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| Meeting of: | SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 |
| Date of meeting: | 16 SEPTEMBER 2024 |
| Report title: | EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026 UPDATE |
| Report owner / Corporate Director: | CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE |
| Responsible officer: | LINDSAY HARVEY CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon policy framework or procedure rules. |
| Executive summary: | <p>The purpose of the report is to provide Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 with an update on progress against the objectives set out in the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-2026.</p> <p>The directorate plays a key role in delivering a wide range of services which impact directly on the lives of children, young people, adults, and families living in Bridgend.</p> <p>The directorate comprises 5 service areas, served by 28 operational teams, 59 schools and 1 pupil referral unit.</p> <p>Due to the complexity and wide-ranging nature of the directorate, it is essential that the directorate’s activity is underpinned by robust governance, strategic and operational procedures.</p> <p>The directorate’s three-year strategic plan (attached at Appendix A) is an important part of the directorate’s delivery model as it enables clear alignment with national policy and locally determined priorities.</p> <p>While the directorate is under no statutory duty to produce a three-year plan, the directorate is keen ensure service delivery, over the medium term, is well co-ordinated and, wherever possible, meets the needs of service recipients.</p> |

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (SOSC1) with an update on progress against the objectives set out in the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate ('EEYYP' or 'the directorate') Strategic Plan 2023-2026.
- 1.2 The EEYYP Strategic Plan 2023-2026 is attached at **Appendix A**.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate is Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC's) largest directorate with an annual revenue budget of approximately £143m and around 3800 staff. The directorate is also responsible for BCBC's largest capital investment project (that is, the School Modernisation Programme).
- 2.2 The directorate plays a key role in delivering a wide range of services which impact directly on the lives of children, young people, adults, and families living in Bridgend.
- 2.3 The directorate comprises 5 service areas, served by 28 operational teams, 59 schools and 1 pupil referral unit. Due to the complexity and wide-ranging nature of the directorate, it is essential that the directorate's activity is underpinned by robust governance, strategic and operational procedures.
- 2.4 The directorate's mission statement is:

To inspire and support children, young people, adults, and families to achieve better outcomes, leading to prosperous, healthy, safe, and happy communities

- 2.5 The directorate's key deliverables are listed below:
 - sector-leading schools (supported by effective professional services) that provide outstanding learning opportunities to secure excellent outcomes for all learners;
 - robust safeguarding procedures across all the directorate's service areas;
 - an ambitious school modernisation programme;
 - excellent early years services delivered by the right people, at the right time, to those most in need;
 - effective youth support services (including the provision of an appropriate youth justice service offer);
 - a high-quality adult learning offer;
 - an effective Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) to promote the Welsh language and Welsh-medium education;
 - outstanding support for children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN); and
 - effective health and safety advice to all areas of council business.

- 2.6 The directorate's key challenges include:
- the significant, continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (in particular, on pupil behaviour, attendance, and exclusions);
 - budget pressures (particularly home-to-school transport and the school modernisation programme);
 - curriculum and ALN reform;
 - capacity issues (especially in specialist and statutory areas); and
 - corporate health and safety compliance and monitoring.
- 2.7 The directorate adopts a mature self-evaluation protocol which informs a comprehensive business planning approach. This includes the development of:
- an annual self-evaluation report;
 - a comprehensive business plan (which aligns with the BCBC Corporate Plan and complies with regulator expectations);
 - a business plan objective progress tracker to ensure agreed objectives are monitored closely; and
 - an established risk register to ensure risks across the directorate are managed appropriately.
- 2.8 The directorate's three-year strategic plan is an important part of the directorate's delivery model as it enables clear alignment with national policy and locally determined priorities. The draft strategic plan benefitted from pre-decision scrutiny by SOSC1 on 23 May 2023 and the resultant plan was formally approved by Cabinet on 20 June 2023.
- 2.9 While the directorate is under no statutory duty to produce a three-year plan, the directorate is keen to ensure service delivery, over the medium term, is well co-ordinated and, wherever possible, meets the needs of service users.
- 2.10 In developing the EEYYP Strategic Plan 2023-2026, feedback was requested from the following groups to ensure the delivery partner and stakeholder 'voice' informs the directorate's medium-term service delivery model:
- children and young people via school councils and Bridgend Youth Council;
 - headteachers;
 - school staff;
 - school governing bodies (including chairs of school governing bodies);
 - Estyn;
 - National Academy of Educational Leadership;
 - Welsh Government;
 - BCBC's Welsh in Education Forum;
 - Cabinet;
 - SOSC1;
 - Corporate Management Board; and
 - officers.
- 2.11 Further to consultation with stakeholders and delivery partners, the directorate identified the following 15 strategic themes ('T') to underpin this three-year strategic plan:

- T1 Pupil and staff wellbeing
- T2 Support for pupil behaviour, attendance, and exclusions
- T3 Support for vulnerable children and young people
- T4 Support for children and young people with ALN
- T5 Curriculum for Wales and assessment
- T6 High-quality teaching and learning
- T7 Effective leadership and governance
- T8 Robust safeguarding procedures across all the directorate's service areas
- T9 Ambitious School Modernisation Programme
- T10 Appropriate family support services delivered by the right people, at the right time, to those most in need
- T11 Effective childcare and early years offer
- T12 Effective youth support and youth justice services
- T13 Meaningful adult in the community learning offer
- T14 Effective WESP to promote the Welsh language and Welsh-medium education
- T15 Effective health and safety advice to all areas of council business (ensuring business resilience and continuity)

2.12 The EEYYP Strategic Plan 2023-2026 provides further narrative in respect of each of the strategic themes including:

- an overview of each theme;
- an assessment of the directorate's current and projected performance;
- a summary of notable successes to date;
- how we will work with partners to improve service delivery;
- the high-level resources required to secure improvement; and
- a list of success indicators; and
- how the theme aligns with national and local policy.

2.13 The directorate benefits from an established, well-coordinated and robust scrutiny process. Reports are taken to subject and corporate overview and scrutiny committees at regular intervals throughout the year, for discussion. The resultant recommendations from scrutiny committees are always carefully considered by the directorate and are used to inform service delivery and policy proposals.

2.14 The directorate's Performance and Financial Monitoring Board meets monthly to review school performance. The board's membership includes input from officers including Human Resources (HR), Finance, the Corporate Health and Safety Unit, the Education Engagement Team, and Central South Consortium. A Performance and Financial Monitoring Schools Monitoring 'Heatmap' has been developed to better track outputs from these meetings and highlight any significant areas of improvement or challenge required in our schools.

2.15 Outcomes of the Performance and Financial Monitoring Board process are reported to the School Improvement Group (SIG) on a termly basis. The SIG is chaired by the Leader of the Council and includes the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director (Education, Early Years and Young People) among its membership. The SIG also benefits from cross-party representation as the group is also attended by the chairperson of SOSC1.

- 2.16 To ensure that the outcomes of all audits, reviews and inspections are recorded, a regulatory tracker has been developed. This includes information shared by Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Probation and Audit Wales. Actions are considered and scrutinised at CMB, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet meetings. The tracker is updated by the directorate on a quarterly basis.
- 2.17 Internal audits are carried out across directorate services to provide an independent and objective opinion on risk management, control and governance processes by evaluating the effectiveness in achieving objectives.

3. Current situation/proposal

- 3.1 In April 2024, the directorate transferred its established business planning processes (in operation since 2017) to a new system called STORI (Strategic Team Objectives Reporting Information). STORI is a spreadsheet-based system which has been developed in-house. A copy of STORI (August 2024) is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 3.2 STORI provides a 'one-stop-shop' solution for the directorate's business planning, self-evaluation, risk management and associated reporting functions. This system has been developed to ensure that the directorate's performance management tools are maintained in a single repository that provides easy access to all authorised users.
- 3.3 The directorate has proactively sought feedback from internal and external partners to ensure STORI is fit-for-purpose. In July 2024, STORI was reviewed by the following partners and their advice is being used to refine the system:
- Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing (Bridgend County Borough Council);
 - Chief Officer – Education and Youth (Flintshire County Council);
 - Chief Officer for Education (Monmouthshire County Council); and
 - Chief Officer – Education and Early Intervention (Wrexham County Council).
- 3.4 STORI includes 5 sections:
- monthly updates from each of the directorate's 7 constituent areas;
 - regular updates in respect of progress against the directorate's 15 strategic themes (linked to the 99 identified strategic indicators);
 - an overall formative assessment of the directorate's progress against its strategic objectives;
 - a risk register (which is updated regularly and reviewed on a quarterly basis); and
 - an annual self-evaluation, using quantitative measures and qualitative narrative, to report on the directorate's performance.
- 3.5 As of August 2024, the directorate is reporting the following progress in respect of the 99 strategic indicators against its strategic objectives:

| BRAYGWP | Definition | August 2024 |
|---------|--|-------------|
| Blue | Activity is completed | 1 |
| Red | Important weaknesses outweigh strengths and urgent improvement is required | 4 |
| Amber | Strengths outweigh weaknesses but important aspects require improvement | 36 |
| Yellow | Strong features although minor aspects may require attention | 38 |
| Green | Very strong, sustained performance and practice | 19 |
| White | Activity has not yet started | 0 |
| Purple | Activity has been cancelled or made redundant | 1 |

3.6 As of August 2024, the following 4 strategic indicators have been rated as 'red':

- We will support schools in developing robust risk assessments.
- We will improve the percentage of completed topic-based audits that are judged as being at least 'adequate'.
- We will develop and implement the Children Missing Education Guidance.
- We will establish a more effective parental engagement policy/practice with parents or children with ALN.

3.7 While progress against every strategic indicator is monitored carefully (at the directorate's monthly senior management team meetings), specific focus is applied to all red-rated activities. A 'Hotspots' tab is included within STORI (refer to attached spreadsheet) to allow for ready identification and close monitoring of each activity.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty, and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report.

4.2 As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services, and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts because of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals and principles prescribed for within the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 connect directly to the approach to supporting schools. The approach to supporting schools is consistent with the five ways of working as

defined within the sustainable development principle and more specifically as follows:

Long term - The approach to education, early years and young people services focuses on meeting the needs of a wide range of service beneficiaries including children, young people, adults, and families.

Prevention - The focus of education, early years and young people services is upon early identification of need and ensuring that there is appropriate provision in place to meet individual needs.

Integration - The approach to education, early years and young people services addresses the need for a coherent delivery of economic, social, environmental, and cultural outcomes.

Collaboration - A fundamental principle of the approach to education, early years and young people services focuses on improving collaboration and creating a unified system.

Involvement - Ensuring that children, young people, adults, and families are at the heart of the system and that needs are discussed in a person-centred way.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The impact of climate change is considered significant at a national and local level. Therefore, one of our biggest challenges is preparing for and tackling the impact of climate change. The steps to meet this challenge are complex and interconnected. However, it is important that we are committed to reducing carbon emissions by changing the way we deliver services either ourselves or via third-party providers. We must embed energy saving and carbon reduction into everything we do.
- 6.2 Through the careful and longer-term strategic planning of services, the local authority is better able to make a robust contribution to tackling the Welsh Government declared climate and nature emergencies. This includes the planning and investment in goods and services we buy and commission, and in our work with local, regional and national partners.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 BCBC is committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity through all our services and dedicated to treating all citizens, employees, and visitors with respect, while providing services which respond to people's individual needs.
- 7.2 The EEYYP Strategic Plan 2023-2026 ensures that equality and fairness remain firmly at the heart of how the council plans, provides and delivers important services to the people of Bridgend County Borough.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The current annual revenue budget for the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate is approximately £143m. In addition, the directorate manages significant capital expenditure (mainly in respect of the Council's School

Modernisation Programme) which, in the Financial Year 2023-2024, totalled £7.927m including £1.766m of grant funding.

- 8.2 BCBC's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the Council's financial priorities over the next two years. Alongside other service areas, the directorate faces several significant challenges over the next few years to meet demand while ensuring services are delivered more efficiently.
- 8.3 It is important to note that the EEYYP Strategic Plan 2023-2026 is predicated on a stable funding scenario and any significant changes to the directorate's budget may have a material impact on its ability to deliver the objectives identified within the plan.
- 8.4 This matter will be closely monitored and will be subject to further scrutiny during the lifespan of the plan.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 SOSC1 is requested to:
- consider the contents of this report; and
 - provide feedback.

Background documents

None