

**SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2023**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1  
HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2023 AT 11:00**

Present

Councillor A Williams – Chairperson

RJ Collins

M J Evans

H Griffiths

D T Harrison

M Jones

J Llewellyn-Hopkins

AJ Williams

E D Winstanley

Officers:

Lucy Beard

Scrutiny Officer

Nicola Echanis

Head of Education & Family Support

Lindsay Harvey

Corporate Director Education and Family Support

Rachel Keepins

Democratic Services Manager

Meryl Lawrence

Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Jessica Mclellan

Scrutiny Officer

Susan Roberts

Group Manager School Improvement

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Johanna Llewellyn-Hopkins, Councillor Ellie Richards and Councillor Tim Thomas.

Registered Representative

Lyndsey Morris, Head of Llangewydd Junior School

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declared personal interests:

Reverend Canon Edward Evans as a Community Governor of Bryntirion Comprehensive School;

Councillor Melanie Evans as a Community Governor for Pencoed Comprehensive School and Croesty Primary School;

Councillor Richard Collins as a Community Governor for St Mary's and St Patrick's Primary Schools;

Councillor Martyn Jones as Chair of the Interim Executive Board of Ogmore Vale Primary School; and

Councillor Alex Williams as his partner is a teacher in a school piloting the Curriculum for Wales in another local authority.

12. ANNUAL LOCAL AUTHORITY SCRUTINY REPORT CENTRAL SOUTH  
CONSORTIUM 2021-2022

The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support introduced the representatives from Central South Consortium (CSC) and the Managing Director of CSC introduced the report, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of the work of CSC and to update Members on the contribution of CSC, working in partnership with the local authority, to raise standards in schools across Bridgend.

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The Chairperson thanked the Corporate Director of Education and Family Support and the Managing Director of CSC and Members discussed the following:

- The formula for the annual contribution made to CSC, the use of funds and how the authority measured tangible outcomes in relation to the revenue investment.
- The sufficiency of support from CSC given the decrease in funding and efficiency savings in schools budgets, the impact of reduced funding on CSC's improvement partners within Bridgend and targeting priorities of individual local authorities to minimise the effect of any changes.
- Systems to track and analyse pupil performance to secure school improvement, whether schools were being sufficiently transparent through self-assessment and other consistent data from tests undertaken according to the assessment framework they were developing in line with the curriculum for Wales.
- The sources of collaboration/cluster funding in Bridgend, including grant funding and professional learning grants that go into CSC, which is given to schools as a lump sum for meaningful use on any type of collaboration.
- Themes from the mid-year and end of year evaluations submitted by the 9 clusters, embedding a system of self-improvement and the cluster agreeing what it would like to focus on, e.g. assessment and progression with a consistent approach in line with the curriculum for Wales.
- Reasons why 16% of clusters had been deemed to be ineffective, concerns that not all schools were participating in CSC support and professional learning and the School Improvement Group's role in determining strategic priorities in particular schools.
- Improvement Partners working with schools to integrate recommendations from Estyn inspections into their school development plans and the possibility of Estyn increasing the regularity of their inspections.
- Archbishop McGrath School no longer being under Estyn review having made appropriate progress against each recommendation made at the original inspection.
- School representatives provided the following feedback of key aspects from their experience of the implementation and continued roll out of the new curriculum for Wales;
  - Learners and learner voice at the heart of what they do
  - Importance of embedding the four purposes at Key Stage 5, before they are mandatory
  - Autonomy of staff to determine best methods of implementation together with teaching and learning pedagogy
  - Ensuring literacy, numeracy and digital competency are integral to lessons
  - Sharing of practice with other schools.
  - Improvement in soft outcomes – thinking, problems solving, literacy and numeracy skills
  - Attendance rates higher than previous year and some challenges, including:
    - The Model clashing against structures elsewhere in school

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- School buildings not fit for purpose in terms of innovative approach
  
- The outcome of Corneli Primary School's case study on financial awareness.
- Key focus / priority areas for schools:
  - Literacy
  - Implementation and refining of the Curriculum for Wales
  - Assessment framework that was agreed by governing bodies as part of the adoption of the Curriculum for Wales
  - Developing effective self-evaluation processes to ensure they have an impact on teaching and learning
  - Networks that received an additional £30,000 funding to plan and facilitate professional learning to meet the schools needs
  - Welsh-medium and Special schools
  
- Minimum levels of support and measures to ensure that support is fulfilled and effective participation by schools and improvement partners in alignment with the School Improvement Network.
- Information regarding the support provided to the two schools who were not provided with bespoke support and the subject-specific support provided by CSC.
- The establishment and key roles of the Vulnerable Group Support Team including undertaking safeguarding audits using the Estyn-approved Safeguarding Audit Tool.
- CSC working on leadership and safeguarding by:
  - Increasing the level of safeguarding training for staff;
  - Developing internal governance structures;
  - Streamlining the way they did business plans to free up capacity;
  - Continuing the good partnership working between the Education and Family Support and the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorates, to ensure that pressures and successes were shared and lessons learnt;
  - Providing a clear vision and raising attainment of disadvantaged younger people and maximising support for free school meals through a pilot scheme in which Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen took part;
  - Development of one-page profiles, toolkits for teaching and learning and whole schools' policies; and
  - Tracking literacy, numeracy and participation.
  
- Pupil Development Grant funding and the impact on funding if eligible pupils did not claim free school meals to which they are entitled.
- An update regarding the 11 priorities and progress made by schools which were not on track during the reporting period of 2021-22 and the end of the academic year.
- The many strengths for which the Directorate and schools should be congratulated and areas requiring further development.

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- The feedback from other local authorities and whether consideration had been given to re-establishing a Joint Scrutiny Committee to potentially add value to CSC's draft 2023-24 business plan.

The Chairperson advised that there were no further questions for the invitees, thanked invitees for their attendance and, advised if they were not required for the next item, they may leave the meeting.

RESOLVED: Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendations:

1. The Committee highlighted that whilst it was useful to review the annual report 2021-2022, the context would have changed somewhat in the last year. With the value of the Committee's consideration residing in the scrutiny of the here and now and current situation, it was recommended that the Committee be given the opportunity to provide pre-decision scrutiny on Central South Consortium's draft Business Plan 2023-2024.
2. Members acknowledged that the Central South Consortium deliver aspects of school improvement services: challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities, which is governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each Authority. Historically, however there had been an informal Joint Scrutiny Working Group between these five Authorities that was unfortunately no longer in existence. The Committee therefore recommended that the Scrutiny section explore the possibility of re-establishing some form of joint Scrutiny to consider holistic high level strategic issues relating to Central South Consortium and identify individual local authority priorities.

and the Committee requested:

3. The Committee requested a detailed breakdown on the core funding contributions allocated to the different functions listed on page 41 of the report and what Bridgend County Borough Council's contribution was on each.
4. Professional learning collaborations included nine clusters in Bridgend which all submitted a mid-year and end of year evaluation. Members requested detail on what themes had arisen from those clusters mid and end of year evaluation reports.
5. In Bridgend, in Autumn 2022, four schools were inspected by Estyn and Corneli Primary School was asked to produce an 'Interesting or Innovative Practice Case Study' on the work in the school in the development of pupils' understanding of financial awareness. Members requested that this case study be circulated amongst the Committee.
6. During 2021-22, Central South Consortium provided bespoke support following 155 requests from schools in the region. These included 20

for Bridgend schools; 18 provided by the Central south Consortium Curriculum and Professional Learning team were related to curriculum. The Committee requested detail on what bespoke was provided to the other two schools in Bridgend not relating to the curriculum.

7. Safeguarding had been identified as part of the previous strategic priorities within the Directorate and as a result, there was an Education Engagement Team whose key role was to undertake a range of safeguarding audits with schools using the approved school safeguarding audit tool. The Director of Education and Family Support offered a written summary of the safeguarding audits conducted by the Education Engagement Team to be circulated to members.
8. The Committee were mindful that the report under consideration was the annual report from 2021-22 and therefore requested a written response on areas which had made particular progress, along with areas that may require attention within the schools in the county area, since the reporting period. They were also interested to understand how the Authority compared with other Local Authorities within the region and what could be learnt from best practice.
9. The Committee agreed to develop with Central South Consortium the opportunity to monitor and receive updates on various areas within their remit, initially identifying those below, to be able to fully scrutinise the needs and effectiveness of the service and support for schools:
  - Equity, vulnerable learners and grants
  - Safeguarding
  - Governor support

13. **NEW FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION, IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO SUPPORT THE CURRICULUM FOR WALES**

The Group Manager, School Support presented the report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the 'School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability' (Welsh Government, 2021) and the implications for the local authority and regional processes and systems.

The Chair thanked the Group Manger, School Support and Members discussed the following:

- Self-evaluation evidence being used to focus on school improvements and individual learner progress moving away from the narrow measures, focus on progress rather than attainment, meaning data, the schools use themselves was focused on what progress the children made since starting school or the year.
- Schools publish a summary of their curriculum on the school websites along with their school development plan for parents / prospective parents to see. Moving away from a narrow data set and looking at what the curriculum the children will receive, the strategic priorities of the school

based on the school self-evaluation and how they are meeting the needs of those vulnerable learners.

- Training that is provided for school Governing Bodies:
  - New Governor induction training;
  - Chairperson induction training;
  - Coaching as part of the role;
  - Curriculum for Wales question and answer sessions;
  - Sharing of Estyn Inspection experiences;
  - Introduction to the Self Evaluation Toolkit;
  - Wellbeing.
- Short term support for Governing Bodies was delayed and Improvement Partners had yet to attend the Governing Body meetings to support that process. It would be ongoing and fully developed in the coming months.
- It was schools' responsibility to work on making sure they had all School Governor vacancies filled. It was suggested by Members that an outstanding list of positions could be shared with local Community and Town Councils.
- Additional support for schools being determined; the School Improvement Framework stated that schools would as part of their development plan identify where they were accessing support, whether that be from an external provider, CSC or bespoke support. Any additional support would then be discussed with the Improvement Partners as part of their meetings in the autumn term.
- The funding for the Bridgend Governors' Association had been removed and although not coordinated directly from the Local Authority going forward, the Corporate Director of Education and Family Support and Officers could attend to represent the Authority and provide input if required.
- Ensuring responses provided to all Scrutiny Recommendations.

The Chairperson advised that Members of the Committee who wanted to ask questions had all spoken, so as there were no further questions for the Invitees, thanked them for their attendance and advised that they may leave the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendations:

10. With School Governor Training being amended in line with the new curriculum, there could potentially be Governors who had not had the new data and induction training required. The Committee therefore recommended training for existing School Governors be offered and made available to them as soon as possible.
11. Members expressed concern over the number of current vacancies on school governing bodies within the County Borough and the impact this could have on the effective monitoring of school performance and driving forward improvement. The Committee therefore recommended that a list of the outstanding positions be made available to local Town and Community Councils for them to circulate with their own Members

and within their communities to potentially increase the pool of candidates for the governing body posts.

and the Committee requested:

12. Following discussion and consideration of the Headteacher views expressed during the meeting, regarding self-evaluation evidence and its use for school improvement and individual learner progress, Members wished to see the documentation on data and learner progress provided by Estyn.
13. Members requested that the information that had been produced by schools and presented to their Governing bodies providing an overview of the new curriculum and the school's plans, be shared with the Committee.
14. The Committee requested further detail on the £929,392 total collaboration funding allocated to Bridgend schools to support participation in collaborative working within and beyond their school and how this funding was spent.

14. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee with the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A for discussion and consideration, requested any specific information the Committee identified to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wished to attend, requested the Committee to identify any further items for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3, asked the Committee to note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meeting in Appendix B and asked the Committee to note that the FWP and Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet for the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee requested that the following items be considered for addition to the Annual Forward Programme at the next Scrutiny Planning Meeting for SOSC 1:

1. Home to school transport / safe routes to school
2. Delays in Capital Schemes – Universal Free School Meals; looking at schools and whether they are ready.
3. Governing Bodies – Support and funding. Invitation to be extended to representatives and the Governors Association.

There were no further items identified for consideration on the FWP having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 4.3, and this could be revisited at the next meeting.

There were no requests to include specific information in the item for the next meeting.

- RESOLVED:
1. The Committee also requested that avenues to be considered by Scrutiny in collaboration with the Education Directorate on how to take forward future monitoring of Learner progress. Suggestions were made including, but not limited to; assurances on direction of travel, Estyn inspections, sources

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of information and evidence needed to make judgement on learner progress, improvement activities and self-evaluations.

2. The Committee agreed to monitor in the form of an outcome report as to how leadership and safeguarding is being audited, specifically in relation to the collaboration within the authority between Social Services and Education and Wellbeing directorate, working closely together, to ensure schools are receiving specialist support timely.
3. That the Committee approved the FWP in Appendix A, subject to the incorporation of the above requests, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B and noted that the FWP, Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet and any updates from the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of COSC.

15. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 13:57