

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - THURSDAY, 18 JULY 2024

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 18 JULY 2024 AT 11:00

Present

Councillor – Chairperson

HJ David

D M Hughes

AJ Williams

E D Winstanley

Present Virtually

JPD Blundell

J Llewellyn-Hopkins

T Thomas

A Williams

Apologies for Absence

RJ Collins, H Griffiths and I M Spiller

Officers:

Nicola Echanis
Robin Davies

Head of Education and Family Support
Group Manager, Business Support

Rachel Keepins
Lucy Beard

Democratic Services Manager
Scrutiny Officer

Invitees / Registered Representatives

Helen Jones
Adele Thomas

Headteacher Maesteg Comprehensive
Headteacher Nottage Primary

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Declarations of Interest

Councillor Alex Ulberini-Williams – Prejudicial – Item 4 – Learner Travel Consultation

Councillor Amanda Williams – Personal – Item 4 includes Brynteg School where the Councillor is LEA Governor and her children attend. Also consultation was completed as a Governor.

Councillor Della Hughes – Personal – Governor at Ogmores Vale Primary School.

Councillor Johanna Llewellyn-Hopkins – Personal – Governor at Cynffi Comprehensive School.

Councillor Jon-Paul Blundell – Prejudicial – Item 4 as the previous Cabinet Member who was one of the ones who authored and signed off subsequently.

Councillor Tim Thomas – Personal – School Governor.

47. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>Resolved:</u> That the minutes of a meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 dated 11 April 2024, be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	18 July 2024

48. Learner Travel Consultation Outcome

Decision Made	<p><u>Resolved:</u> Following consideration of the report and detailed discussion with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers the Committee made the following comments and recommendations:</p> <p>General Recommendations:</p> <p>Recommendation 1 The Committee highlighted that as Corporate Parents, all Councillors have a responsibility to Care Experienced Children and young people and recommended that consideration of how they might be affected by the HTST proposals be explored as part of the Cabinet’s decision.</p> <p>Recommendation 2 Evidence at the meeting suggested that the proposals could have a potential impact on attendance and educational outcomes of pupils, particularly in areas of higher social deprivation. Members recommended that if possible, prior to the decision of Cabinet, information and analysis be sought from other Local Authorities to understand the level of this impact in order to inform Cabinet’s decision.</p>
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Recommendation 3

The Committee highlighted the importance of communication with parents as well as children and young people regarding any potential changes or ways in which they may be affected and recommended that this be a priority following any decision, in order to ensure they are aware at the earliest opportunity.

Proposal 1

Recommendation 4

The Committee highlighted various concerns regarding some of the routes to school currently regarded as safe, such as some areas having no pedestrian crossings, routes not being maintained and the lighting along them insufficient for dark winter evenings. The Committee therefore recommended:

- That all safe routes to schools be reviewed termly;
- That a mechanism be provided for parents to provide feedback on any issues with the routes so that they can be rectified quickly.

Recommendation 5

Members discussed the issue surrounding children and young people having to walk to school, potentially 3 miles under the new proposals, in various bad weather conditions, and then some pupils also potentially being wet all day resulting from continued crossing of the school site in bad weather to access their classes. The Committee expressed concern over the potential for this to affect pupil attendance on days where the weather was bad. Members also expressed concern over reports that pupils were at times having to wait significant lengths of time for BCBC contracted buses to pick them up from school which meant that pupils and teachers were often waiting outside in awful weather.

- a. The Committee recommended that the Local Authority work closely with schools and teachers to try and ensure provision is made for pupils to either dry their clothing or possibly change when arriving at school.
- b. Likewise, that provision is made to keep pupils safe and warm after school should they have to wait a while for either a public bus or a BCBC contracted bus to get home.
- c. Members further recommended that the Authority explore with contractors the times that they are arriving at schools to pick pupils up to minimise waiting times for both pupils and teachers.

Proposals 3 and 4

Comment

Whilst appreciating that the LA's strategy is to grow Welsh Medium education and the number of placements, the Committee expressed concern over the capacity of Welsh Medium schools as well as Faith Schools to account for the potential increase in applications for these schools given that their nursery and post-16 transport provision will be protected under these proposals.

Proposal 4

Recommendation 6

Should this proposal be agreed, Members highlighted that there will inevitably be an increased reliance on public buses by post-16 pupils to enable them to get to school or college. The Committee therefore recommended that prior to any decision being made on post-16, the LA explore whether there are public buses going near or past each school that offers post-16 education and where there is not, the potential impact of this on pupils then opting out of post-16 education be fully understood. There was particular concern amongst the Committee of the significant impact these changes could potentially have for post-16 pupils living in the Llynfi, Ogmore and Garw Valleys, and the removal of transport for them leading to a potential removal of access to post-16 education.

Recommendation 7

Members recommended that the LA work with local bus companies as soon as possible to consider how they could assist with post-16 transport provision to schools and colleges across the Borough. Furthermore, that the LA also explore any opportunities with the current contracted bus companies to consider if there is anything that they would possibly be willing to provide in terms of a local bus service which would assist pupils accessing schools and colleges. Members also requested that the LA ensure all bus routes and timetables are communicated to post-16 pupils affected by this change.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommended that the LA explore with Bridgend and Pencoed Colleges whether they would be willing to support their learners in providing free bus passes to eligible pupils, similar to schemes that are provided in colleges in other Welsh LAs.

Recommendation 9

Members queried whether the proposed changes to Post-16 transport would be in line with the LA's commitments under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Whilst acknowledging that the report summarises the implications relating to the five ways of working under the Act, the Committee felt that the

response does not capture the impact of children no longer being able to attend post-16 education. The Committee therefore recommend that this be fully considered and the impact under the Act be made clearer.

Recommendation 10

The Committee expressed concern over potential vulnerable pupils who might be disadvantaged by these proposals, such as those who would not be able to afford a bus pass to access post-16 education and were then at a higher risk of becoming NEET. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to this, and the potential of a means tested scheme for pupils considered as vulnerable.

Proposal 5

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommended that clarification be sought on whether the mileage allowance of 45 pence per mile is sufficient to cover any extra costs parents/carers might incur such as any insurance costs if this was seen as a business mileage allowance. Similarly further clarification be considered as to whether this allowance would have any potential tax or benefit implications for parents/carers.

Monitoring Impact

Recommendation 12

During their consideration of the proposals, it was acknowledged by the Cabinet Member that if the proposals were agreed it would inevitably lead to some individual issues and problems and that this was unfortunately unavoidable when looking to reduce certain areas to the statutory minimum. In order to try and respond to these issues, he reported that he would be looking to set up and chair a monitoring group that would consider the impact of any changes to HTST and respond to these as necessary. He explained that this group would engage with Officers across the various directorates when required to try and see how problems could be overcome.

a) The Committee welcomed the establishment of this Group and recommended that it specifically look to consider some of the aspects mentioned in the above comments and recommendations including:

- Regular review, maintenance and issues relating to Safe Routes to School;
- How schools are responding to pupils walking to school in bad weather conditions such as suitable facilities to dry or change clothes;

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	<p>As well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact on NEETs figure, pupil attendance, absenteeism, vehicle traffic outside schools;• Ensuring that the LA is still meeting its requirements of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act, particularly in relation to post-16 pupils;• Consideration of disabled access and parking at schools and colleges to assist families and young people with getting to and from school safely, particularly as these proposals could potentially result in an increase in traffic outside schools;• How schools are using timetabling to potentially assist its post-16 pupils in reducing the impact from these proposals, for example reducing the need of a pupil to have to attend school for only one class on a specific day;• How schools were sharing best practices in the ways they were responding to these proposals and supporting their pupils with accessing education safely. <p>b) The Committee recommended that it was essential that school leaders were involved with any monitoring of impact from the proposed changes to HTST as well as any resulting actions.</p>
Date Decision Made	18 July 2024

49. Corporate Parenting Nomination Report

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That Councillor Della Hughes be nominated to represent Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 as an Invitee to meetings of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting.
Date Decision Made	18 July 2024

50. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	<u>Resolved:</u> The Committee approved the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A, 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 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Date Decision Made	18 July 2024

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51. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	18 July 2024

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#) for Part One, this [link](#) for Part Two, and this [link](#) for Part Three.

The meeting closed at 14:38.