

TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM - TUESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2019

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2019 AT 16:00

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

N Alderton	JPD Blundell	MC Clarke	N Clarke
P Davies	Cllr L Desmond-Williams	RM Granville	Cllr P Jenkins
B Jones	D Jones	T Lyddon	A Mckay
CE Smith	W Willis		

Apologies for Absence

Cllr Stuart Baldwin, Cllr Ken Watts, Coychurch Lower Community Council, Pencoed Town Council.

Officers:

Michael Pitman	Business Administrative Apprentice
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services

189. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

190. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 15/07/2019 and 29/07/2019 as a true and accurate record.

191. BRIDGEND'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support and Family Support presented a report which updated Members of the Town and Community Council Forum on Bridgend's local government education services.

He explained that BCBC maintained 60 schools, which included 48 Primary Schools (4 being Welsh-medium education), 9 Secondary Schools (1 being Welsh-medium education) and 2 special education schools.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support and Family Support explained that Bridgend was one of five local authorities in the Central South Consortium joint education service for school improvement. He informed Members that in 2019-20, the Council's net Education and Family Support Directorate budget was approximately £114m, which represented 42% of the Council's total net budget of £271m.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support and Family Support provided figures in relation to children and young people in Bridgend which was detailed at 3.3 of the report. He also provided statistics relating to school and pupil budgets which were detailed at 3.5 and 3.6 of the report.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support gave a presentation which elaborated on the aforementioned topics with the following key points noted:

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- Overall, pupils in Bridgend make good progress between the statutory school ages of five and sixteen.
- Pupil attendance is strong and consistently compares favourably with the all-Wales average.
- Pupil exclusion data is generally in line with the all-Wales average, although, recently, BCBC has seen a rise in fixed-term exclusions.
- In general, progress made by vulnerable learners, is either in line with, or better than, the all-Wales average.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support provided further pupil information which saw that:

- Over a 3-year average, 18.1% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are eligible for free school meals (which is slightly higher than the Wales average of 17.9%).
- 7.7% of pupils aged 5 and over are fluent in Welsh (which is lower than the all-Wales average of 16.2%).
- 6.0% of pupils are from ethnic minorities (which is lower than the all-Wales average of 11.0%).
- 20.2% of pupils have special educational needs (which is lower than the all-Wales average of 22.6%).
- 131 children per 10,000 were looked after by the local authority in 2018 (which is higher than the all-Wales average of 102 children per 10,000).

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support explained that improvements had been made in schools which was shown by recent Estyn assessments. It was found that Bridgend had 31 'green' support category schools (up from 27 in 2017-2018); 22 'yellow' support category schools (up from 21 in 2017-2018); 4 'amber' support category schools (down from 9 in 2017-2018); and 3 'red' support category schools (which is the same as in 2017-2018).

He added that the processes to monitor 'schools causing concern' were effective and the impact of these focused and robust systems for ensuring that progress was clear. For example, in the past year: the number of schools in Estyn review or monitoring categories has fallen from 11 to 6; and the number of schools in 'red' or 'amber' support categories has fallen from 12 to 7.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support advised that The local authority placed significant emphasis on the importance of learner voice. As part of the post-16 review, all secondary school student councils were engaged in workshops to create the learner voice input to the 'ambitions for 16-18 education across Bridgend County'. Later in the process, a detailed survey to establish learners' views of current 16-18 provision was launched and over 2400 learners aged 16-18 responded.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support explained the concept of 'Team Bridgend', which was a recognition of the fact that all delivery partners and stakeholders subscribe to the same vision and focus all efforts, at all times, on improving learner outcomes.

Through 'Team Bridgend', schools are expected to work in their clusters to develop learning and share good practice. This was exemplified through the team 'Strategy On A Page' (SOAP) documents.

Similarly, there were a number of structures that facilitated a learning culture whereby professionals were able to draw on and learn from others' experiences (e.g. head teacher meetings and wider groups where the sharing of effective practice takes place).

There were also a number of well-established professional learning networks across the borough that also contributed to developing and sustaining a learning culture.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support talked about the Local authority's strategic vision, aims and priorities in relation to national, regional and local priorities. He advised that the local authority had worked closely with schools as well as all operational team leaders within the directorate to agree on Team Bridgend's direction.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support also talked about the effectiveness of the leadership of elected members and officers and how the link between them and schools was effective. He said that Members and Officers have significant experience of the local authority and possess an ambitious vision for children and young people.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support provided details on the five proposals of the learner travel consultation. The consultation ran from 14th October 2019 and ends on the 5th January 2020 and included the following proposals:

- Withdrawal of transport for learners who benefit from available walking routes to school and live within the two/three miles thresholds.
- Removal of escorts from all taxis and minibuses of less than 8 passengers.
- Removal of specific examples in the policy regarding discretionary transport.
- Removal of transport for post-16 learners (with the exception of those learners attending Welsh-medium or faith schools).
- Removal of free home-to-school transport for nursery pupils.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support provided details on the post-16 consultation and the three options being considered:

Option 1

A mix of school sixth forms with some mergers to create new local authority maintained sixth-form centre(s).

Option 2

A mix of school sixth forms with some mergers to create new further education (FE) college governed sixth-form centre(s).

Option 3

The retention of sixth forms in all schools - the current position (ie a distributed tertiary model based on collaboration, but with further development in order to improve the delivery of this option).

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support provided a summary on the education services and ESTYN findings.

- In most key pupil attainment indicators (eg foundation phase indicator, key stage 3 core subject indicator, Level 1, Level 2, Level 2+ and Level 3), the local authority performs above the all-Wales average and compares favourably against similar local authorities.

- However, standards at key stage 2, performance in certain subjects (ie science at key stage 4) and the performance of more able and talented learners at post-16 have been identified as areas for development.
- The attainment of vulnerable groups is generally strong (eg the attendance and attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals in Bridgend is consistently above the all-Wales average).
- However, the gap in performance between pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils not eligible for free school meals requires improvement.
- In terms of pupil attendance, the local authority consistently performs better than the all-Wales average and, in most cases, exceeds the performance of similar local authorities. However, the number of fixed-term exclusions within the local authority is rising and has been identified as an area for improvement.
- Support for school improvement is generally good with 88% of Bridgend schools now being categorised as requiring 'green' or 'yellow' support (from 76% in 2016-2017). Similarly, since September 2017, the number of Bridgend schools in Estyn review or monitoring categories has fallen from 12 to 7.
- However, despite significant support from Central South Consortium, and the local authority exercising its statutory powers of intervention, the progress being made by Bridgend's three 'red' support category schools has not been swift enough and remains a key priority for the local authority.
- Provision for identified groups is generally good. For example, targeted support for young people at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training continues to result in positive outcomes. Similarly, the local authority's 'Edge of Care' services continue to demonstrate positive impact on preventing children from becoming looked after.
- The local authority works effectively with a wide range of delivery partners (including with its schools and Central South Consortium). The 'Team Bridgend' concept, which places significant emphasis on the importance of collaborative working, is promoted at every opportunity.
- While the local authority makes effective use of resources, it acknowledges the significant financial challenge it faces; especially in respect of the current and projected pressures on delegated and centrally retained budgets.
- The development of the Access to Education Panel and the creation of the Vulnerable Groups Team in 2018 demonstrate the substantial investment the local authority has made in ensuring children and young people in Bridgend benefit from tailored learning experiences and robust safeguarding processes.
- In conclusion, while readily acknowledging the challenges it faces, the view of the local authority is that its education services are generally effective. Local government education services in Bridgend are generally well-led, and, as a result, the local authority secures good outcomes for most learners.

A summary of the ESTYN recommendations were as follows:

R1 Raise standards of literacy in primary schools

R2 Improve outcomes for post-16 learners in sixth forms

R3 Increase the pace of improvement in schools causing concern

R4 Strengthen the role of the Welsh Education Strategic Forum to ensure timely progress in delivering the priorities identified in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

In conclusion, the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support was happy to answer any questions from Members and also explained that if they had questions following the meeting, that they could email EDSU.

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The Leader thanked The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support for the comprehensive presentation and asked Members if they had any questions.

Cllr Evans said that the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support explained there was a difference in performance from children who received free school meals compared with ones who did not. He asked what were the issues surrounding this and what could be done.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support stated that additional pupil development grant funding had been received which would target specific these specific pupils.

Cllr Evans asked what could be done for the children who are struggling in general. The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support explained that children's home life was pivotal on their performance.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration added that this was an important point to be raised and that support was required from families as well as for families. He stated that the strongest schools in relation to pupil performance are the ones that involve the parents the most, so this is something the local authority needs to work on.

The Leader stated that although this needs continuous work, schools in Bridgend are performing well, but the gap in performance between pupils still needed to be narrowed.

A Member asked in relation to Option 3 of the Post 16 Consultation, that this was discussed at the Subject Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 meeting. Was there any feedback from that?

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support explained that there were many good questions and discussions in that meeting and said that many positive comments were made about Option 3. He added that the authority will weigh up the risks and benefits of each options once there is enough feedback from the public and then report back to Scrutiny and Cabinet.

A Member asked if the schools and parents would be consulted. The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support confirmed that they would be. He explained that the language used will be different and tailored to ensure that everyone involved fully understands what we are planning.

A Member asked if there was any improvements to West Park Primary School in regards to School Modernisation Programme.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support explained that the Council had recently employed a new Energy Specialist who had been liaising with the Head Teacher at that school and said that the bills had already decreased there. He also explained that the infrastructure is assessed in categories from A to D and stated that no schools were in category D; however, there are issues with infrastructure in a number of schools that still need addressing.

A Member stated that the figures for Welsh Language speakers was lower than the average in Wales. He asked what was being done to ensure children and adults were encouraged into taking up the welsh language.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support agreed that this was an issue and that teaching the Welsh Language involves adults and children. He explained that

the 5 Welsh Medium Schools are doing well, but there is equal focus on ensuring English speaking schools are getting the chance to learn the Welsh language.

The Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration added that involving people in learning languages in general would be beneficial and stated that it was easier to learn other languages when people learn a second language early in life.

A Member asked what we were doing to ensure futureproofing of our schools, particularly schools that are currently in Band C. The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support explained that the main priorities were to ensure that there was enough space in the schools and that schools were fit for purpose. He added that, unfortunately, Government funding received was only to build new schools and not provide infrastructure improvements to existing schools.

Cllr Jenkins explained that there were three schools in the Llynfi area that were in need of updating and modernising, e.g. wind turbines and solar panels, which would be an investment that would save money in the long term. He provided options on making schools run more efficiently which included combining all the holidays into one, working through the traditional summer holidays and then closing the schools in the winter period, which would save on energy and maintenance costs.

The Corporate Director – Education and Family Support thanked Cllr Jenkins for the points he made and stated that it was good to have ideas on how the local authority can do things differently. The Head Of Operations - Community Services added that the funding we had receive would be spent in schools and we need to look at where the best investments can be made and paid back at a reasonable rate.

The Leader asked the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support for an annual update on this item to review the progress.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum:

1. Noted the contents of the report and;
2. Requested an annual update to review the progress.

192. **STREET CLEANSING**

The Head Of Operations - Community Services presented a report to update on the current street cleansing activities and resource levels throughout Bridgend County Borough and its Town Centres.

He explained that that the ongoing financial savings implemented by BCBC in order to meet reductions in public funding have had a significant impact on the size of the Street Cleansing Teams. He advised that in 2010, the street Scene Department consisted of around 85 staff in total, now in 2019 the department was made up of 35 operators.

The Head Of Operations - Community Services explained that in May 2019, the All Wales Local Environmental Audit and Management System Report 2018-19 compiled from independent on street inspections carried out by Keep Wales Tidy, gave Bridgend a Cleanliness Indicator Score of 67.7 and graded the streets predominantly free of litter and refuse apart from some small items or better as 96.7%. These scores were shown on Appendix 1 with all other Welsh authorities, as can be seen the Bridgend scores are comparable with those of surrounding South Wales authorities. He added that the general score was actually the highest Bridgend has ever scored.

The Head Of Operations - Community Services explained that the Cleaner Streets Operations Officer had spent considerable time over the past year building relations with the community. They had attended meetings to identify opportunities and offer support and ideas for ways in which to work together to meet objectives. He outlined the project work that had taken place which was listed at 4.9 of the report.

The Head Of Operations - Community Services explained the situation on dog fouling and said that it had been on the forefront of complaints received coupled with social media escalating people's opinions further, which had increased the demand for more action to be taken. He advised that the Public Space Protection Orders could be used in certain areas which gave the Local Authority the power to place bans for certain activities in an area, one of which can be dog walking, as a way to tackle the dog fouling. Further enforcement had also been in place whereby members of the public who walk their dog can now be fined for not carrying appropriate dog waste disposal bags.

The Head Of Operations - Community Services explained that to further improve the street scene environment, the contractor 3GS had been engaged to carry out litter enforcement activities throughout the borough. He advised that 592 fines had been issued and 10 prosecutions that had gone to court. He stated that approximately 80% of the fines issued were from cigarette littering. The enforcement work began in May 2019 and was set for review after one year had elapsed which would then set out future provision for enforcement.

The Head of Operations – Community Services explained that the costs of the Street Cleansing Teams were met through the Councils Revenue Budget and there was also additional funding provided from Welsh Government for £30,000 which would be used for the Volunteer Community Hubs Project.

A Member stated that this area of the Communities Directorate was a shining light, and that the public have taken the initiative to help by picking up litter themselves. The Leader commented that the initiative had only been in place for a few months but had already proven very successful.

Cllr Jenkins explained that there was still a big issue of fly tipping in the Llynfi Valley. He stated that one area which costed a lot of money to clean, was already back in the same condition just a few months later. He explained that CCTV in problem areas, although it would be expensive, could catch the persistent fly tippers and avoid further costs of cleaning. He added that there should be a bylaw in place to ensure businesses were not leaving the rubbish and bi-products left over from their premises outside in the streets.

The Head of Operations – Community Services thanked Cllr Jenkins for the points made. He explained that the authority was constrained with resources and staff so this would be difficult to achieve. He added that considering the cuts that had been made, the authority had done extremely well with what was available.

The Head of Operations – Community Services explained that the local authority needed to work with Town and Community Councils and the community more intelligently to figure out the best ways to use the resources that we had and asked for any suggestions from Members and Town Councillors if there were any local knowledge that might help with this, e.g. where hotspots were for littering, where best to place the litter bins etc.

Cllr Unwin asked if there were any road cleaning machines available to use for particular areas of Bridgend Town. The Cleaner Streets & Waste Contract Manager stated that they had 2 road sweepers, but did not currently have a road cleaning machine. She added that if there were any particular problems in the town centre that need attending to then let our team know.

The Head of Operations – Community Services added that businesses taking personal responsibility for the outside of their premises was a good idea and that was the mind-set that the local authority hoped to instil and will look at ways to approach instilling this mind set into local businesses as a way to improve the cleanliness of streets.

A Member stated that there was something called a Street Litter Control Notice that required the owners or occupiers of businesses to take steps to both minimise and clear up any litter that had come about as a result of their commercial or retail activities. This may be something to look into for the borough. The Leader agreed that this was something that should be looked in to.

Cllr Prescott explained that in Ogmores Valley there had been a number of areas where the weed spraying had taken no effect when it was undertaken in May. The Cleaner Streets & Waste Contract Manager asked Cllr Prescott to let the team know the specific locations of the weeds and it will be dealt with.

Cllr Chapel asked if any publication had been done on 3GS enforcement officers patrolling the Borough as he had not seen any advertising of this. He also asked if any fixed penalty notices could be issued for dog fouling.

The Cleaner Streets & Waste Contract Manager stated that the 3GS Enforcement Officers would engage with members of the public to inform them of the proper procedures. She added that it was difficult to issue a fixed penalty notice to an owner because that required the officer to witness first-hand the owner avoiding picking up the dog mess and walking away.

She added that with regards to publicising this, the team are awaiting more figures from fixed penalty notices from other means of littering so that they can build a case and be able to put together a proper statement which included figures.

The Leader added that the publication of personal details would not be the case, however, the general location of the offenses would be publicised so that the public knew the range of areas that the offenses took place and people were being fined to ensure deterrence of future offending.

Cllr Chapel asked if there was a specific place where they as well as the public can report offending hotspots.

The Cleaner Streets & Waste Contract Manager stated that this could be reported directly to Clean up the county in BCBC. The team could then direct 3GS to these hotspots.

The Leader thanked the suggestions and comments from members of the Forum and thanked the Officers who presented the reports today. He also thanked Town and Community Councillors for making the Love it don't trash it scheme so effective.

RESOLVED: That the Town and Community Council Forum Noted the report.

193. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.