

No.

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 8th July, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor G.C. Kemp (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice-Chairman); Councillors S.J. Griffiths, N.P. Hodges, Mrs. J.M. Norman, Mrs. S.D. Perkes and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church) and Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector).

Also present: Councillors N. Moore (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) and L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration).

196 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

197 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors T.H. Jarvie and A.C. Parker.

198 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

199 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

200 CONSULTATION RESPONSE: WELSH GOVERNMENT'S RACE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN FOR AN ANTI-RACIST WALES (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 7th June, 2021 was presented to Committee as contained within the agenda.

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The report summarised key aspects of the Welsh Government's draft Race Equality Action Plan for an Anti-Racist Wales (REAP) and presented to Committee a draft response to the consultation on this Plan (Appendix A). To inform the Council's draft response to the consultation, comments from officers across Council Services, the Ethnic Minority Staff Network and the Equalities Consultative Forum had been sought and incorporated in the draft response.

Members noted that the plan was ambitious and that involvement of the Minority and Ethnic Network should be encouraged as their contribution could assist in focusing on issues regarding racism and inequality.

Councillor Mrs.. Perkes noted that in terms of education, there appeared to be an ethnicity-based ambition gap, and asked what was being done to address this. The Head of Standards and Provision replied that Careers Wales provided support in this area, however the Council's Strategic Equality Plan had been shared with schools, and in consultation with Head Teachers, the WLGA and young people further plans were being developed to address this gap.

Committee, having considered the reference

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the draft consultation response be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

To enable a response to be submitted to Welsh Government by the deadline of 15th July, 2021.

201 THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON THE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN AND AN OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY (DLS) –

The report advised Members of the experiences and views identified in the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Coronavirus and Me survey in January 2021 and how the Local Authority had supported children and young people

In May 2020 and January 2021, the Children's Commissioner undertook a survey of children and young people across Wales to find out about their experiences during the Coronavirus pandemic. The report attached at Appendix 1 showed the results of the second survey. The Children's Commissioner was clear that the information within the report should be used to inform the Local Authority's next steps in supporting children and young people rather than to compare Local Authorities with each other.

The survey was specific to the period of lockdown and the questions reflected restrictions that children and young people were experiencing at that particular time. It included questions about children and young people's emotions, mental health, wellbeing support, education, wider services, information, play and

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leisure.

SELFIE (Social and Emotional Learning for Improvement in Education) was an online survey which pupils from Year 2 upwards completed to gather their views about their social and emotional wellbeing. The survey information was used by school staff to proactively track, respond to and monitor pupils' wellbeing.

Both surveys indicated that most children had shown remarkable resilience during the pandemic, but some young people had undoubtedly been impacted negatively, and Officers presented key figures to Members which reflected this.

Officers advised that the Directorate had been concerned about the social, emotional and mental health of children and young people for a number of years. In 2019, a strategy was developed based on the most up to date research in this field which incorporated an understanding of Developmental Trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), Attachment theory and the neuroscience of mental health and ill-health. The progress made in implementing this strategy, alongside specific support provided by the Local Authority as a result of the pandemic, had enabled children and young people to access appropriate support in relation to social, emotional and mental health.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with permission to speak, thanked Officers for the comprehensive report and was pleased that she would be able to advise the School Councils network, who had expressed there was a need for greater emphasis on mental health matters, that this matter had been considered by Committee.

Members overwhelmingly welcomed and praised the report for its quality and level of detail, and indicated they would like to hear updates on this matter going forward. In response to queries from Members, Officers advised of the following:

- The Children's Commissioner's Survey was anonymised, however data acquired via SELFIE may give some indication of whether the rurality of where they lived had impacted children's wellbeing during lockdowns as a result of isolation. It was suggested however that poverty, as opposed to rurality, would have had a greater impact.
- Regarding the impact according to age and gender, evidence gathered from the surveys suggested that there had been a greater impact on adolescent girls, who had seen more referrals to higher level supporting services, however this was still an emerging picture.
- As the Children's Commissioner's report had categorised older learners in a 12-18 category it was difficult to gauge the impact on the wellbeing of exam year pupils, however a number of respondents had highlighted their anxieties regarding external qualifications and the Directorate had been made aware of or dealt with a number of individual incidents relating to this.

The Chairman thanked Officers for the report and Committee, having fully considered the report and its contents, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the results of the Children’s Commissioner’s Coronavirus and Me report and Local Authority data outlining the impact of the pandemic on children and young people in the Vale of Glamorgan be noted.
- (2) T H A T that the Local Authority’s identification of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on children and young people’s mental health prior to the pandemic and its strategic approach to address this be recognised.
- (3) T H A T the universal and targeted support the Local Authority has provided to support the wellbeing of children and young people as part of a strategic approach and in direct response to the pandemic be recognised.

Reason for recommendations

- (1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

202 CURRICULUM FOR WALES: JOURNEY TO 2022 (DLS) –

The report provided an update on the Curriculum for Wales that was due to be introduced in maintained schools and funded non-maintained nursery settings from September 2022.

The report and presentation given by the Assistant Director for Curriculum at Central South Consortium (CSC) made reference to the shared expectations for schools, as set out in the ‘Curriculum for Wales: The Journey to 2022’ document. It outlined the range of professional learning and support provided by CSC to all schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. The report also made reference to the schools that had engaged with the professional learning opportunities, including network meetings and key programmes.

Following the presentation, the Cabinet Member, with permission to speak, advised that the Council’s Senior Leadership Team had that morning received a presentation from Barry Island Primary School in which they discussed how the Council’s ‘Project Zero’ tied in with the Curriculum for Wales. The children had clearly been engaged and understood the Curriculum, and this was an example of work happening across the Vale.

Councillor Ms. Birch indicated she was pleased to hear schools were acting as leads in this work and emphasised the value of peer-to-peer assistance which could be easier to accept than feedback from an inspectorate.

In response to a query from Councillor Thomas, the Assistant Director confirmed that each school had received £6k of collaboration funding to support participation in regional professional learning and collaborative working. A sum of £30k was then awarded to a Special Schools Network which covered the region.

Members subsequently

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RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the findings of the report and the approaches being developed to support schools with curriculum reform be noted.
- (2) T H A T Committee receive termly updates on Curriculum for Wales developments, including information about the readiness of schools for September 2022.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To ensure Members are kept abreast of schools' progress towards the introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales.

203 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE 2020/21 (DLS) –

The report advised of the Council's progress at Quarter 4 (1st April, 2020 to 31st March, 2021) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2020/21) (ADP) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Appendix A to the report provided a summary of how the Council was performing against each of its Well-being Objectives which were specific to the remit of the Committee. Performance exceptions within the remit of the Committee were presented at Appendix B to the report, while detailed performance commentary for all actions and measures were provided at Appendix C.

Despite the ongoing challenges of responding to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Council had made positive progress in delivering its in-year commitments in relation to its ADP. This performance had contributed to an overall Amber status for the Plan at Quarter 4 (Q4).

Progress made against the 61 actions and 8 quarterly measures which were specifically within the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee could be summarised as follows:

- GREEN: 36 actions (59%) and 4 measures.
- AMBER: 0 actions and 1 measure.
- RED: 25 actions (41%) and 3 measures.

Of the 25 attributed a Red performance status, the impact of COVID-19 was identified as a contributory factor in the reported slippage for 23 actions. In relation to all three measures attributed a Red status, the impact of COVID-19 had contributed to missing the target.

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The Director of Learning and Skills gave a presentation to Committee which highlighted key achievements accomplished during the year, along with identified areas for improvement. Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was also reported to Members with the presentation highlighting issues pertinent to the Committee's remit.

The Chairman noted that it was positive to hear that so few actions had slipped due to non-COVID related reasons, and with there being no further comments it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of under-performance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(3) T H A T the progress being made through the Council's recovery strategy in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

204 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS (DLS) –

The report advised that the year end revenue position was a favourable variance of £4k after a net transfer to reserves of £7.610m.

A revenue savings target of £45k had been set for 2020/21 which was achieved and there was capital expenditure during the year of £47.641m.

The Chairman noted that the effect of COVID-19 was apparent and that potential problems with budgetary deficits could become apparent in the future.

Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report and the financial measures taken and proposed be approved.

Reason for recommendation

To approve the report and the financial measures taken and proposed.

No.

205 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 3
1ST MAY, 2021 (DLS) –

The report advised that the revenue position for 2021/22 would be challenging with the continuing pressure for the service both operationally and financially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This would impact both as a result of incurring additional expenditure but also from a loss of income. Funding had been provided by Welsh Government to cover some of the issues.

A savings target for the year had been set at £59k, and the currently approved capital budget had been set at £61.094m.

There being no queries at this time it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

206 1ST QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2021/22 AND
UPDATED COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2021/22
(MD) –

The report advised Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2021/22 for the Committee's consideration.

Appended to the report were:

- 1st Quarter Recommendation Tracking April to June 2021 (Appendix A)
- Uncompleted Recommendations for the Municipal Year 2019-20 (Appendix B)
- Updated Committee Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2021/22 (Appendix C).

With there being no comments from Members regarding the above, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A and B to the report be agreed.

(2) T H A T the updated Committee Forward Work Programme Schedule attached at Appendix C to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

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Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.
- (2) For information.