

## BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2014

#### REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES

##### MEMBER AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT PANEL

#### 1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To present the Committee with a revised plan for the Member School Engagement Panel.

#### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities.

- 2.1 The key improvement objectives identified in the Corporate Plan 2013–2017 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The Corporate Improvement Objectives were adopted by Council on 19 February 2014 and formally set out the improvement objectives that the Council will seek to implement between 2013 and 2017. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

#### 3. Background.

- 3.1 At its meeting on 11 February 2013, the Committee established a Research and Evaluation Panel in order to engage with Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors. The purpose of this Panel would be to explore school performance and improve levels of understanding in support of the Committee's accountability function.
- 3.2 The Committee agreed that the Panel would pilot this project with secondary schools, receiving and discussing with the relevant Head Teacher and Chair of Governors their Estyn report when it is published, alongside school banding figures and school performance data for the current year.
- 3.3 An annual summary report was presented to the Committee in April 2014 in to ensure that all Members were kept informed of the work of the Panel, and the key findings.

#### 4. Current Situation / Proposal.

- 4.1 Following Estyn's inspection of the Local Authority in October 2012, inspectors have returned for monitoring visits. Whilst acknowledging the work of the Member and School Engagement Panel, they were of the view that the project should be further developed and expanded; firstly to incorporate primary schools as well as secondary, and also to focus on a broader criteria other than the timing of a school's Estyn inspection.

4.2 Having learnt from the pilot project, and following research and discussions with the Corporate Director - Children's Services, it seems more appropriate to concentrate on where there are issues or concerns and a need for improvement, as well as where there has been significant change and significant improvement in performance. It is therefore proposed to continue with the Research and Evaluation Panel with enhanced focus on schools who come under the following criteria:

- Schools in Category Red in the National Schools Categorisation System
- Schools where the Director has had to intervene and use her statutory powers
- Schools where there has been a significant improvement in performance; this could be a school who has moved up from a Category Red to Green in the Categorisation System, or even a school whose performance in a particular area appears to stand out positively against the majority of other schools within the county borough.
- Schools whose involvement in the Central South Wales Challenge or Challenge Cymru has brought about improvement in standards.

### **National Schools Categorisation System**

4.3 Attached at Appendix A is a written statement by Welsh Government around the new National Schools Categorisation System which is due to be introduced in January 2015. This system will incorporate the principles of the Secondary School Banding but will be colour coded, and will include Primary Schools, for a pilot year, as well as Secondary Schools.

### **Local Authority Intervention**

4.4 Intervention in maintained schools is done under Part 2 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. This is accompanied by the 'Schools Causing Concern: Statutory guidance for schools and local authorities', which, together, provide a single point of reference for local authorities when they are considering using their powers to intervene in schools causing concern.

4.5 There are 6 grounds for intervention and where there are grounds for doing so, it is initially the local authority's job to intervene in the conduct of a school, usually after serving a warning notice under the Act.

4.6 The key messages about where the LA can use its powers of intervention are as follows:

- Where a school has been judged as requiring significant improvement or special measures
- Where the school or key figures within it refuse to collaborate with an appropriate partner.
- Where the governing body needs additional expertise, or the head teacher and senior management team need further challenge and support.
- Where the governing body is providing insufficient challenge to the head teacher or senior management team of the school, is providing an obstacle to progress, or where there has been a breakdown in working relationships that is having an impact on standards.

## **Central South Wales Challenge**

- 4.7 In January 2014, the five local authorities that constitute Central South Wales (Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and the Vale of Glamorgan) launched a major new strategy to raise standards across all schools in the region.
- 4.8 The aim of the Central South Wales Challenge is to stimulate the sharing of expertise amongst schools and joint efforts to innovate in order to:
- Improve the performance of every school;
  - Increase the numbers of good and excellent schools;
  - Reduce the gap between high and low performing groups of learners; and
  - Improve outcomes for vulnerable groups of pupils.

## **School Challenge Cymru**

- 4.9 Schools Challenge Cymru was announced in February 2014, and includes 40 Secondary Schools, called Pathways to Success Schools, who will be part of the Welsh Government's multi-million pound, improvement programme to increase performance in Welsh schools.
- 4.10 Schools have been chosen using a range of performance data and information that highlights the challenges they face in terms of their circumstances and stage of development. They have been also been chosen as it is believed they have the potential to deliver swift and positive improvements for learners.
- 4.11 Working with their Schools Challenge Cymru advisor, each Pathways to Success School will be given the opportunity to access proven expertise, to deliver a package of support that is individually tailored to meet each school's needs and the needs of their learners. This will be backed by around £20 million of Welsh Government funding.
- 4.12 The programme will also provide targeted support to participant schools' cluster primaries in order to address challenges at the earliest opportunity and improve transition between these key stages of education.

## **Research Areas**

- 4.13 As it is now proposed to include primary schools as well as secondary schools in the investigation, the data considered at each meeting will need to reflect this. Therefore, as before, the relevant Estyn inspection report and Key Stage Data will be considered for all schools, as well as the new National Schools Categorisation data. Further to this, it is suggested that the Panel also consider Central South Consortia documentation such as the Annual Report on Performance (APR), school visit reports and where relevant, Post Inspection Action Plans.

## **Panel Membership**

- 4.14 Once again, it is proposed that the membership of the Panel be determined on a rota basis, to allow all Members an opportunity to be involved and to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest, given that a significant number of Members are also school governors.

## **Schedule of Meetings**

4.15 Due to the increase in the project's remit, with primary schools now being incorporated, and the criteria expanded, the number of schools being considered under the project will likely increase. Due to the fact that the school performance results have not yet been published, it is not known how many schools will now fit within the criteria. Once the results are in the public domain, Members will be able to determine what schools will form part of this project. However, in determining which and how many schools to include, Members are asked to take into account capacity issues.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

5.1 The work of the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental well being in the County Borough of Bridgend.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There are no equalities impact issues arising from the report.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 There are no financial implications.

## **8. Recommendation**

The Committee is asked:

- i. to agree to re-establish the Member and School Engagement Panel;
- ii. to approve the new approach and criteria for the Panel, including the incorporation of Primary Schools as well as Secondary schools.

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## **Background Documents**

Welsh Government

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/raisingstandards/schools-challenge-cymru/?lang=en>

Welsh Government

<http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/educationandskills/2014/140501-schools-challenge-cymru/?lang=en>

Central South Consortium

<http://www.cswchallenge.com/>