

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 9th April, 2019.

Present: Councillor L. Burnett (Chairman); Councillor N.P. Hodges (Vice-Chairman);
Councillors: S.J. Griffiths, K.F McCaffer, M.G. Morgan and Mrs. J.M. Norman.

Co-Opted Members: Dr. C. Brown (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector),
Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor –Primary Sector) and Dr. M. Price (Roman
Catholic Church).

Non-Voting Observers: Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education) and Mr. I. Cramb
(Vale Youth Forum).

Also Present: Councillor R.A. Penrose.

918 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Ms. R.M. Birch, Mrs R. Nugent-Finn,
Mrs S. Perkes and Mr C Edwards.

919 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March, 2019 be
approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that Mr. H. Gapper (Non-
Voting Observer – Welsh Medium Education) had submitted his apologies for this
meeting.

920 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

921 PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES AND ESTABLISH 48 PART TIME NURSERY PLACES AT ST. NICHOLAS CIW PRIMARY SCHOOL (REF) –

Cabinet had, on 18th February, 2019, referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee
for its consideration as part of the proposed consultation exercise. Cabinet approval
had been sought to undertake a statutory consultation as outlined in the School
Organisation Code 2018 on the proposal to:

- Alter the lowest age range of pupils at St. Nicholas CIW Primary School from
4 to 3, to consist of the addition of a new nursery class containing 48 part time
places from September 2021;

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- Increase the capacity of St. Nicholas CIW Primary School from 126 places to 210 places from September 2021;
- The proposal would ensure St. Nicholas CIW Primary School was able to meet increased demand for school places as a result of recent housing developments within the catchment area and would address the condition and suitability issues with the existing buildings;
- The establishment of a nursery would develop continuity and progression in children's learning from the age of 3;
- St. Nicholas CIW Primary School had been included as part of Band B of the Council's 21st Century Schools Programme with the creation of a new 210 primary school building scheduled for completion by September 2021;
- Feedback received throughout the consultation period would be presented to Cabinet for consideration in June 2019.

The Council had a statutory duty to review the number and type of schools in the area and to make the best use of resources to raise standards in schools. The Council also had a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places in its area to meet current and future demand for school places in line with national, regional and local strategies. Expanding schools and developing new schools was required where there was a shortfall in school places, current and future, to meet demand for Welsh, English and denominational schools. This may arise due to large scale housing developments planned for an area, increased demand and changes to parental preference for schooling.

In order to ensure St. Nicholas CIW Primary School was able to meet anticipated future demand for education, its capacity would need to increase.

The report detailed that the current school building had a capacity of 126 places but had 128 pupils on roll as outlined below.

School	Type of school	Language category	Admission number	School capacity	Number on roll	Age range
St. Nicholas CIW Primary School	Voluntary Controlled	English Medium	18	126	128	4 - 11

The table showed that current demand for school places at St. Nicholas CIW Primary School was above the current capacity which meant there was no capacity to accommodate additional pupils generated by the new housing developments.

The Head of Service for Strategy, Community Learning and Resources in presenting the report, advised that it had therefore been considered that a 210 place building was the minimum size from an efficiency and sustainability perspective and a 210 place school would accommodate the projected increase in pupil numbers from the new housing developments. St. Nicholas CIW Primary School did not currently offer nursery provision due to the limitations of the existing building.

It was proposed that 48 part time nursery places were provided to develop continuity and progression in children's learning from the age of 3. This would ensure there

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was a consistent approach to planning and delivery of the Foundation Phase (Nursery to Year 2).

St. Nicholas CIW Primary School was a timber clad building which had been categorised as being in poor condition and suitability. This meant the school was exhibiting major defects and teaching methods were adversely affected. It would not be possible to refurbish teaching areas to fully meet 21st Century standards.

The school was split over two sites with Reception pupils having to walk to the nearby "Old School" building following morning assembly. There was no path along this stretch of road. Classroom sizes were also inconsistent throughout the building. There were currently 72 children being taught across two classrooms.

St. Nicholas had therefore been included as part of the Council's 21st Century Schools Programme and a new 210 place school building would be built on the existing school site. It was anticipated that the new school building would open by September 2021.

Following a query as to whether any consultation had been undertaken in light of the new developments for St. Nicholas and Bonvilston and whether the department also had information regarding where children resided that went to the school, the Head of Service advised that provisions and projections had been taken into account with the conclusion reached that there was enough demand for Church in Wales placements as well as there being some surplus capacity. There were a significant number of pupils who attended the school from outside the locality and once accepted, they were on the school roll.

The Chairman, in referring to the location and parking on the site, was informed that the department would look to install turning circles at the site. The issue of pupils currently walking from one site to the other would be resolved by the new proposals.

Having considered the report, the Scrutiny Committee subsequently unanimously
RECOMMENDED – T H A T the proposals as outlined in the report be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents contained therein and the discussions at the meeting.

922 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2020/2021 (REF) –

The report was presented for the Committee's consideration having been referred from Cabinet on 1st April, 2019. At its meeting on 1st April, Cabinet had been informed of the outcome of the statutory consultation on the proposal for school admission arrangements for the academic year 2020/21 for admission to Community Schools in accordance with the Education (Determination of Admission Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2006.

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The Consultation Document outlined the proposed changes to the existing Vale of Glamorgan Admissions Policy as attached to the Cabinet report at Appendix A.

The Council had a statutory duty to consult on school admission arrangements each year for those schools for which they were the admission authority and to determine the arrangements for 2020/21 following conclusion of the consultation by no later than 15th April in the determination year. In the event that Cabinet did not approve the proposed School Admissions Policy for 2020/21, the existing arrangements agreed for 2019/20 would be adopted for the academic year 2020/21 in order to ensure that the statutory requirement to determine the policy by 15th April, 2019 was met. These arrangements were set out in Appendix B attached to the report.

The key changes proposed as part of the consultation were referred to as below:

- A proposed change to the oversubscription criteria for entry into Year 7 to prioritise those living in a school's catchment area and remove the use of feeder primary schools as an oversubscription criterion. This would ensure in accordance with the statutory guidance that children who moved into the area at a late stage were not unduly disadvantaged and considered carefully the impact that such arrangements had on the ability of a school to serve its immediate local area;
- Continuation of a co-ordinated admissions pilot programme in partner voluntary aided schools in order to promote a fairer, more equitable system of allocating places was also proposed. The co-ordinated admissions programme would be reviewed after the conclusion of the September 2019 reception admissions round with a view to extending the programme to other voluntary aided schools for 2020/21 on a voluntary basis;
- The policy also advised that the Council was proposing to undertake a review of school catchment areas during 2019 that would be subject to consultation and reflected in admission arrangements for the academic year 2021/22.

A summary of 25 key themes and issues raised during the consultation exercise was included in the consultation report attached at Appendix C to the report. Individual responses to the consultation were available for Members to consider from the service Directorate, on request. The Operational Manager confirmed that consultation had taken place with prescribed consultees and a range of individuals, the details of which were attached in the consultation document at Appendix C to the report, page 2. Along with the Consultation Report, an Equality Impact Assessment included at Appendix D of the report for Members to consider alongside the Consultation Report.

The Council had received 304 responses by the closing date of 22nd February, 2019 and of these responses, 105 consultees had been in support of the proposals, 198 were opposed and one did not offer an opinion either way. Paragraph 2.10 of the report detailed a number of key themes that were highlighted in favour of the proposal, and 2.11 detailed the key themes that were highlighted in opposition to the proposal.

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Following a query from the Chairman regarding the possibility of issues for the department with some pupils from outside the area being closest to the school than some in catchment, the Operational Manager stated that the Council was to undertake a review of catchment areas later in 2019 which may change some catchment areas but although there was a possibility some catchment areas could grow they could not overlap. The Chairman in conclusion referred to the fact that the new proposals would also support the Well Being of Future Generations Act with people not having to drive distances to drop their children off to school.

Having full regard to the contents of the report, the responses to the consultation and the officer's responses at the meeting, it was subsequently unanimously

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the School Admission arrangements for 2020/21 as contained within the report be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and the discussion at the meeting.

923 WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS PERFORMANCE 2017-2018 (DLS) –

The suggested annual return for 2017/18 was submitted to the Committee, attached at Appendix A to the report, with Committee being requested to endorse the return to be submitted to Welsh Government by July 2018.

The report also provided feedback on the Library and Information Service performance received from the Welsh Government and the new performance indicators for libraries.

The Standards were reviewed and updated by Welsh Government on a three year cycle. The Annual Return submitted for 2017-2018 was the first report of the sixth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020. Named Connected and Ambitious Libraries, the sixth framework recognised the contribution libraries made to the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The framework also recognised the financial pressures on public services and the need to balance what was practical and what was possible.

Included as part of the report were the Welsh Public Library Standards – Assessment Report 2017-2018 at Appendix C, providing feedback on the Authority's performance under the Welsh Public Library Standards for 2017-18, and the Welsh Public Library Standards – Case Studies 2017-2018 at Appendix B, providing evidence that the library service had made a positive difference to individuals (or group of individuals).

The Library Services Manager, in presenting the report, advised of the following:

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- The only Core Entitlement which the Vale had not achieved was the requirement to share data and policies online. This would be achieved by 31st March, 2019 by the creation of a page on the website where this information could be shared. It would include library policies and book issue data;
- The Vale partially met targets in relation to QI 3, the Quality Indicator which specified the range of training and skills expected at all libraries. In many cases the service was only expected to identify a minimum of one instance of specific training at each library, including Community Libraries. The Library Service would in future engage with Community Libraries more closely to inform and support them to host the minimum levels of training required to achieve this Quality Indicator. Some of this training was scheduled to take place before 31st March, 2019;
- QI 13, the Quality Indicator which covered staffing levels and qualifications, was only partly met due to a shortfall in staffing per capita. Unfortunately volunteer staffing was not considered within this indicator and it was unlikely staffing levels would increase to attain the indicator in the short term. The Library Service would make the point wherever possible that volunteer staffing plus Council staff were adequate to the needs of the Library Service at this time;
- The Vale partially met QI 16, the Quality Indicator on staffed opening hours per capita. The Library Service did not meet this at present, and nor would it meet this if the 16 hours of unstaffed hours were also included. The Vale was, however, the only Library Service using Open+ technology to provide unstaffed hours in Wales at present, and unfortunately this was not taken into consideration under the sixth framework. Other services were interested in Open+ and as the technology continued to prove itself the argument for including unstaffed hours may become more difficult to dismiss. In the meantime, opening hours were deemed by the Library Service to be satisfactory for the type, location and staffing of libraries in the Vale and the flexibility for out of hours access through Open+ was welcomed by service users;
- The new National Performance Indicator, which reported the number of Quality Indicators achieved by the Library Service, would in future give a quick comparison of how each Library Service was performing in regards to the standards. The Vale Library Service was likely to be ranked as average or above average in this regard as there were some Authorities which achieved far fewer indicators than the Vale and a few which achieved one or two indicators more.

The Head of Service also commented on the excellent job undertaken by Volunteers who provided staffing hours within the Community Library service which unfortunately was not reflected in the Standards. These libraries also provided a considerable amount of activities for example, Welsh language opportunities and ICT facilities. It was also important to note that the Community Libraries as charities had been able to access over £1m of funding that the Local Authority would not have been able to access.

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The Library Services Manager provided through the presentation a number of statistics identified as below, with the Vale rankings out of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales noted in brackets:-

Active borrowers 19,742 (11/22)
Visits in person 561,003 (10/22)
Virtual visits 45,100 (11/22)
Event attendees (9/22)
User training attendees (10/22)

A Member queried how the public's view of the service was captured, being informed that CIPFA surveys were undertaken which was used by a number of Local Authorities which allowed the Council to benchmark the service.

The Library Services Manager took the opportunity to ask all Members to advise him if there were any residents in their local communities who may require a library service.

The Chairman in conclusion stated that the Library Service was a great success and sought consent from the Committee for a letter of thanks to be sent to the Library Service in recognition of their support and commitment to the communities of the Vale which were also well managed by the staff.

Having fully considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Annual Return for 2017-2018 to be submitted to the Welsh Government at Appendix A to the report be endorsed.
- (2) T H A T the performance of the Library and Information Service in relation to the quality framework for Welsh Public Libraries be noted.
- (3) T H A T the new National Performance Indicator for Libraries be noted.
- (4) T H A T a letter of thanks be forwarded by the Chairman on behalf of the Committee to the Library Service as outlined above.
- (5) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet for its consideration.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To comply with the requirement of the Welsh Assembly Government for formal approval of the Annual Return for 2017-2018.
- (2) To keep Members informed of library progress in achieving the Standards.
- (3) For Members to be aware of the additional performance indicators from Welsh Government.

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(4) In recognition of the excellent work being undertaken by all in the Library Service.

(5) To seek Cabinet's endorsement of the Annual Return for 2017/18.