

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 APRIL 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM COLLABORATIVE SCRUTINY GROUP

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to present an annual update on the work of the Central South Consortium (CSC) Collaborative Scrutiny Group.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 This report and the establishment of a Collaborative Scrutiny Working Group for the Central South Consortium assists in the achievement of the following Corporate Priority:

- a) **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Central South Wales Consortium is responsible for school improvement on behalf of five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 3.2 The Consortium is accountable to the local authorities through a Joint Committee comprising the relevant Cabinet Member for each Local Authority.
- 3.3 The Consortium's performance is scrutinised on an annual basis by the relevant Scrutiny Committee in each Local Authority who examine the detail of the latest school performance results and business plan. These meetings focus on data and activity relevant to the individual local authority rather than performance in the region overall.
- 3.4 This accountability and scrutiny structure is critically important since the statutory responsibility for the performance of schools resides in the individual Local Authorities.
- 3.5 Consortium officers have met regularly with the five Scrutiny Committee Chairs in the Central South Consortium, as a group. Officers representing/working for the five local authorities have also attended. The idea was to develop a 'regional' element to

scrutiny work in addition to the current individual local authority scrutiny programme outlined above.

3.6 Last year this was formally made into a Collaborative Working Group with each Council approving its establishment and Terms of Reference.

3.7 The Group's purpose is to consider the following standing items:

- i. The consortium's progress against its 3-year business plan on a regional basis
- ii. Regional performance trends
- iii. Sharing best scrutiny practice across the region

3.8 In addition to this the group have proposed further items for consideration such as the Consortium's value for money, Governor training and support, the Free School Meal attainment gap and the impact from recent changes to the Pupil Deprivation Grant, focusing each time on the regional and national perspective.

3.9 It was also agreed that the group would report annually to each relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee in each LA and provide recommendations to the Consortium's Joint Committee.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

4.1 The group meets on a quarterly basis, and following approval by all of its TOR and approach they have since received the CSC Annual Standards Report and Draft Business Plan monitoring, considered regional and national pupil outcomes and the national categorisation results for the region.

4.2 They have also considered the Estyn report on the Consortium as well as aspects such as the new curriculum and the region's plans around cluster working and maximising partner schools' access to pioneer school expertise.

4.3 The Group has subsequently agreed to consider the Business Plan at each of their meetings to discuss CSC areas of focus and evidence of progress including expected outcomes and RAG Status updates, evidence of quality assurance, finance information, Consortium regional and national comparison data.

4.4 Through detailed consideration, the Group have also identified some regional topics that they deem worth consideration and have therefore added these to their forward work programme, which has been attached at Appendix A for information. One such example is an item on Vulnerable Groups – Performance and Support where the Group wish to look at the Performance of vulnerable groups separated out from overall pupil data. This item includes consideration of the impact of changes in curriculum on vulnerable learners – Looked After Children, pupils eligible for Free School Meals, pupils with Additional Learning Needs - who seem to have been inadvertently more affected by the changes recently taken place. The Group has also asked that within this they also look at the Consortium's work being undertaken to reduce the Free School Meal gap and the status of Pupil Development Grant

(PDG) and its future; evidence of how it is being used to raise pupil attainment for pupils eligible for Free School Meals. Members particularly wish to look at whether there have been any examples of success within the region or nationally that the Consortium has identified that could be shared across LAs.

- 4.5 On the subject of sharing best practice, the Consortium has also reported numerous areas where the Consortia across Wales are working together, establishing an agreed work plan to share best practice. Some examples of areas they are looking into include Leadership Development, Teacher workloads and Improving Standards. Updates on these working groups are scheduled to be received by the Scrutiny Collaborative Group at its next meeting.
- 4.6 It is hoped that through both the monitoring of the Consortium's Business Plan and detailed consideration of key regional issues and general trends in school performance across LAs, it will enable the Group to gain an overview of the Consortium's work and other school performance areas to make informed recommendations to the CSC Joint Committee with possible proposals for change and improvement.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 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. Any changes to the structure of the Scrutiny Committees and the procedures relating to them would require the Bridgend County Borough Council constitution to be updated.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications attached to this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications attached to this report.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- a) Note the work of the CSC Collaborative Scrutiny Group; and
 - b) Provide any suggestions that the Chair can take forward to the Group in terms of possible subject areas they may want to consider, detail on those already in the FWP and possible invitees that could assist them in their work.

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Background documents

None.