

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

25 FEBRUARY 2020

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to secure Cabinet's commitment to the long-term future of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.

2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 The information in this report relates to the following strategic priority in the Corporate Plan:
- Supporting a successful economy.

3. Background

- 3.1 Welsh Government is making significant changes to the delivery of education in Wales. In the autumn of 2018, the five Education Cabinet Members of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee commissioned the ISOS Partnership to undertake an independent review of Central South Consortium to ensure it was fit for purpose and financially viable for the foreseeable future.
- 3.2 A progress report from the Lead Chief Executive of the Consortium was presented to the Joint Committee on 19 December 2019, who approved recommendations 2.1 to 2.3. A copy of this report and the ISOS report is attached in the Appendix to this report.
- 3.3 The Joint Committee approved a request that five local authorities share the ISOS report with the Cabinets of the five local authorities to Central South Consortium before the end of February 2020, and that the five Councils consider and restate their commitment to a joint approach to school improvement through Central South Consortium.

4. Current situation

- 4.1 The ISOS report provides robust evidence that the educational performance of the Central South Region has significantly exceeded that of the other three Welsh regions; particularly when you consider the region has the highest levels of deprivation in Wales. Furthermore, the majority of the region's head teachers are positive about the support, advice and guidance provided by the Joint Service. However, given fundamental changes to the educational landscape in Wales against a backdrop of continued funding pressures, it is critical that the service evolves to meet needs in a flexible and sustainable manner.
- 4.2 It is therefore pleasing to note that the Joint Committee of Education Cabinet Members has been proactive and commissioned the ISOS review to independently evaluate the

performance of the Joint Service, identify the areas for improvement and to ensure it is fit for purpose and financially viable for the long term.

4.3 In one of the four regions, there has been some uncertainty as to the long-term future of their shared educational advisory services. This report seeks to provide a clear commitment from each of the five Councils to the long-term future of Central South Consortium and provide schools and Central South Consortium staff with some certainty in a period of significant flux for the education sector in Wales.

4.4 If the five Council Cabinets confirm their continued support for the delivery of the shared educational advisory services, the Directors of Education and the Managing Director of Central south Consortium will move forward with:

- plans to remodel Central South Consortium as advised by ISOS;
- three-year budget proposals for consideration by the five Councils; and
- opportunities to ensure that the vast majority of grant funding continues to go directly to schools, but that the relevant overheads of delivering Welsh Government curriculum support are appropriately funded by Welsh Government grants.

4.5 There will be significant engagement with headteachers and governors as part of the remodelling of Central South Consortium, and in the delivery of future work programmes.

4.6 If a Council wishes to withdraw from the Central South Consortium, the legal agreement states:

Any party proposing to withdraw from this agreement must notify each of the other parties by giving not less than two years notice in writing of its intention to withdraw expiring on 31 March in any given year.

4.7 Therefore, the earliest any Council could withdraw from the agreement is 31 March 2022.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no impact on the Council's policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment provides a comprehensive summary of the outcomes expected from the implementation of the service.

Long term The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 ("the 2015 Act") requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

Prevention The local authority's commitment to raising standards in all of Bridgend schools.

Integration	Monitoring and acting upon schools' individual needs is key to ensuring that outcomes for schools are achieved thus helping to support a successful economy.
Collaboration	This report recognises the importance of working in collaboration to meet the needs of young people over the long term.
Involvement	This area of work involves all stakeholders in school improvement. Schools work closely with challenge advisers from CSC to refine their improvement plans or post-inspection action plans and to identify strategic support from the local authority, CSC and elsewhere (as required) reflecting the diversity of stakeholders involved in aspects of school improvement.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. All costs will be covered from existing budgets.
- 8.2 It is important to note that savings have been identified within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2020-2021 in respect of the local authority's financial commitment to Central South Consortium, and further savings are likely for future years. The local authority does not anticipate that these savings will have any negative impact on the service provided by Central South Consortium to its schools or pupil referral unit.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Based on the fact that an independent review of the work of Central South Consortium has determined the Joint Service will be well placed to deliver school improvement functions effectively, and support schools to manage the major reforms across the region, along with positive feedback received from head teachers at recent Scrutiny sessions, it is recommended that Cabinet:
- agrees to support the decision of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee to continue to deliver shared educational advisory services in partnership with the other four Councils in the region for at least the next three years.

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Background documents: None