

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2018

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB
ON TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2018 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor CA Webster – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
DK Edwards
KJ Watts

NA Burnett
J Gebbie

RJ Collins
M Jones

PA Davies
RME Stirman

Apologies for Absence

SK Dendy, JH Tildesley MBE, LM Walters and AJ Williams

Registered Representatives

William Bond
K Pascoe

Special School Sector
Secondary School Sector

Officers:

Gail Jewell
Andrew Rees
Tracy Watson

Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Scrutiny Officer

Invitees:

John Fabes
Lindsay Harvey
Councillor Charles Smith

Specialist Officer Post 16 Education & Training
Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C Webster declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 - Review of Post 16 Provisions across Bridgend, Public Consultation on Concepts as she has a child in secondary education in the County Borough.

Councillor NA Burnett declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 - Review of Post 16 Provisions across Bridgend, Public Consultation on Concepts as she has a child in secondary education in the County Borough.

Rev Canon E Evans declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 - Review of Post 16 Provisions across Bridgend, Public Consultation on Concepts as he is the Chairperson of the governing body of Bryntirion Comprehensive School.

Mr K Pascoe declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 - Review of Post 16 Provisions across Bridgend, Public Consultation on Concepts as he is a member of the governing body of Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School.

34. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 of 5 September 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record subject to Councillor KJ Watts name being added to the list of apologies for absence for the meeting.

35. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer reported on items which had been prioritised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its next cycle of meetings would be considering the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Committee considered that it wished to scrutinise Education Outcomes at its meeting in January and the Review of the Fostering Project in February.

The Scrutiny Officer presented a list of further potential items for comment and prioritisation and requested the Committee identify any further items for consideration using the pre-determined criteria form.

Conclusions

In relation to the response received from Welsh Government regarding the transfer of funding for prisoners in the secure estate, Members recommend that a reply is drafted and that a subject access request is made covering the following:

- The cost of individually housing prisoners per year;
- The cost of the Parc Prison contract;
- The cost to Bridgend Council - taking into consideration the grant that used to receive and the funding now allocated through the RSG.

Members prioritised the following items to be presented to Corporate for future allocation:

January	Education Outcomes
February	Review of Fostering Project

36. REVIEW OF POST 16 PROVISIONS ACROSS BRIDGEND, PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON CONCEPTS

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support introduced the report on the review of post 16 provision which would be the subject of public consultation. He stated that the review had been shaped by a number of reviews, a variety of reports and professional dialogue amongst the local education community. There was general consensus that current provision did not meet the stated ambitions for post-16 education across the County. He welcomed the views of the Committee in shaping future post 16 provision and stated that there was a need for post-16 education to deliver the best it could possibly be.

The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee of the background to the review of post 16 education which went back to 2011 wherein a distributed tertiary model was agreed by schools and colleges at that time offering a breadth of subjects with twilight provision delivered by Bridgend College. A further review took place in 2013 at the request of the Welsh Government which found that there was a good range of subjects on offer and good collaboration, but due to the pace of change there was a need for change. Further reviews took place with the establishment of a PSG Group. The Strategic Review Board in turn established a Post 16 Operational Board to review post 16 provision. The Strategic Review Board recommended six concepts be considered and two preferred options for the future of post 16 education. Cabinet in endorsing the recommendations in October 2017 requested more detailed work be undertaken and in April 2018 approved a public consultation on the six concepts and preferred options for post 16 education.

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The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that there are sixth forms in each secondary school which vary considerably in size for approximately 1,500 learners; including twilight provision; Welsh-medium provision is enhanced through extensive collaboration between YGG Llangynwyd with YGG Llanhari in RCT with faith education provision available at Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School. He indicated that from a variety of reports and professional dialogue from stakeholders there was general agreement that current provision did not meet the ambitions for post 16 education across the Borough, due to the size of sixth forms, post 16 funding, standards of achievement, the range of subjects offered and access to digital learning and staffing. The two preferred options are concept 4 which is a mix of school sixth forms with some mergers to create new local authority maintained sixth form centres and concept 5 which is a mix of school sixth forms with some mergers to create new FE college governed sixth form centres(s).

The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that the issues of Faith and Welsh language education and additional learning needs require separate consideration. In relation to Faith education, the Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School is some distance away from other faith schools, while there is a shortage of Welsh medium teachers and if sixth form provision was removed, it would have a knock on effect on YGG Llangynwyd. He stated that ALN would be the subject of a separate review but this would complement the review of post 16 education.

The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee of the consultation process to be followed in that there will be separate online surveys for adults and young persons and hard copies of the options will be available. Workshops will be run at all 9 secondary schools with the aim of engaging with 3,000 pupils and students. Parents would also be engaged through workshops to discuss the concepts for post 16 education.

The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration thanked the Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training for the immense amount of research he had undertaken in moving the concepts towards public consultation. He remained open minded on the concepts and that the chosen would be based on the best education outcomes. He commented on the need for maintaining the link between sixth form students with the rest of the school as aspirational role models and supporting younger pupils; the larger scale of a sixth form centre could offer learners a level 2 (GCSE) offer and curriculum breadth being retained at level 3 will allow minority subjects to be more viable. He stated there was a need for collaboration and it was important to have a common timetable. It was also important to introduce more e-learning and for teachers to move around sixth form centres instead of pupils being moved around. It was also important that every secondary school teacher has the opportunity to teach 16+ education and there was equal status given to academic and vocational students.

The Corporate Director Education and Family Support informed the Committee that the aim was to achieve high quality learning with first class support and a wide offer of curriculum.

The Committee expressed concern in relation to the movement of pupils and teaching staff between sixth form sites, particularly where teachers do not have access to a vehicle or do not drive. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training commented that the movement of teaching staff at YGG Llangynwyd had been looked at as some teachers car share, some do not have access to a car and some do not drive. Pupil movement between sixth form sites had also been looked at. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration commented that student centres were being looked at which would be based at existing schools. Concern was also expressed at the amount of time that would be lost with teachers and pupils travelling between sites

particularly the summer months and inclement during winter. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support informed the Committee that a whole range of aspects would be considered during the consultation, such as blended learning through the use of ICT and face to face learning. Investment had been made in fibre connectivity and video conferencing which had not been fully exploited to date. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that many students found adapting to blended learning difficult at first, but within half a term all students would be on track. Travel time has been considered and it was envisaged that most journeys could be completed within 20 minutes and undertaken at lunch times. Twilight provision is available where students will come together at Bridgend College for 2 hours, twice per week. He informed the Committee that 40% of students do not attend sixth form but instead travel to attend Bridgend College, which is one of the highest performing colleges.

The Committee questioned how the cost of travel between sites would be met. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that the cost to support post 16 travel had been funded by a Welsh Government grant. That grant had since reduced and was now administered by the Central South Consortium and devolved to schools budgets. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support commented that he and the Cabinet Member had visited 3 primary schools the previous day and had witnessed pupils' aged 5/6 using apps as part of their learning. He stated that addressing transport is a challenge; however secondary schools are working collaboratively. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that post 16 transport is a discretionary payment by local authorities. He stated that where sixth form centres exist, teaching groups are reduced creating efficiencies, with those efficiencies being used to transport students. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration commented that integrated timetable with common time tabling of lessons was being considered and that blended learning and tutorials would become the main focus.

The Committee expressed concern in relation to travelling between centres being carried out during lunchbreaks which should remain sacrosanct and there could be pressure for pupils to skip meals where they have to travel.

The Committee questioned whether ALN for post 16 students would be part of this review. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training stated that a distinct report would be produced reviewing ALN provision post 16 with students being directed towards college. The Committee commented that their needs are individual and their education has to be tailored.

The Committee expressed concern if concept 5 were implemented which would lead to the creation of a new FE college governed sixth-form centre(s) and the merger of several centres into a smaller number of larger centres may not lead to high performance. The Committee commented that smaller sixth forms in the Borough, namely Maesteg Comprehensive is among the highest performing sixth forms and there is already high performance amongst all sixth forms. The Committee also expressed concern over the transparency of governance and performance data if concept 5 was implemented.

The Committee expressed concerns were concepts 4 and 5 implemented and questioned where sixth form education would be maintained and where sixth form provision would be lost. The Committee also questioned whether the proposals could be the subject of challenge if the consultation process was not transparent enough. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that the proposals were intended to be evolutionary and not revolutionary. He stated that the consultation process would be transparent and that every permutation would be

considered. Any mergers would be worked through and be safe from a Judicial Review perspective.

The Committee questioned the research methods and evidence used to come up with the proposals for post 16 provision. The Committee also questioned whether employers and universities had been consulted on the proposals for post 16 education as to what they require and requested that consideration be given to consulting a sample of businesses as part of the consultation. Concern was expressed by the Committee that universities make unconditional offers. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that all concepts and background information will be in the consultation together with research papers used to inform the proposals. He stated that most research papers point away from small sixth forms and towards better leadership and teaching in larger settings. He commented that the highest performing sixth form centres are in colleges and that St David's College in Cardiff has larger teaching groups. He also commented that some schools had seen a dip in A level results, while others had seen an increase in performance as a result of students receiving unconditional offers. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that there is a great deal of variation in the performance of smaller sixth forms. The Corporate Director Education and Family Support confirmed that research had been undertaken by Estyn which had shown greater volatility of results in smaller schools.

Concern was expressed by the Committee on how the proposals would affect teaching staff and pupils and there was concern teachers would leave schools if there was no longer a sixth form provision at the school. Concern was also expressed that the retention of post 16 education by only a select amount of schools would influence parental choice which could lead to oversubscription in schools providing post 16 and surplus places where they were not. Concern was also expressed at the potential loss of some GCSE subjects at schools where there would be no sixth form. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training commented that he did not envisage there would be a risk to the availability of certain GCSE subjects being taught at schools.

The Committee expressed concern at the possible impact on the Council's budget of pursuing concepts 4 and 5. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training stated that there is discreet grant funding for post 16 education and schools are audited each autumn. The authority retains a small proportion of the grant funding (3%) which is ring-fenced from other budgets. He stated that the FE sector will also have access to these grants. There had been fiscal pressure with the grant which had been cut by 2.5%. He also stated that the funding per student is £1k more in England with post 16 education in Wales being under funded in comparison with England.

The Committee questioned whether the review of post 16 education would pave the way for super schools where RCT Council had rationalised its sixth forms provision. The Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training informed the Committee that the issues in the Borough are similar to that in RCT Council; however the Council was not looking at super schools.

In response to a question from the Committee as to whether consultation would be carried out with governing bodies, the Specialist Officer Post 16 Education and Training confirmed that would be the case. The Corporate Education and Family Support informed the Committee that the authority is governed by national policy and there is a very strict coded that has to be adhered to. He stated that the interests of learners need to be prioritised above all else. The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration commented that he and the Director had visited each secondary school and special school and were very positive with regard to the proposals.

The Committee thanked the invitees for their contribution.

Conclusions

- Members requested that ALN Post 16 Review is added to the FWP.

Members raised the following concerns:

- The Committee raised concerns in relation to the travelling between centres that were proposed to be carried out during pupil and teacher lunchbreaks and also queried what assessment of risk had been carried out if a greater transport time was involved.
- The Committee was concerned of the probable increase to travel arrangements imposed by most of the presented concepts, which in turn would create an increase to the Post 16 Transport budget and Members questioned the sustainability of this.
- To avoid future challenge, Members highlighted the necessity to present what Post 16 sites will be retained, along with evidence and reasoning for their retention.
- The Committee voiced its concerns regarding the positivity that was being presented in the consultation regarding Post 16 learning in large groups and Members were keen to emphasise that the Borough does have high performing Post 16 learning from much smaller settings.
- The Committee was concerned of how the retention of Post 16 Education by only a select amount of schools would influence parental choice. Members suggest that this could possibly lead to oversubscription in schools providing Post 16 and surplus places where they were not.
- The Committee raised concerns in relation to implementing Concept 5 - the creation of a new FE college governed sixth-form centre as this option would impact on schools, what the Authority provides and also the Council's budget. Members also voiced their concerns regarding FE governance and provided performance data.
- To enable Members to successfully visualise the process, the Committee suggest that Officers provide examples of blended learning in action.
- Members raised concerns regarding the implementation of Concept 3 where the proposal is to close all sixth forms and create a FE governed sixth form college. The Committee highlighted the danger that current post 16 staff could leave the schools where A-levels were no longer taught which could impact the choice and range of subjects available for GCSE options.

Recommendations

1. Initial concerns were raised regarding the evidence and research gathered for the review of Post 16 provisions and the Committee recommend that a representative sample of small, medium and large businesses be invited to partake in the consultation when live and that social research is also commissioned and undertaken on the pupils in our Borough.
2. The Committee requested clarification of the consultation process and recommend that Members of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 are invited to add value to the process and act as consultees when the consultation commences and that they receive the final outcomes prior to being presented to Cabinet.

37. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.