

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - MONDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 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 MONDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 11:00

Present Virtually

Chairperson (for the meeting): AJ Williams

JPD Blundell
T Thomas

HJ David
E Winstanley

D M Hughes

I M Spiller

Apologies for Absence

RJ Collins, J Llewellyn-Hopkins and A Williams

Officers:

Lindsay Harvey
Nicola Echanis
Mark Lewis
Susan Roberts
Robin Davies
Stephanie Thomas
Owen Shepherd

Corporate Director – Education, Early Years & Young People
Head of Education and Family Support
Group Manager, Early Years and Childcare Manager
Group Manager, Schools
Group Manager, Strategy, Performance and Support
Early Years and Childcare Manager
Youth Support Services Manager

Lucy Beard
Stephen Griffiths

Scrutiny Officer
Democratic Services Officer - Committees

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Invitees / Registered Representatives

Kathryn John Headteacher, Brackla Primary School and Chair of Primary Federation
Neil Pryce Headteacher, Pil Primary School
Ryan Davies Headteacher, Byrnteg Comprehensive School

Samantha Lambert-Worgan Registered Representative - Parent Governor Special School

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jon-Paul Blundell – Prejudicial – Item 4, Involvement in the Young People’s Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-26 last year
Councillor Elaine Winstanley – Personal – Item 7, Employer Owen Cultural Trust mentioned in the information report
Councillor Huw David – Prejudicial – Item 4, Member of Cabinet at the time the Strategic Plan was accepted and endorsed

52. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>Resolved:</u> That the minutes of a meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 dated 18 July 2024, to be approved as true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	16 September 2024

53. Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-2026 Update

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>T1: Pupil and staff wellbeing</p> <p>1. Members expressed concern about Learning Support staff leaving schools for employment in other sectors to potentially earn more and in more flexible or hybrid roles. Discussions with Invited Headteachers included:</p>
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- Losing staff at key times with four weeks' notice;
- The length of time taken for the recruitment process;
- A significant reduction in the quality and number of applications for such vacancies creating a challenge for schools.

Following discussions and given concerns about the challenging impact of the above on schools, the Committee recommended that the situation be monitored and kept under review to provide assurance.

T2: Support for Pupil behaviour, attendance and exclusions

2. Members asked what was being done to increase capacity in the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in the Bridge Alternative Provision and in Heronsbridge School, as there was concern at the number of children placed in other schools, which may not be the most suitable environment for them. Officers responded assuring the Committee that a lot of work had been carried out to review available provision. Heronsbridge had been over capacity for a while and there were plans to look at the possibility of an available building which could potentially be used for additional classrooms depending on grants available and taking into consideration any financial implications on the school. Over the coming term a longer-term plan for capacity would be developed aiming to meet developing needs and increased demand in the service.

The Committee felt it was important to ensure that all was being examined to extend provision in the special schools and recommended that the longer term plan for capacity be reported to a future meeting of the Committee and added to the Forward Work Programme.

T11: Effective Childcare and early years offer.

3. Members referred to the proposal made as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2024-25 regarding the removal of nursery provision in primary schools and asked what progress had been made on ensuring there was enough childcare provision. Officers advised a full childcare sufficiency assessment would be carried out to look at the potential demand for childcare a prior to consideration of nursery provision. That

information would be gathered in the next 6-8 weeks and would give people the opportunity to have their say, and to obtain the best information possible, before a future decision is considered. Prior to submitting a consultation report, a plan for any shortfall in childcare places would be prepared.

The Committee recommended that a further report be provided to SOSC 1 on the outcome of the review of the sufficiency of childcare places, prior to Cabinet consideration of Nursery provision.

Additional information:

Following detailed consideration and discussion with Cabinet Members and Officers, the Committee made the following requests for information:

T1: Pupil and staff wellbeing

4. Members raised the removal of the balance updates for school dinner accounts in Secondary Schools and there no longer being a breakdown of what the money put into the pupils' accounts was spent on, which was important to help parents to support their children to make informed nutritional choices.

Officers advised that the introduction of the Universal Primary Free School meals had meant a fundamental change to systems and enabled reporting to Welsh Government (WG). Whilst the current system would remain, schools had the option of investing in systems such as pay parent that could be linked to their corporate financial systems, and schools were making progress in investing in 'reevaluation units/machines' and a written update on progress across the nine secondary schools could be provided.

Following Discussions, the Committee requested a written update on progress across the secondary schools, be provided to Members of the Committee.

T8: Robust safeguarding procedures across all the directorate's service areas

5. Members referred to Schools across Wales and the UK undertaking lockdown risk assessments to demonstrate how they protect staff and pupils from security threats and asked what the plans were for proportionate and sensible procedures. Officers advised they had worked closely with schools over a number of years on emergency procedures and these were refreshed last summer whilst working closely with the Emergency Planning Team and Health and Safety Unit. Welsh Government had also produced guidance, in line with which the Authority's Policy had been adopted.

The Committee agreed on the importance of the procedures being as robust as possible and welcomed any feedback from Estyn inspections on those procedures once they had taken place.

T5: Curriculum for Wales and assessment

6. The Committee were pleased to see the new Curriculum for Wales being successfully rolled out across the Borough and asked given the focus being very much on hands on learning and access to play, how the Authority was ensuring that schools were adequately prepared to be able to deliver the new curriculum. Officers explained there was a significant amount of investment into new schools and upgrading schools across the local authority, in addition they worked closely with Welsh Government on the community focused schools grant and maintenance grant using those whenever possible to make the learning environment accessible and exciting for learners.

Members queried how the grant funding was allocated between the schools. Officers responded that the overall figure of the Community focused school grant and maintenance grant was managed by the Communities Directorate and allocation figures could be provided to Members of the Committee.

Following the discussions, the Committee requested a breakdown of the allocation of the Community Focused School Grant and Maintenance Grant be provided to Members of the Committee.

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	General 7. The Committee welcomed the suggestion that the Directorate Strategic Plan be reported to Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 annually to benefit from the Committee's ongoing monitoring and requested that it be added to the Forward Work Programme for the future year.
Date Decision Made	16 September 2024

**54. Cabinet Response to Committee Recommendations on the Learner
Travel Consultation Outcome**

Decision Made	The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to present the Committee with the Cabinet response to the Recommendations made by the Committee on the Learner Travel Consultation on 18 July 2024. Following consideration of the response, it was <u>Resolved:</u> The Committee noted the Cabinet response to the Committee's recommendations made on the Learner Travel Consultation report.
Date Decision Made	16 September 2024

55. Information Report - 2023-24 Quarter 4 Performance

Decision Made	<u>Resolved:</u> The Committee noted the publication of the information report on 2023-2024 Quarter 4 Performance report.
Date Decision Made	16 September 2024

56. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	<u>Resolved:</u> The Committee considered and approved the Forward Work Programme (FWP) in Appendix A, Subject to inclusion of the items below, noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B and noted that the FWP, Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet and any updates from the
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	<p>Committee would be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, following consideration in this cycle of Committee Meetings.</p> <p>The Committee requested the following be included in the FWP:</p> <p>8. Members requested that when Attendance, Behaviour and Exclusions were to be scheduled to come to the Committee could Officers please ensure the following invitees were sent an invite:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Secondary school headteachers due to this being where the main exclusions were coming from.- Invitation be sent to Ysgol Bryn Castell as a school that provides education for pupils with complex Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD).- A member within the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision team that specifically deals with and supports children with behavioural difficulty.
Date Decision Made	16 September 2024

57. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	16 September 2024

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

The meeting closed at 14:09.