; however improvement was still needed to shape best practice more quickly through school improvement groups.

Another Member referred to the target setting and tracking process and was concerned that the individual schools name in the report had actually achieved far greater than their targets. It was his belief that their knowledge of using data in the process was inadequate had affected the results. He gave Garth Comprehensive School as an example where pupil tracking showed an increase of 11% in targets in a cohort of 30 children at KS2 with just three pupils. He stated that they could have been targeted because of the data setting and knowledge to achieve that level, and believed that schools should be congratulated, and it should not be presumed that they were not up to speed with the data processing.

The Group Manager – School Improvement advised that the performance was to show the target setting to emphasise that fact that it was a different process. Most schools in the Borough had been challenged on their target setting as they had previously not been challenging enough, albeit that the cohort of the school had been taken into account. She informed Members that the information had been included to demonstrate that the majority of schools had made great strides in performing their target setting, and stressed that it was not an exact science.

**The same Member referred to paragraph 3.4 of the report, regarding the reservations concerning the reliability and accuracy of the NC assessment reporting across schools and local authorities. He questioned that if the assessments were accurate then it would show valuable data at KS3 and if not, banding would go down. He asked what action was being taken regarding the possibility of external examinations at KS2 with the move towards outside bodies undertaking the marking. He believed that schools were continually playing catch up to KS4, and the report identified that this did affect the school banding.**

The Representative – Central South Consortium (RH) explained that the data was an expression of high expectations for every school, for every child and the core of any school's work was to provide pupils with the opportunity to achieve their very best. He advised that the data was also being used to compare performance both locally and nationally, and he explained that although the only complete data in Wales was for KS4. Last year data on the first year of national testing for reading and numeracy was introduced and would be repeated this year. The Welsh Government had set up working groups to redefine it, and although there would be more objections to a national testing regime, it would be a year or two before schools would come to rely on it, with reading and numeracy tests for every year group. He advised that there were no assessments for teachers.

**A Member asked what degree of confidence Officers had that schools would get back on track in the coming year, and what actions were being put in place to achieve this.**

The Group Manager – School Improvement advised that the previous Corporate Director – Children had put in place a review of teacher assessments across primary schools. This demonstrated that confidence had been restored in the science subjects, with some advice being given to Primary Schools from external consultants. The System Leaders had looked at the assessments in the schools, challenging them on science subjects, and if the results in those subjects appeared low, the school would be questioned as to what was wrong in order to ensure the appropriate intervention was put in place. The current measures were on numeracy and literacy.

**One Member asked if Officers were confident that Bridgend was in a better position in terms of making progress now that the consortium had taken over school improvement, and whether there were adequate scrutiny arrangements in place between this Authority and the consortium.**

The Corporate Director – Children advised that it was about working closely together to deliver the new Consortia Business Plan in line with the national model. Staff had a close working relationship and the Senior System Leader was regarded as a member of staff supporting school improvement in the County Borough. She was confident that schools were now in a better position. KS4 was already showing an improvement in line with targets and early intervention and support for children and their families was in place, with schools working alongside other agencies to ensure that the children from those families came to school ready to learn.

**A Member asked what changes had been made to enhance the work of Social Workers in the community.**

The Head of Safeguarding and Family Support advised that the most fundamental change came approximately 18 months ago when the strategic decision was taken to move to generic safeguarding teams within Bridgend. The teams work from hubs with the same core of professionals, including health visitors and midwives. He informed Members that the intention was to move three teams out into local communities, with the first one being set up at the beginning of June in the Pyle Life Centre. A further team will be established in Y Dderwen Comprehensive School during the summer and they were looking for yet another venue towards the north of the Borough. He advised that practitioners were already using these facilities.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People commented that he had every confidence in the project due to the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) following the Estyn inspection which had recognised that progress was being made. Although the consortium now governed school performance, it is the Authority who commissions it, chaired by the Leader, alongside senior staff from the Authority. Behind that the changes made will strengthen those arrangements even further. He advised that the most exciting development is Central South Consortium, as it recognised that the key to school improvement lay with the schools themselves. He reported that school improvement had proved successful in London and Manchester under far more difficult circumstances than Bridgend experienced, and it was that model which had been adopted here. He stated that he was confident it would succeed, particularly as it had not been imposed on schools, and the model had been co-constructed with Head Teachers. He added that Bridgend did have good schools and school improvement was about the support provided through access inclusion.

**One Member asked whether the accountability put in place was adequate, given that a large part of the service to schools, previously delivered by the Authority was now provided by the consortium.**

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People explained that this would need to be developed; however ultimately the Cabinet would be held to account for school performance and if Member felt that the consortium was not delivering and not taking steps to address any weaknesses. This arrangement would also be held to account by Estyn and the Welsh Government.

The Representative – Central South Consortium (RH) advised that it was intended to have robust scrutiny arrangements in place, with more contact through committees like this one in the future.

**Conclusions:**

Following discussion on the ways in which data is collected, and how this takes account of the number of pupils within a school who have Additional Learning Needs or Special Educational Needs, the Committee welcomed the news that debate was taking place on this issue at a national level. The Committee expressed the hope that this debate would lead to the development of a more sophisticated method of assessing school performance that takes into account the number of pupils with SEN or ALN, and does not therefore appear to penalise those schools with a high number of such pupils.

Due to the persistent gap in boys' and girls' achievement, the Committee recommends that the Central South Consortium examines the evidence regarding segregating boys and girls for specific lessons, and the impact this has on achievement, with a view to piloting this, depending on the results of the evidence.

The Committee is concerned that the Authority, and implicitly our primary schools, were not adequately prioritising attainment in the science subject area at KS2. Based on the Committee's discussions around KS2 CSI outcomes and the rapid deterioration of Bridgend's rank position in Wales (from 6th authority in 2011 to 18th in 2013) the Committee would want Cabinet to instruct the Central South Consortium to ensure an equal priority is given in our schools to science alongside literacy and numeracy at KS2.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the reliability of KS2 assessment as it remains a teacher assessment that is ultimately subjective. The Committee welcomed the introduction of a national, objective assessment at KS3 but accepted that it would need to be in place for a few more years before robust analysis of the data over time could occur.

With regard to those schools whose targets were significantly over or under actual performance, the Committee noted that in smaller schools, a seemingly significant percentage difference could relate to a very small number of actual pupils. For this reason, the Committee consider that in future, figures should be expressed as both a percentage difference and as an actual number.

The Committee recognise that there are many areas of good practice within the County Borough and welcome those arrangements and processes, such as the use of the school cluster fora, which allows schools to share good practice.

#### 105 LOCAL AUTHORITY ESTYN INSPECTION – POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The Corporate Director – Children presented a report to update Members on the progress regarding the implementation of the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP), which was required following the Estyn inspection on the quality of Bridgend Council's education services for children and young people. The PIAP sits within the wider Council planning and monitoring processes and addresses the five recommendations in the inspection report, detailed under Appendix 1. Related actions are also identified in the Directorate Business Plan, corporate programmes and the Single Integrated Partnership Plan.

**Discussion took place on the proposed action to impose fixed penalties on parents who took their children on holiday during term time, and one Member suggested that some families had no choice but to take their children out of school during term time, as this was often due to work or financial reasons.**

The Corporate Director – Children advised that on the run up to the school Easter break, some schools found that a percentage of pupils were absent and took 3 extra days off on the approach to the Bank Holidays. She described how one school in particular struggled on Fridays and Mondays during the summer due to families taking caravan breaks over a 'long weekend', and commented that these missed days added up over the school year. She informed Members that there was a clear link between missing school and achievement and a report was being

presented to Cabinet tomorrow to introduce the Welsh Government's new proposals around fixed penalty notices to parents who took their children out of school during term time. She advised that if Cabinet agreed this proposal, it would then be considered as part of the improvement attendance using a fixed penalty of £60 when parents are not supporting the school in helping children to attend. She informed Members that she would be asking Cabinet to agree a local policy that schools do not routinely authorise absence during term time for family holidays. Head Teachers agree with this revised policy and are keen that the Authority implements it.

The Group Manager – School Improvement advised that it was usually those children who were taken out of school during term time who were the most vulnerable with regards to achievement. Head Teachers could sanction up to 10 days in one school year; however teachers had welcomed the community leadership role in this, as schools had a duty to ensure pupils are proactive right up until the last day of term.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People advised that although Cabinet had not yet made a decision, the attendance rate in Wales was still lower than England, despite some improvement. In response to a suggestion from Members on flexibility, he advised that it would be difficult to highlight certain times in the school year that were less important, as he believed that every day in school was important. He advised that the Penalty Notice would be issued for just one day of absence and the Family Engagement Officer would try to work with families to prevent such absences. The report would outline all the different initiatives to tackle absence rather than focusing on just one aspect.

**The Chairperson drew the Committee's attention to the low turn-out for training sessions by Members.**

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People informed Members that verbal feedback from Estyn had intimated the poor attendance by Members of this Committee which he advised would need to be addressed. He added that the dates and timings of sessions would be considered and in future, Members would be given plenty of notice.

**A Member asked whether all the Youth Support Services were using the QES database or similar, and if so how the outcomes would be developed.**

The Corporate Director – Children confirmed that it was being used as a tool as it was the perfect database the Directorate would want to use, and had the potential to be more broadly adopted as part of planning. The intention was to collate all the Childrens Services onto one database and to ensure that the QES database does not become a stand-alone. She informed Members that Estyn had highlighted the fact that Directorate had made good progress in linking them all together since the last inspection.

The Chairperson thanked the invitees for their attendance.

**Conclusions:**

The Committee noted the importance of training for Members in support of Estyn's Recommendation 4 (Improve the quality of information provided to elected members so that they can challenge the performance of the Authority's services and schools more robustly). The Committee noted that registered representatives and co-opted members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee should also be invited to attend any training activities. However, the Committee considered that four hours (as has been the case for some training events in the past) was too long, and training events should last no longer than two hours.

The Committee agreed with the importance of improving school attendance; however it considered that the uncompromising tone of letters being sent to parents regarding the importance of not taking children out of school during term time risked damaging the relationship between parents and schools. The Committee considered that the letters could be more constructively worded in order to emphasise those times of the academic year when it was particularly essential that children attended, thereby focusing on positive behaviour rather than anticipating negative behaviour.

The Committee also questioned the effectiveness of fining parents who took children out of school during term time. The Committee considered that this would not be an effective deterrent, especially to wealthier parents, and could be perceived as a local authority revenue raising exercise.

The Committee welcomed the news that levels of NEETS had improved and noted that they would be receiving a report on this topic at their next meeting. The Committee noted the importance of intervening early, even at primary school age, to address the needs of pupils at risk of becoming NEETS.

The Committee expressed particular interest in the RoNEETS programme and noted the importance of establishing the sustainability of intervention/ prevention programmes.

#### 106 UPDATE OF INCLUSION PROGRAMME BOARD AND THE INCLUSION SERVICE

The Corporate Director – Children and Young People presented a report to provide the Committee with:

- An update on the position of the Inclusion Programme Board
- An update on the restructure of the Inclusion Service

The Inclusion Programme Board was established in 2009. The membership of the Board included amongst others the Corporate Director – Children; Head of Learning; Head of Strategy, Partnership and Commissioning; Group Manager Inclusion; Principal Educational Psychologist and an ALN Champion. The Board oversaw the development of the Learning Resource centres. The work of that Board is now concluded with the realignment of the LRCs being complete.

A consultation regarding the proposed restructure of the Inclusion Service and Educational Psychology Service was undertaken between November 2013 and January 2014. All changes were based on consideration of the impact they would have on service users and their families and the changing needs of those children, rather than on financial considerations. The focus of the restructure was to ensure that children were getting the help they needed at the time they needed them. It also sought to ensure that frontline services were providing the support needed.

The Corporate Director – Children advised that the Inclusion Programme Board no longer exists and has since been integrated into the Children's Change Programme Board, as it was more beneficial to work closely with colleagues across the Directorate, and it was imperative to drive forward together as a Directorate rather than in isolation. She assured Members that inclusion was foremost on the agenda. The new structure for the Inclusion Service commenced at the beginning April 2014 and was now fully functioning, with schools already commenting on improvement. She explained that the revised structure would enable the delivery of more open, positive and flexible inclusion services, such as support for autism, as there had been high incidents of children suffering from autistic spectrum disorders. As well as providing children with the support they need, at the same time the restructure was realising financial savings. She advised that by actively bringing together the whole area of behaviour and wellbeing, this would ensure a more holistic approach for a diversity of need in different settings.



Discussion took place and the Committee nominated Councillor D B F White to sit on the Inclusion Programme Board as ALN Champion.

The Corporate Director – Children pointed out that whilst she welcomed an ALN Champion, the Board was a broader setting, focusing on bespoke pieces of work in order to drive the agenda forward, covering transport and developing nursery education policy, and therefore it may not be relevant for a Member to sit on that Board. She suggested that it would be more appropriate to have an ALN Champion the Board could provide reports to and for that Champion to be invited along to a meeting when discussing relevant reports. She therefore requested that the Committee consult the Legal Department on nominating an elected Member to the Board, as there may be a conflict of interests.

The Chairperson requested that the Corporate Director – Children report Councillor White's expression of interest and report back to the Committee on this matter.

The Cabinet Member – Children and Young People suggested that it would be more appropriate for him in his role as Cabinet Member to sit on the Board and hold regular meetings with the ALN Champion. He congratulated Michelle on her appointment to Group Manager – Inclusion and advised that he had received excellent feedback from teachers on her performance. He informed Members that she had managed to deliver on a restructure that had saved a significant amount of money whilst enhancing some of the services provided to children and young people, which he remarked had been no mean feat. The Chairperson echoed those remarks.

**Conclusions:**

The Committee noted and welcomed the changes to the Inclusion Service which had allowed the Directorate to adopt a more holistic approach to inclusion.

The Committee nominated Cllr D White as its ALN Champion and agreed that it would await the outcome of further legal advice regarding whether it would be appropriate for the ALN Champion to sit on the Children's Change Programme Board, as the Inclusion Programme Board has ceased to exist as a separate entity.

The Committee noted that the role of the ALN Champion could potentially be effectively discharged by means of regular meetings with the Group Manager, Head of Service, Corporate Director and Cabinet Member, with regular reports back to the Committee.

107 **MEMBER AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny presented a report to inform the Committee of the work of the Member and School Engagement Panel during 2013-14. The Committee had previously agreed that the Panel would consider the published Estyn report for each secondary school

**Conclusions:**

The Committee noted the report and suggested that in the future, schools who had taken part should be approached to establish whether they had found the experience beneficial.

108 **SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORTING FRAMEWORK – NOMINATIONS FOR JOINT RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PANEL**

The Senior Democratic Service Officer - Scrutiny presented a report to request the Committee to nominate four Members to sit on the Joint Research and Evaluation Panel (REP) to consider the Social Services Annual Reporting Framework. Members had agreed at a previous meeting of

the Committee that this work should be undertaken through a REP established jointly with the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which had also agreed to this. It was suggested that a total of eight Members would be suitable for a joint Panel, four from each Scrutiny Committee.

It was proposed that the same procedure without amendment is followed this year in order for the Annual Report to be reported to Cabinet.

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee appointed the following four Members to sit on the Joint Research and Evaluation Panel to consider the Social Services Annual Reporting Framework:

Mr W Bond

Councillor C Westwood

Mr K Pascoe

Councillor D B F White

109 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report outlining the items due to be considered at the meeting of the Committee to be held on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2014, subject to this meeting date being approved at the Annual Meeting of Council.

**Conclusions:**

The Committee noted the topics due to be considered at the meeting of the Committee scheduled for the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

The meeting closed at 5.20pm.