

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2015 AT 2.00 PM**

Present

Councillor EP Foley – Chairperson

PA Davies  
M Jones

DK Edwards  
G Phillips

N Farr  
C Westwood

PN John

Registered Representatives:

Mr W Bond  
Mr T Cahalane  
Mr K Pascoe  
Mr R Thomas

Officers:

Rachel Keepins  
Andrew Rees

Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny  
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

Councillor HJ David	: Deputy Leader
Councillor HJ Townsend	: Cabinet Member Childrens Social Services and Equalities
Susan Cooper	: Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing
Deborah McMillan	: Corporate Director Education and Transformation
Nicola Echanis	: Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships
Pete Tyson	: Planning and Contract Management Officer
Zenda Caravaggi	: GMB Representative

193. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members for the reasons so stated:

Councillor RL Thomas – Work commitment  
Councillor DBF White – Unwell  
Canon E Evans – Prior commitment.

194. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr W Bond declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Children With Disabilities Programme as a parent governor of Heronsbridge School.

195. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 23 September 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record.

196. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report which detailed the items to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee and sought confirmation of the information and invitees required.

The Scrutiny Officer also reported that Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a local authority towards looked after children and young people and that all Members have a level of responsibility for the children and young people looked after by the authority. She requested that Members consider how the services within the remit of the Committee affect children in care and care leavers and how it can assist in these areas. The Scrutiny Officer stated that Scrutiny Champions can greatly support the Committee in this by advising of the ongoing work of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.

The Scrutiny Officer also reported that the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to set up a Joint Research and Evaluation Panel for Sickness Absence and sought a nomination from this Committee to sit on the Panel.

**Conclusions:**

- (1) Noted the topics to be considered at its meeting on 5 January 2016 and the invitees to attend to attend the meeting;
- (2) Determined the invitees to be invited to attend the meeting on 21 January 2016;
- (3) Requested that education practitioners be invited to attend for the item on the Education of LAC and a Head Teacher / Deputy Head Teacher for the item on FSM Attainment Gap at the meeting on 9 March 2016;
- (4) Nominated Councillor P A Davies to sit on the Sickness Absence Joint Research and Evaluation Panel.

197. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report on the work being undertaken as part of the Children with Disabilities Transformation programme which focused on the review of in-county residential provision and respite services for children with disabilities.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the Children with Disabilities Transformation is a sub-programme which sits beneath the Safeguarding and Family Support Change Programme, within which four distinct work areas had been identified. She also informed the Committee that a consultation exercise with staff and stakeholders was commencing today which would inform options for the delivery of respite services and in-county accommodation in the future.

The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing reported that it was the Council's aim for children and young people to remain in their local community with family and friends in order to ensure stability in their lives. It was proposed to increase residential care at Heronsbridge School from the current 38 week provision for up to 6 service users for 5 days a week to 52 week residential provision. There are three young people receiving 39 week residential care whose needs were such that they may in future require 52 week residential care. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing also informed the Committee that Bakers Way currently provides an overnight respite/short break service for Children with Disabilities. The facility has been subject to review and whilst it provides a valuable short breaks service, there are drawbacks such as high transport costs, high cancellation rates and the need to improve access for

wheelchair users. The Planning and Contract Management Officer informed the Committee of the gaps he had identified with current provision. Discussions had commenced with the families of the three existing high cost out of county placements that could potentially be placed in county with 52 week residential provision. Discussions had also commenced on the viability of increasing the registration of Heronsbridge to 52 week residential provision.

The Committee questioned the number of out of county placements and whether there was a waiting list. The Planning and Contract Management Officer informed the Committee that there were 13 out of county placements as at June 2015, 3 of which would be suitable for in county provision based on 52 week residential provision. The average cost for an out of county placement is £180k per annum and the 3 high cost out of county placements suitable for 52 week residential provision cost £676k. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the Council did not operate a waiting list for placements. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing also informed the Committee that it was proposed to create 52 week residential provision by redeveloping facilities at Heronsbridge. The Planning and Contract Management Officer informed the Committee there is existing out of county provision at facilities in Cardiff, Brecon and Cheltenham.

The Committee referred to the report identifying 3 existing out of county placements returning to in county provision and also the potential for another 6 out of county placements to be brought in county and questioned the number of beds which were taken at Heronsbridge and whether adaptations were to be carried out at Weston House. The Planning and Contract Management Officer informed the Committee that there was at present 39 week provision at Heronsbridge, however some analysis had been undertaken of the placements and it was believed that 3 or 4 places would be sufficient as some of the young people due to their ages would shortly be transitioning into adult social care. It was intended to refurbish the existing vacant caretakers lodge at Heronsbridge which would free up heron House for 52 week residential provision for which a capital bid of £100k had been made for the conversion works. The Cabinet Member Childrens Social Services and Equalities informed the Committee that Weston House has 35 beds for 16-19 year olds but was not at full capacity. She also informed the Committee that a further report would be brought to this Committee on the proposals prior to them being considered by Cabinet. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that the proposals for new models for respite services had not yet been firmed up and would be subject to consultation with the governing body of Heronsbridge School. She stated that costings for adapting Weston House were being worked up but the existing facility could not deal with children with very challenging and complex behavioural issues. She also stated that the out of county placements were necessary due to the complexity of the behavioural issues.

The Committee referred to the review of Bakers Way which had found that one of the drawbacks was the high cost of transport to Bakers Way and questioned the long term plan for the facility and the reasons for the high cancellation rates. The Committee also questioned the nature of the report to Cabinet and where does the Scrutiny process fit in. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that an options report for the short break service would be brought to this Committee prior to it being presented to Cabinet. She stated that parents of service users had been this morning at the consultation event to discuss proposals for the short breaks service. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that there are 5 places available at Bakers Way but it was very difficult for the facility to be full to capacity at any one time due to the facilities not being suitable to meet current need as the building required renovation work to accommodate wheelchair users to the upper floor. Discussions were taking place with families on a bookings system which needed to be more flexible to accommodate overnight stays at short notice. The outcome of the

discussions will inform an options paper. She stated that the future of Bakers Way for respite needed to be considered in the context of being used in an alternative way as it was currently closed during the day. The Cabinet Member Childrens Social Services and Equalities confirmed that the options would be subject to the Scrutiny process prior to it being considered by Cabinet. A member of the Committee stated that the lack of a lift / stair lift system at Bakers Way to accommodate wheelchair users had been picked up by Members undertaking rota visits. The Committee considered that the facility at Bakers Way could be revolutionised if it offered 52 week residential provision. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that it was not intended to offer 52 week residential provision at Bakers Way as it was intended to be used for short breaks.

The Committee questioned whether staff affected had been involved in the consultation. The Head of Safeguarding and Assessment informed the Committee that the first consultation with staff at Bakers Way on the proposals was taking place this afternoon and she had ensured that staff are being offered as much reassurance as could be given. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing informed the Committee that consultation was taking place with staff on the basis of the future service model and staff were anticipating change, but there was also a need to see what staff want as well.

The Committee questioned the current registration of premises which was based on 39 week residential provision. The Planning and Contract Management Officer informed the Committee that Heronsbridge and Weston House were at present registered to provide 39 week residential provision and there is an appetite for both facilities to provide 52 week residential provision in order that children are able to stay near to their families and friends. He stated that both providers had made enquiries with the CSSIW to increase their registration to 52 week residential provision. The Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing stated that discussions take place on a regular basis with the CSSIW to share the Council's current thinking and proposals on service provision. The Head of Safeguarding and Assessment informed the Committee that the CSSIW are supportive of the Council and the principles underpinning this approach which is one of the priorities for the forthcoming year.

### **Conclusions**

1. The Committee welcomed the general principle of having a 52 week residential provision for children with disabilities in the county borough and also supported the review of respite services. Members also supported any extension of the role of Heronsbridge as a means of returning children from out of County.
2. In relation to any future options for Respite Care, Members expressed the view that the current staff should be retained as far as possible due to their experience and skills and the fact that the number of children requiring this provision would still potentially be the same.
3. The Committee noted that the Officer's report stated that a further report would go to Cabinet following consultation, however there was no mention of Scrutiny in the process for pre-decision scrutiny. Members commented that there should be a collaborative relationship in that any report planned for consultation should be subject to objective consideration from Scrutiny at an appropriate time before a decision is made by Cabinet.
4. With this in mind, the Committee requested that a further report be provided to Scrutiny on the developed options approximately two thirds of the way through the consultation process so that Members can provide views on the options as a consultee and also monitor the consultation process.

5. The committee also requested that this report include:
  - a) details of cost comparisons for future respite care; should the care continue in Bakers Way and adaptations made against costs of moving the provision elsewhere;
  - b) details of staffing provision relating to an increase to 52 week residential care, due to the fact that this would require a substantial change for staff in their working patterns.

198. STRATEGIC REVIEW INTO THE DEVELOPMENT AND RATIONALISATION OF THE CURRICULUM AND ESTATE PROVISION OF PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND POST 16 EDUCATION

The Scrutiny Officer introduced an update report on the work of the Schools Task Group in supporting the development and rationalisation of the curriculum and provision of primary, secondary and post 16 education.

The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that Cabinet at its meeting on 11 July 2006 had received a report of the Overview and Scrutiny process which contained 14 recommendations proposing a strategic review of the provision of primary, secondary and post 16 education and school reorganisation. She stated that a Schools Task Group had been established to consider falling rolls, a large number of surplus primary and secondary school places, and the number of head teachers reaching retirement age in the near future and financial constraints which had led to a number of schools in a budget deficit situation.

The Corporate Director Education and Transformation commented that the outcomes for learners had improved above the Welsh average, with 55% of pupils leaving school with 5 GCSEs A\* - C grades, however 45% of pupils left without qualifications.

The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the Task Group had established six work streams, namely: Analytics; School Modelling; Post 16 Provision; Welsh Medium Provision; Catchment Review and 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Modernisation. It had been identified by the Task Group that each work stream had interdependencies which meant that none of the issues could be tackled in isolation and had led to the development of a strategy. The purpose of the strategy was to consider decisions relating to the organisation of school places and to deliver a managed programme for change. Each work stream had recognised the need to bring the work together to develop a coherent strategy, however due to the limited expertise and capacity in house it was proposed that a strategic partner be sourced to contribute to the development of the strategy. It was expected that the strategic partner will develop an options appraisal paper for presentation to Cabinet. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation highlighted the specification for the review and sought the views of the scrutiny function on what should be in the specification for the review to inform preparation of the review and welcomed the opportunity for Member representation on the Task Group from this Committee.

The Corporate Director Education and Transformation also highlighted the range of options the will consider, namely:

- Some secondary schools may not have a sixth form;
- Some schools may operate within federations;
- Some schools may become all through schools for the age range of 3-16 or 3-19, and
- Some schools may not have a non-teaching head.

A member of the Committee commented that he had previously sat on the Learning Pathway Group which reviewed 14-19 education and had met over a five period with consultants prior to the Group being disbanded. He expressed concern that a similar group was now being created employing consultants to develop the strategy. He stated that all governing bodies were against schools operating within federations and that the best model was cluster groups led by secondary schools. He also stated that to reduce the number of sixth forms at the same time as changing learner transport arrangements to potentially introduce charging was potentially dangerous as it could lead to an increase in the number of NEETs. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the previous Group had concluded its work. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation also confirmed that post 16 transport had not been cut and would be in place until 2020.

A member of the Committee questioned how church schools and faith schools would fit in to the strategy and expressed concern that a full Equality Impact Assessment would only be carried out following the formal consultation stage. Also would children and young people be consulted on the strategy. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation confirmed there would be representation from the Diocese on the Group. Although the review was in its early stages there would also be engagement with children and young people and that the rights of child are an important component.

The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that one of the advantages of having sixth forms is that it saved on not having to bus pupils across the County Borough which is diverse. He stated that it was not all about the cost of class provision but also about the cost of transport. He also stated that 20% of pupils undertake their studies in more than one centre. The model of charging pupils and travelling in order to undertake their studies was not sustainable but there was a need to weigh up the cost of travel.

The Committee expressed concern at the sustainability of sixth form education in schools as tertiary education was not viable in this area however the tertiary model is the favoured approach of the Welsh Government. The Committee considered that head teachers would favour retaining sixth forms as it would also help in the retention of teachers who want to teach sixth form classes. Concern was expressed that the Group did not come up with any proposals after a year's worth of consultation. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that each work stream had come up with a series of recommendations but did not want to put them in the public domain as yet. A member of the Committee commented that following consultation 9 head teachers believed that the current model of post 16 education was not sustainable and that the Welsh Government was considering developing a sixth form centre. The Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships commented that the head teachers had agreed that the existing model of post 16 education was not viable. She stated that significant cuts were anticipated to the 16-19 education budget and that work was being undertaken with head teachers on longer term solutions which may encompass a mixed tertiary model.

The Committee requested more detail on the views of senior management on the proposals for post 16 education. The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that the proposals were at present sensitive and he gave an assurance that a great deal of work was being undertaken and it had been a productive process with there being tangible outcomes. There was a need to develop provision at the Kenfig Hill site and there would be an options report presented to Cabinet.

A member of the Committee stated there were at present 300 pupils in the sixth form in the Llynfi Valley and expressed concern at the impact this would have on the futures of pupils if sixth form provision was removed from schools.

The Committee questioned the number of surplus nursery places at the newly opened Coety Primary School and whether the surplus places would influence the closure of other schools in the locality. The Deputy Leader commented that the Welsh Government was focused on surplus places at the expense of future provision. He stated that the Parc Derwen when complete would comprise 1,400 properties and there would then be no surplus places at Coety Primary. He also stated there were no plans to close Litchard Primary which had seen an investment of £3m in refurbishing facilities at that school.

The Committee requested more detail on school modelling which affects pupil outcomes and work streams and the timescale for developing the strategy and the reasons why Bridgend College is part funding the strategy. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that the strategic partner would not drive the review; their role is to provide technical advice and expertise which needed to be procured. The strategic review would be carried out by the Council. In terms of the timescale, the draft specification would be considered by the School Modernisation Board and the Safer Communities Board. Once the specification had been written a strategic partner would be procured. The Welsh Government would pay for the costs. It was intended to start the review in February 2016 with an options paper being presented to Cabinet in mid-2016. A final decision would then be made in 2017-18. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation commented that the College was working with the Council but was not contributing financially to the strategy.

A member of the Committee referred to three schools in the Garw Valley having an open door policy on federations and that the big issues on school modelling are change management, performance management and people. This had resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding being put together by the three head teachers. The Committee how the Garw Valley project could fit in and how it can benefit from the strategic review. The Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships informed the Committee that the model developed in the Garw Valley is the exact model that is needed to be adopted which could be replicated elsewhere. A member of the Committee stated that flexibility was needed as the Council could not carry on as at present. Concern was expressed at the data analytics and inward migration needed to be taken into account. The Corporate Director Education and Transformation informed the Committee that an officer in her Directorate possessed excellent data analysis skills and who was able to accurately predict future birth rates and where housing development would take place. She offered to meet the member with the officer responsible for analysis.

A member of the Committee questioned the reason for the surplus places at Coleg y Dderwen. The Deputy Leader informed the Committee that 2,000 new properties are to be built in the gateway to the valleys area and three feeder primary schools are full to capacity. The Head of Strategy Commissioning and Partnerships informed the Committee that the calculations for Coleg y Dderwen had been inaccurate and should have been done on the basis of 10% capacity.

The invitees were thanked for their contributions.

### **Conclusions**

1. Members acknowledged the sensitivities around the subject, however expressed disappointment at the lack of detail contained in the report in relation to the information gathered by the work streams such as, for example, the benefits and drawbacks of Federations which would have helped them better understand the work being undertaken.

2. The Committee commented that any proposals must clearly consider the geographics of the County Borough due to the view that closing some sixth forms could potentially have significant implications for pupils and their continuing in education and therefore a resulting increase in the number of NEETs. Members stressed that there must be suitable access to Post-16 education across the County Borough and agreed that this would be a point for detailed consideration by the Committee at future meetings.
3. In relation to the Consultation process, the Committee stressed that a Quality Impact Assessment needed to be carried out at an early stage to inform the consultation in order that it can effectively contribute to the process.
4. The Committee also stressed the importance of the views of children and young people in the consultation process, with the rights of the child in mind.
5. The Committee supported the proposal put forward by the Deputy Leader that the work of the Schools Task Group and its workstreams, along with future work around the development of the Strategy, be cascaded down to School Governing Bodies and staff to ensure that they are kept informed of progress.
6. Members requested that they received feedback as soon as possible on who the Strategic Partner will be and asked that they be invited to any future meetings on this subject item.
7. Members welcomed the opportunity offered to them to meet with the Director and consider the comprehensive reports behind each workstream to better understand the information and have confidence in the findings thus far. Members agreed that they would individually contact the Director for this should they wish to follow this up.
8. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to have its own representatives on the Working Party tasked with developing the Strategy for future education provision in the County Borough. Members nominated Cllr G. Phillips and Cllr DK. Edwards to be the Committee's representatives and provide feedback at future meetings.

199. **SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORTING FRAMEWORK**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report to update Members on the work of the Joint Research and Evaluation Panel in relation to the Social Services Annual Reporting Framework in June 2015. The Committee had previously considered a report on the Social Services Annual Framework at its meeting in November 2009, which outlined the arrangements put in place by the Chief Inspector of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). The framework involved formal engagement on an annual basis with Scrutiny and the Committee had agreed that the work should be undertaken jointly with the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (now the Adult Social Care Overview Scrutiny Committee), which subsequently also agreed to this approach through the establishment of a Research and Evaluation Panel.

The Panel met on two separate occasions to consider the report and formulate questions and lines of enquiry, as well as offering comments and recommendations on the Director of Social Services Annual Report. Some of the Panel's main points were summarised under paragraph 4.3 of the report and their comments and views were incorporated into the final report which was approved by Council in July 2015.

**Conclusions:**



The Committee noted the report on the work of the Joint Research and Evaluation Panel.

200. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 4.53 pm