

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

25 April 2024

Chairperson: Councillor R.Phillips

Vice Chairperson: Councillor D.Thomas

Councillors: W.Carpenter, N.Goldup-John, J.Henton, D.Keogh, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, P.Rogers and R.W.Wood

Co-Opted Members M.Caddick

Co-Opted Members Apologies L.Newman, A.Amor

Officers In Attendance H.Lervy, C.Millis, R.Crowhurst, C.Saunders, Z. Ashton, T.Davies, S.McCluskie, S.Griffiths and P.Chivers

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors J.Hurley, N.Jenkins and C.Phillips

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The chair extended best wishes to those affected by recent events at Ysgol Dyffryn Aman.

It was confirmed that the committee would be scrutinising items 6 and 7 from the Cabinet Board Agenda.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Professional Learning Offers available for School Based Staff**

Members thanked officers for the report and made reference to the vast amount of training available to school based staff. Members questioned whether data is available to identify if training has impacted on teaching and learning outcomes within schools, and, the process should schools not engage with the training programme.

The Head of Education Development confirmed that all training should be identified and costed through the Schools Development Plan, resources are limited and consideration should be given to how staff can access courses taking into account the requirement to cover staff absences. There are various methods to deliver training, many of which can be cost neutral. Monitoring of the Schools Development Plan is undertaken by a variety of officers to establish if training has been effective. Questionnaires are provided during training and responses are followed up. Schools who do not participate in training are contacted to establish barriers to attendance. It was acknowledged that school budgets and training costs can affect staff accessing training.

Members asked whether training could be pre-recorded to assist with staff accessing the training at a convenient time.

The Head of Education Development confirmed that some courses were pre-recorded but this depended on the nature of the course and the required course intervention. It is important not to lose the quality of training.

Members asked whether training was available solely for school based staff.

Officers confirmed that the requested report focused solely on school based staff but training was delivered to partners where appropriate.

Members acknowledged that the learning requirement for staff in all sectors was great and asked whether training requirements had an impact on budgets and teaching and learning in schools.

The Head of Education Development commented that training has to be planned and school leadership and the school development plan was important in planning for future training requirements.

Members asked if a correlation had been identified between the amount of school staff attending training and any positive impacts on the school.

The Head of Education Development confirmed that some data is held, however, it is important that the training is put into practice and there is a need to ensure that training matches the need of the school. Through performance management, staff should access training that has the greatest impact on pupils. There is no evidence held whether there is a direct correlation.

The Chair commented on the comprehensive training programme that was in place and thanked officers for the report.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

5. **Celtic Leisure Working Group Update**

Members thanked officers for the report but commented on the sparsity of the Terms of Reference. Members requested information on meeting dates.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that Celtic Leisure Working Group meetings had been held on 5th February, 22nd February and 13th March; it is anticipated the next meeting will take place shortly with future meetings being held fortnightly, if required.

Members asked if consideration has been given to income generation and the balance of expenditure to income generation possibilities. Members questioned whether any cross linkage of service possibilities had been identified.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that the working party had not focused on income generation but Celtic Leisure had made progress in relation to income generation and budget savings during the last financial year. There is confidence that further savings can be achieved during the current financial year through income generation. Cross linkage has not been explored at this stage, the focus has been on ensuring incoming costs are managed.

Members stated that there needs to be more focus on potential savings across the rest of the authority and asked whether the working group would be undertaking this work.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed that this was not being looked at currently but will be looked at, depending on the outcome of the working group. There will be work undertaken as the year progresses, to plan how services are operated when they come back in house.

Members asked for an explanation regarding a possible phased transition and when a report could be expected.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed consideration had been given to how different timescales would affect costs. The timing of the report depended on the ongoing work around costs but it was hoped this would be available before summer recess. Members stated it was important to look at how services interlink and the potential for savings in other areas.

The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture confirmed there are opportunities but these may not be realised in the short term. Celtic Leisure have a business plan which they are working through.

Members commented that it would be useful to see the business plan going forward. The Head of Service confirmed that he would check when the plan was going to the Celtic Leisure Board.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Children and Young Peoples Plan and Early Years Strategy

The Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Participation introduced the Children and Young Peoples Plan and Early Years Strategy as outlined in the Cabinet Agenda report pack.

Members referred to page 17 of the report and requested further detail on how vulnerable learners were included in the consultation process.

The Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Participation confirmed that it was important that the views of vulnerable young people were captured. To achieve this a Consultant was employed and an extensive consultation was undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders and individuals. The views gathered were used to formulate the plan and establish priorities, views will continue to be considered as delivery groups are developed. In line with the new Participation & Engagement Strategy, it was ensured that all groups of young people, particularly those who are under-represented were consulted. It was noted that it was important to give children skills so they can take part in the consultation process.

Members referred to page 18 of the report and the stated positive valleys communities' impact. Members asked for further information on how parents and young people were consulted.

The Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Participation confirmed that extensive consultation was undertaken with groups of people, special schools, youth council, online drive and incentives. Views were also sought from professionals working in various areas.

Members expressed respect for the youth council but stated they may not be representative of all young people; views are needed from groups of young people who historically do not engage.

Officers confirmed that consultation was undertaken with the youth service, young carers and care experienced young people. Links were made with LGBTQ+ groups, Flying Start, breast feeding groups and many small group consultations were undertaken following consultation with partners.

Members commented that the plan is good but there was a lack of any negatives; is there a clear connection between the Directorate Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan and Early Year's Strategy.

Officers confirmed that there are two strands to the strategy; priorities for the directorate and also priorities that are reflected and aligned with partnership plans. Progress on the strategy will be brought back to the committee.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years thanked education staff for the huge undertaking in producing the strategy and commented that the strategy had links to the professional learning report that was discussed earlier.

Following scrutiny, the committee supported the recommendation to Cabinet Board.

Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Strategic Directorate Plan

Members commented that the Directorate Plan was useful in providing information and insight into delivery and requested it should be brought back to committee as a useful tool to monitor progress, particularly in the new model of scrutiny.

The Head of Education Development agreed to bring the plan back to committee half way through as a monitoring document but commented that not every target will progress at the same rate. Below the Directorate Plan sits Service Plans and a selection of these can be brought to committee also.

Committee Members commented that it was pleasing to see the mention of apprenticeship schemes in the report.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

7. **Committee Action Log**

The committee action log was noted.

8. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

Members raised the recent incident at Ysgol Dyffryn Aman, Carmarthenshire and a discussion was held concerning lockdown procedures at Neath Port Talbot Schools.

The Head of Education Development confirmed that all schools had a Lockdown Policy, associated to the Safeguarding Policy. Regular training sessions are carried out through H&S Audit and staff from the Environment Directorate visit schools to advise on the Prevent and Protect agenda. It was noted that it is the responsibility of school leaders and governing bodies to practice and implement lockdown procedures as appropriate. The Head of Service confirmed that information has been disseminated to school staff and parents to bring awareness of lockdown policies.

Members commented that a high number of young people from Neath Port Talbot attend Ysgol Dyffryn Aman and may have been affected by recent events. Members noted that community organisations have put in place support programmes in affected communities and enquired whether there was any further support available within our authority. Members suggested there should be support put in place for the youth service.

Officers stated that it was important that any support provided was co-ordinated with Carmarthenshire, and that the school is the community that is best placed to support young people. Contact will be made with the School Based Counselling Service to identify if there are any opportunities for collaborative work. It was noted that the cohort of pupils from the borough were identified through transport that is provided by the authority; pupils attending schools out of county will not be on school roll here.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years confirmed that testing lockdown procedures was important and was carried out without alarming pupils. The Cabinet Member asked committee members to reassure parents and communities that schools are safe and plans are in place should they be needed.

**Cllr. R Phillips
CHAIRPERSON**