

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - THURSDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2022

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 HELD IN REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2022 AT 11:00

Present

Councillor A Williams – Chairperson

RJ Collins
T Thomas

M J Evans
AJ Williams

H Griffiths
E D Winstanley

D T Harrison

Apologies for Absence

M Jones and J Llewellyn-Hopkins

Registered Representatives

Rev Canon Edward Evans Church in Wales
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Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Robin Davies	Group Manager - Business Strategy and Performance
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support
Alix Howells	Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Jessica Mclellan	Scrutiny Officer
Michael Pitman	Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services
Gaynor Thomas	School Programme Manager

Invitees:

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP)

The Cabinet Member for Education and the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support made opening remarks.

The Group Manager - Learner Support briefly presented the report, the purpose of which was to update the Committee as to the implementation and the progress of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, a 10 year plan due to end in 2032.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers and Members discussed the following:

- Whether Councillors could observe the Welsh Education Forum (WEF).
- The School Improvement Group, which focussed on improving the standards in all Bridgend schools in line with WESP which was attended by the Chair of SOSC 1 providing a link from the Committee

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- The availability and quality of resources for education in Welsh, the finances to source required textbooks and, given the pressure on budgets, the significant investment in digital information available by way of “one to one” chrome book availability within the Welsh Medium schools and further resources available within the online platform via Hwb.
- The outcome of the consultation, which was widely distributed, feedback from members of the WEF and amendments made, the measures undertaken to ensure that Estyn’s requirements were met including: revisiting the membership of WEF, establishing subgroups to ensure a wider reach, steps taken, and information on the work completed had been shared with subgroups.
- The aims and delivery timescale of the action plan to be submitted to Welsh Government (WG) on 16 December 2022 which was a comprehensive 5 year plan generated by all stakeholders and delivery partners and would be shared as soon as approval was granted.
- The financial mechanisms that will be explored, additional funding received by local authorities from the WG following a commitment to implement WESP including the funding for the 4 hubs, modernisation of schools and further investments through negotiations with WG.
- Catchment areas for Welsh Medium Schools, current legislation not allowing for cross county catchment, and consideration of a Welsh seedling school.
- Parents discontinuing children’s education in the medium of Welsh from nursery to primary and the creation of a Welsh Medium seedling school.
- Variability in transition rates, the location of schools being a factor, opening childcare hubs in Bro Ogwr and the seedling school to facilitate the transition, and a new development in Bettws and Blackmill being created to assist.
- Fewer children joining Welsh Medium secondary school because their families are not Welsh Speakers and parents sending children to Welsh Medium primary schools due to proximity, and capacity within the English medium schools.
- Praise for quality of Welsh Medium education, the quality of facilities, costs of refurbishment and maintenance work for schools in the borough, 21st Century Schools modernisation and plans to move Llangynwyd to a more up to date facility.
- The sufficiency in relation to the expected growth regarding relocating Ysgol Bro Ogwr and increasing the pupil numbers, the Pupil Admission Number in the 10 year WESP, further plans to increase provision in the east of the Borough and a significant expansion at Bro Ogwr.
- The Welsh Language impact assessment form developed by the local authority formulated as part of consultation so questions as to the adverse effect on the Welsh Language would be asked and contributions and proposals from stakeholders will be requested as to whether the Welsh or English languages will have an impact.
- The expansion of the Welsh Medium provision in the Borough, including the doubling of capacity of Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sger school in Cornelly and a Welsh medium school in Porthcawl in the form of the seedling school.

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- Positivity about the support from the Directorate and praise and recognition for headteachers of the Welsh Medium schools for the services provided and the work done by schools.
- The commitment to meeting additional learning needs for children in the Welsh Medium, the moderate learning difficulty centre opened and recognised in conjunction with the development of Ysgol Bro Ogwr, the need for an observation class through the medium of Welsh, and the focus to promote, market and celebrate, recognising the work of staff and headteachers.
- The importance of sustaining growth in Bridgend, the intention to offer post 16 qualifications in collaboration with Llanhari, to offer the best level of qualifications to learners to bring back those qualifications as Teachers.
- Challenges and actions needed for the recruitment and retention of staff and incentivising them to train and remain in the profession.
- The need to work with Estyn to understand the challenges faced by the Welsh medium sector and subject specialism, the need for Qualifications Wales to ensure the qualifications are equally available in both English and Welsh and the resources aligned.
- The importance of working with other providers, e.g. Bridgend College and the involvement of Central South Consortium with English medium schools to facilitate qualifications in Welsh being made available.
- Action being taken to promote the Welsh Language with the business communities including, in discussion, with Bridgend College about how they could engage with employers, increasing the throughput of learners who were comfortable to work in Welsh, recognising and celebrating what those who are qualified in the language can bring to local businesses, and working with various Officers to advertise jobs in their magazine.
- Opportunities available for teachers in the English medium to learn and convert to teaching in the Welsh medium, with Central South Consortium offering support depicted in Subgroup outcome 6 and 7.
- Many schools had taken up the offer to take a sabbatical to learn Welsh and move from the English medium to the Welsh Medium and the WG grant being used to increase capacity and entice teachers from the English medium to Welsh.
- The leaflet being provided to parents to raise awareness and encourage Welsh medium education from pre-birth age, that indicated pathways in Welsh medium education to help parents and carers to make positive and informed choices.

The Chairperson advised that there were no further questions for the Invitees, thanked the Invitees 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 Recommendation:

1. That the Cabinet Member for Education raise with the Welsh Government Minister for Education whether there should be a change in legislation to allow for schools not in the Bridgend County Borough to be included in

Bridgend catchment areas to ensure parents have availability close to their homes to transition their children from primary to secondary education.

and the Committee requested:

2. A written response from the Cabinet Member for Education setting out how Members can feed into the Welsh in Education Forum to include detail on attending meetings and providing input.
3. A written response regarding the subgroups for the five-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) including an action plan and delivery timetable to enable the Committee to monitor in the future.
4. The Governance and Action plan; visibility of projects mapped out to show routes of governance and how various projects will be monitored.
5. An update, when appropriate, on the provision of Welsh Medium education in the South East of the County with input from the Corporate Director for Education and Family Support and written feedback from the Cabinet Member for Education following his meeting with the Welsh Government Minister for Education.
6. Further information on the financial implications of the implementation of the WESP to include detail on what has been done thus far to source additional funding and from where and how future funding would be obtained to maintain the WESP Co-Ordinator position.
7. Data on how many learners travel into County Borough from outside the catchment areas to attend the Welsh Medium Schools and more information on the support available to parents who would like their child(ren) to receive a Welsh Medium education or would like them to have the opportunity to develop the Welsh language in English Medium Schools.
8. An update on the timescale for the refurbishment of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd and its place in priority compared to all schools being considered for maintenance required.

3. **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.

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Members discussed the consistent budget pressure due to the Authority's generous home to school transport offer and agreed that it would likely be considered in more detail during Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget discussions.

The Committee requested that the following item be considered for addition to the 2023-24 Annual Forward Programme at the next Scrutiny Planning Meeting for SOSC 1:

- The Action Plan relating to the 5-year WESP to include performance monitoring and risk management. Members requested that schools who have begun implementation of the WESP be invited to discuss their experiences.

Members requested that English and Welsh-medium schools be included in the scope of the Catchment Areas Information Report to be provided.

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: 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.

4. URGENT ITEMS

None.