

Scrutiny Report



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Part 1

Date: 20 June 2018

Subject Education Achievement Service, Value for Money, Financial Year 2017-18

Author Scrutiny Adviser

The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Area / Role / Subject
James Harries	Strategic Director - People
Sarah Morgan	Chief Education Officer
Geraint Willington	Education Achievement Service (EAS) Company Secretary
Hayley Davies-Edwards	Education Achievement Service (EAS) Principal Challenge Adviser for Newport

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1 Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider the information provided within the submission of evidence in **Appendix A** together with the externally commissioned Education Achievement Service (EAS) Regional Value for Money (VfM) report 2017-2018 in **Appendix 1**.
2. Consider how Scrutiny should be involved in the future monitoring of value for money outcomes, and;
3. Determine if it wishes to make any comments to the Cabinet Member and / or the EAS.

2 Context

Background

- 2.1 The EAS is the school improvement service for the five Local Authorities in the region (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen). The role of the EAS is to support, monitor and challenge schools with the purpose of raising education standards in South East Wales.

- 2.2 Newport City Council makes an annual contribution to the commissioning of the EAS. The EAS has provided Value for Money reports to each of the local authorities across the Region for the last two years, which for Newport, were reported to the Learning Caring and Leisure Scrutiny Committee. ***(Links to the Report and Minutes of the Learning Caring and Leisure Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22 March 2017 are provided in the Background Papers in Section 8 of this report.)***
- 2.3 The EAS is now reporting Value for Money on a regional level set against the previous year's Business Plan and consequently, the external report upon Regional Value for Money Evaluation for 2017-18 is being submitted to the Committee together with an explanatory submission of Evidence from the EAS.
- 2.4 For Members information, EAS Reports upon Newport's performance are reported to the Performance Scrutiny Committee – People for scrutiny, including reports upon: Education and Pupil Performance; School Attendance; Special Educational Needs and Performance; Exclusions Monitoring; Key Stage 4/5 Pupil Performance Data, and National Categorisation of Schools and the EAS Principal Challenge Adviser for Newport attends to answer the Committee's questions.

3 Information Submitted to the Committee

- 3.1 The following information has been submitted to the Committee for consideration:
- **Appendix A - Submission of Evidence – Education Achievement Services, Value for Money, Financial Year 2017-18**
 - **Appendix 1 - Regional Value for Money Evaluation 2017-18 by External Consultant**

4. Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to consider:

- 4.1 Whether the information presented provide the Committee with evidence of the impact of the EAS providing measurable value for money?
- 4.2 How should scrutiny be involved in monitoring of the value for money of the EAS collaboration?
- Assess and make comment on:
 - Whether the consortium is providing value for money?
 - The progress being made since the previous year's Value for Money report?
 - How well the consortium is working together to deliver Value for Money?
 - Conclusions:
 - What was the overall conclusion on the information contained within the reports?
 - Is the Committee satisfied that it has had all of the relevant information to base a conclusion?
 - Do any areas require a more in-depth review by the Committee?
 - Do the Committee wish to make any Comments / Recommendations to the Cabinet?

Suggested Lines of Enquiry

- 4.1 In evaluating whether the EAS is providing Value for Money in the Report attached as **Appendix A**, the Committee may wish to consider:
- Why has there been a move to a Regional Value for Money Report, from the Value for Money reports to each of the local authorities across the Region.
 - How does EAS performance compare with that of neighbouring regional education improvement services?
 - Is there a correlation between the reduction in funding and grants and the decline in performance?
 - While the number of “Green” Primary schools has increased in 2018 by 14% since 2017, the number of “Red” Primary schools has also increased from 2% to 5% across the EAS.
 - How are resources targeted to improve schools, in particular, those in “Red” and Special Measures?
 - The number of “Red” Secondary Schools has increased in 2018 to 25% from 17% in 2017 across the EAS, this is almost double the Wales Average of 13%.
 - Whether National Categorisation for 2018 varies much across all 5 Authorities: for primary schools, and; for secondary schools.
 - The Estyn Inspection outcomes for schools for 2016-17 shows 5.6% “Red” based upon current performance, increasing to 8.3% “Red” based on Prospects for Improvement.
 - Whether the report contains sufficient information to demonstrate that the EAS Consortium is providing Value for Money.

Section B – Supporting Information

5 Additional Data and Analysis

- 5.1 The following is an extract from the minutes of the Learning, Caring and Leisure Scrutiny meeting held on 22 March 2017, when the Committee received the EAS Contribution: Financial Year 2016-17 report:

“The Principal Challenge Adviser for Newport presented the report on Newport’s contribution to the EAS during 2016/17, outlining the return on this investment.

The following points were discussed:

- *The reduction in reliance on “traded income” was explained. Research showed that internal school support had a far greater impact than external training events, and there was also a potential conflict of interest in needing to promote chargeable provision when resources could be better targeted within schools.*
- *It was highlighted that EAS was just one of a number of commissioned education services, and EAS were supporting work to develop a “Value for Money Model” so that the approach developed here could be applied more widely. It was suggested that this model could also be of interest to scrutiny in monitoring and assessing commissioned services.*
- *It was reported that grant funding levels were confirmed for the next year. In response to a question on future projections for funding, and whether any cuts in grant funding would impact upon the contributions requested from partner authorities, officers stated that this would need to be referred to EAS management for a response. It was noted that a full response may not be possible given the variables involved. It was suggested that, if a full response was not possible, an explanation of the process to be followed in negotiating and agreeing changes to local authority contributions would be useful, for Members to better understand the relationships and accountability structures at play.*

- It was noted that a high level of Welsh Government grant funding went into Newport schools compared with other authorities.
- It was clarified that the Core Values in the report were those of the EAS. Each of the regional consortia defined its own core values, but all worked towards national policy, and there was regular communication and networking between the leadership teams to share good practice.
- It was suggested that value for money could not be demonstrated while any schools were in the “red” category. This assertion was challenged strongly by the officers present: it was highlighted that there would always be schools in need of support, and for a variety of legitimate reasons. For example, additional support might be required to establish new leadership in a school. The key role of school leaders and governing bodies in school improvement was emphasised. It was also stressed that re-categorisation of schools can be hindered by external factors, for example a delay in follow-up inspections by Estyn.
- In relation to the point made about school leadership, Members raised concerns about the lack of support for governing bodies, given the crucial role required of governors, on a voluntary basis. It was confirmed that there was a small team in place to support governing bodies, but resources were stretched. Members suggested that this could be an area of inquiry for scrutiny’s work programme after the election, to establish levels of support in place, responsibilities for funding that support, and whether additional resources could be committed to this. (*** This bullet point is the subject of a separate report upon the Agenda for consideration by today’s Committee meeting.**)
- In relation to take-up of training, officers confirmed that attendances were monitored regularly, with any persistent issues being challenged.
- The Teacher Adviser to the Committee commented positively on the contribution of the EAS to raising educational standards in Newport.

Resolutions and Actions

The Committee **requested** a response from EAS management on the grant funding query outlined above.

No further monitoring was agreed as this would be a matter for the new Committee following the election, however annual monitoring of the local authority’s financial contribution to EAS would be included in the suggested work programme to be agreed after May. The suggestions to look into the “Value for Money Model”, and the area of governor support, would also be put forward for consideration.”

6 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- Newport City Council’s Corporate Plan and Wellbeing Objectives:

Well-being Objectives	Promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment	Improve skills, educational outcomes & employment opportunities	Enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient	Build cohesive & sustainable communities
Corporate Plan Commitments	Thriving City	Aspirational People		Resilient Communities
Supporting Function	Modernised Council			

7 Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

7.1 General questions

- How is this area / policy affected by the new legislation?
- How will this decision / policy / proposal impact upon future generations? What is the long term impact?
- What evidence is provided to demonstrate WFGA has been / is being considered?
- Evidence from Community Profiles / other data?
- Evidence of links to Wellbeing Assessment / Objectives / Plan?

7.2 Wellbeing Goals

- How are the Wellbeing goals reflected in the policy / proposal / action?
 - *A prosperous Wales*
 - *A resilient Wales*
 - *A healthier Wales*
 - *A more equal Wales*
 - *A Wales of cohesive communities*
 - *A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language*
 - *A globally responsible Wales*

7.3 Sustainable Development Principles

- Does the report / proposal demonstrate how as an authority we are working in accordance with the sustainable development principles from the act when planning services?
 - **Long Term**
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
 - **Prevention**
How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives
 - **Integration**
Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies
 - **Collaboration**
Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives
 - **Involvement**
The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

8. Background Papers

- [The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act \(Wales\)](#)
- [Corporate Plan](#)
- [EAS Website](#)
- [Agenda and Minutes](#) of Learning, Caring and Leisure Scrutiny Committee 22 March 2017

Report Completed: 12 June 2018