

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 20 June 2018

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors M Rahman (Chair), Y Forsey, R Hayat, S Marshall and T Suller

In Attendance: James Harris (Strategic Director - People), Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer), Alan Speight (Chair of Newport Association of School Governors), Hayley Davies-Edwards (EAS Principal Challenge Advisor for Newport), Claire Coff (EAS Head of Governor Support), Geraint Willington (EAS Company Secretary), Tracy McKim (Partnership Policy & Involvement Manager) and Meryl Lawrence (Scrutiny Adviser)

Apologies: Councillors D Davies, R Mogford, M Spencer and K Whitehead

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 April 2018

The minutes of the Meeting held on 25 April 2018 were **approved** as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Education Achievement Service - Governor Support

Attendees:

- James Harris (Strategic Director – People)
- Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer)
- Clare Coff (Head of Governor Support - Education Achievement Service (EAS))
- Hayley Davies-Edwards (Principal Challenge Adviser for Newport (EAS))
- Mr Alan Speight (Chair of Newport Association of School Governors)

The Head of Governor Support (EAS) introduced the report to the Committee which included the level of support in place for Governors, responsibilities for funding for this support and an assessment of the adequacy of resources for Governors. The overview of the report included 3 key areas: Professional Clerking Service; Statutory Committee Support and Specialist Advice (Governance), and; the Governor Specific Support and Intervention Framework.

The Chair asked the Chief Education Officer for any comments. The Chief Education Officer advised that from a Local Authority point of view it was important to carry out regular quality assurance, which is carried out in a number of ways, including meetings that the Chief Education Officer attends with Principle Challenge Advisors, HR and representatives from Finance to exchange information about schools that are causing concern. HR report specific issues, whether challenges were to correct and to identify any training needs. The team were looking at broker governor support on a termly basis which describes the training of each governing body. Health checks were also conducted on governing bodies to ensure they are

accessing the right support, which allows support and challenge at the right time. It was also advised that over the course of years that the EAS had worked in partnership with the Local Authority, its relationship had grown and improved. There were Representative directors based around the region, with Mr Alan Speight being the Representative for Newport.

At the Chair's invitation Mr Alan Speight; Chair of Newport Association of School Governors, introduced himself to the Committee. He explained that he saw both sides of the support provided as he sat on both a Green and an Amber school. Initially, he advised that he had not been in favour of the move to a consortium as the Local Authority had provided excellent support, but the support had not diminished and the training provided had been developed and improved. The Strategic Group had input into the Business Case. There were a number of Clerks providing service to governing Bodies and if a complaint was received support was provided.

Discussions included the following:

- Members discussed the decrease in the number of survey outcomes, with responses being over 300 lower in 2017 than they were in 2015-16. Members were advised that this was due in part to general survey fatigue, however those who had issues responded to the surveys and the responses received were quite passionate and were all acted upon. This year the survey itself would be reviewed, to improve it and introduce an opt in and opt out option.
- It was queried whether the same issues were being raised despite the dip in responses? It was advised that there were a range of issues. The support received from Governors Support was very good. There had been changes to Clerks and EAS staff, and former Heads of Services and retired staff also clerk. There were various reasons why people could not attend meetings and a different Clerk would need to attend. The team would be looking at how staff could be recruited and maintaining current staff.
- A Member enquired about the requirement for Mandatory training? It was advised that once appointed Governors were required to do mandatory training within one year or become eligible for suspension. Mandatory training was only cancelled in extreme circumstances. Courses for Newport varied from 8 to 20 attending and Governor training programmes were promoted on each agenda. Members would like to see Governors promoting the training.
- It was asked what training was currently available to Governors and what had been the uptake. It was advised that currently the whole government body training is offered to those schools in Amber and Red. The training package for the cluster was a menu, and trainers could run a course on each activity listed however it is preferred to visit a school, look at the last inspection, identify the training that was required and focus on what the school wants. This would take place over a rolling programme for 2 years to cover every cluster.
- It was questioned whether Self Evaluation of Governors was too subjective and whether there could be a more objective set of measures. Members were advised that the self-evaluations were a POLO national model that looks at organisational management. The discussions Governors have were important, such as Do you work effectively as a team. Mr Speight advised that the calculator was just a starting point, it was subjective but it is important to be honest and fair in the evaluation and the POLO provides back up.

The Chief Education Officer (CEO) advised that as a part of the partnership between the Local Authority and the Challenge Advisor, if the CEO felt that if governors evaluated themselves as good but actual standards were poor, she was able to get

involved to express concerns about the Governing Body and leadership. The Challenge Advisors would also have a robust dialogue with Heads and Governors to have an accurate view of where the school is.

- Whether any Governors been suspended for not attending mandatory training with the EAS. It was explained that the EAS does not hold statutory powers to suspend; it would be within regulations of the Governing Body to suspend. Letters are sent out at 2, 3 and 6 monthly stages and it has not been known for a Governor to be suspended. It was advised that around 9% of Governors are due to take their training.
- The Governors attendance for September 2013-17 was discussed and comment was made about the drop in attendance. Members were advised that when mandatory training had been introduced following a change in the law in 2013, all new and reappointed Governors had to be trained, which had resulted in a large numbers of Governors being trained at that point in time and a subsequent decrease when only new Governors required training.
- Members asked about the availability of refresher courses in the interim. It was advised that where refresher courses were currently being focussed on red and amber schools, the cluster approach was continuous. Once the online training induction had been completed then governors could revisit the training at any time and Governors had really benefitted from this. It was further clarified that there had been an increase in redundancies and Stage 2 complaints and possibly capability. Members were also told that it was important to note Governors were encouraged to tackle underperformance.
- It was asked if there Governor training on Autism had been available. Members were advised that training courses had been held and that they would be rolling out Autism friendly schools. This has been booked in the region for October and Additional Learning Needs was also presented to Governors.
- With regard to the Youth Voice, a Member asked does any Governing Body have young people involved or do they invite them to look at Youth Voice. Members were advised that every Secondary school needs Associate School Governors (ASG), and the Officer had seen some great presentations from young people. Where schools had struggled to get an ASG the school had asked other schools for a School Council Member to attend. Schools also had the learning walk at least annually, where 1 – 2 pupils could speak.
- Members asked about the main challenges and pressures, such as shortage of clerks. It was advised that there is risk in every organisation however there was no emergency situation in Newport relating to provision of clerks, ensuring Clerks are fully trained and recruitment is regular. Members were advised that last year there had been 30 meetings in Newport where associate clerks were unable to make a meeting due to illness but cover had been provided by another clerk.
- The Chair asked Mr Speight in his view how well the consortium was working to deliver support. Mr Speight advised that he felts the consortium was working very well. The Governors had real input in the EAS, documentation was received on how to be good Chairs and they were constantly being updated on developments. The main challenges for the EAS were getting every Governor involved in being a full Governor and recruiting the right Governors.
- Comment was made about the EAS budget decreasing similarly to the Local Authority which has to be a key challenge and pressure and it was questioned whether charges for hard copies of training manuals were made, and if the budget

restraints were having an impact on Governors support. Members were advised that there were no charges for hard copies. Every area was under scrutiny and pressure in the future would get tougher for everyone. The team were looking at different ways to effectively use the resources they have, such as put more resources online. The Chief Education Officer advised the Committee that it was important not to get too distracted by the budget. Workload was not getting easier however looking despite austerity standards were rising across Newport.

The Chair thanked Mr Speight and the Officers for their attendance.

Conclusion:

The Committee made the following comments:

- It had been positive to hear from the Chair of Newport Association of School governors and overall it was felt that the responses to questioning from all Invitees demonstrated that that Governor Support provision was working as a model and that although there were some challenges including training, they were adapting to address.
- While at the current level the Governor Support Service was effective, concern was expressed of future risk involved if there were further reduced resources in future.
- Whilst governor support was available, a large challenge appears to be ensuring buy-in from all Governing Bodies, as effective engagement requires a two way process.
- Inviting the Chair of Newport Association of School Governors to ascertain views had been very helpful and it was requested that a letter of thanks be sent from the Chair on behalf of the Committee.
- The Committee requested that a report upon Governors support be included in the Annual Forward Work Programme for consideration in 12 months' time as a separate report, but at the same Committee as the EAS Value for Money Report would be scheduled.

Comment to the Cabinet Member:

The Committee proposed that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills be involved in promoting buy-in to the Governor Training and Support offered by the EAS to School Governors, which could enable more localised training for Governors.

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

Attendees:

- James Harris (Strategic Director – People)
- Sarah Morgan (Chief Education Officer)
- Geraint Willington (Company Secretary - Education Achievement Service (EAS))
- Hayley Davies-Edwards (Principal Challenge Adviser for Newport (EAS))

The EAS Company Secretary presented an overview of the report to the Committee. The Education Achievement Service (EAS) provides a Regional Business Plan on an annual basis. Alongside this the EAS provides a mid-year review on progress towards the plan and the Annex for NCC. In addition, a number of reports were provided to Members throughout the year to enable scrutiny in a number of key areas. The EAS had provided Value for Money (VfM) reports to all local authorities across the region for the last 2 years. The EAS would be reporting VfM on a regional level set against the previous year Business Plan.

Members asked the following:

- With regard to Value for Money, a Member was concerned at the number of Red Schools in the categorisation table on page 40. Members were advised that 25 days are allocated in Challenge Advisor time to schools, which might be partially driven by categorisation, partially by inspection. A bespoke detailed support plan was delivered in partnership with the Local Authority. Advisers could also come to the school to coach a Head teacher or spend time with middle leaders. A fund had also been created to bring in Head teachers from another local authority.

The Chief Education Officer advised that to ensure EAS was delivering, trends and Challenge Advisor reports were examined by the Local Authority to get a feel if they were written accurately and appropriate for the school. She advised she was looking for pace, progress and impact, and if progress was not happening quickly enough she would question EAS and ask them to change what they were doing. She would also consider whether the school was accessing the appropriate training and consider warning notices.

The Principle Challenge Advisor advised the Committee that schools causing concern were held on a statutory register and have intervention plan monitoring to provide a forensic view of the impact, which adds value and things improved with the frequency of checking.

- Members referred to the regional report received with no breakdown of how many schools in Newport are in the red category and asked why there had been a move towards regional value for money rather than value for money in individual authorities. Members were advised that previously there had been a breakdown for local authorities, however an external consultant recommended a regional value for money report as resources are shared and balanced out and so it was more meaningful to look regionally.
- A Member enquired whether there was an area of most concern which was a Cluster of Red schools. Members were advised that there was not a cluster of red schools and advised there were a number of reasons why schools are in red measures. The common factor is usually that leadership needs to be improved. The Chief Education Officer advised that she is focussed on making sure that Newport schools were receiving the support needed and it is consistently being tracked.
- Members asked whether best practice was being shared. It was advised that there was a matrix of learning network schools that lead in particular areas. Schools volunteer to take the lead in an area they have strength in. Challenge Advisors use intelligence to share across the region. Everyone has the opportunity to share expertise and that way each local authority area gets something in return.
- Comment was made about the public perception of schools in red measures and whether it had a negative effect on children entering those schools. It was advised that the EAS are aware of the consequences of colours of categorisations, however if a school needed the highest level of support then 25 days need to be allocated. It was also advised that this year the EAS were trying to change the culture. 120 learning network schools across the region were far more than what the EAS was set up to do. This had not just been limited to green and yellow schools, but was open to red measure schools as well. The Chief Education Officer made the final decision whether a school could cope with extra demands, as they don't want to burden schools.
- It was queried whether Newport schools were getting value for money when there were different challenges in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen schools. It was advised that Newport have the best outcomes in primary schools in the region. Newport schools have also been given as examples of good practice in schools in the Gloucester and Bristol area.

Gaer Primary school is improving and the partnership work which helped had been praised. Value for Money report examines all outcomes as well as systems leadership. Since 2014 there had been massive changes.

- Members asked if there was any update on GEMS. It was advised that funding for GEMS had recently been confirmed by Welsh Government however other Local Authorities had not been as fortunate so as a result less money may be going into the budget. If the total funding was reduced then a redesign of the service may be considered.
- Members referred to the decrease in funding on pages 37-38 which indicated that the EAS was delivering its services to all schools across the region whilst spending less and asked whether there was any correlation between the reduction in funding to the spikes in regional level performance. It was advised that there was a funding jump between 2016-17 from the Welsh Government, however it ended in 2017-18 and there had been a further 10% reduction in the last 2 years from the EIG, however, it would be difficult to prove a direct link academically. The Chief Education Officer advised that the biggest impact on performance was teaching in the classroom and leadership, which needed to be tackled and addressed.

The EAS Company Secretary advised that they had aimed to protect delegation to schools without a reduction in service. He advised that if grants continued to decrease then it could start to impact a year or two down the line.

- Members referred to increase in the number of green schools in the categorisation figures on page 40 and asked to what extent the increase was down to support from EAS rather than a national trend and whether the EAS anticipated this to level off. Members were advised that it was unsure whether this was due to a national trend, but there was a good correlation between schools in green measures and outcomes in inspections. There were schools that were currently yellow that were likely to become green in the next round, however a few green schools could become yellow due a change in their circumstances.
- A Member asked whether EAS had undertaken any comparison with neighbouring improvement services and if not whether this was likely to change. It was advised that information was currently not available to share, while outcomes can be compared but some neighbouring services were not ready to share finance comparisons as each was in a slightly different position. The EAS Company Secretary advised that Welsh government were interested in considering national Value for Money, which would be likely to move towards comparison of consortia. The Chief Education Officer advised that on a termly basis Challenge Review meetings for each consortium were held. There were also meetings with the Managing Directors and Local Authority representatives together. It was thought that 94% delegation was the highest in Wales but the figure could not be proved yet without the sharing of financial data.
- Members referred to the grant figures in the report and asked for a breakdown of grants, where they came from and what the biggest wins had been for the EAS in the past year. The EAS Company Secretary advised that all grant funding came from Welsh Government although through 36 different grant lines with various conditions attached. The grant was paid to Torfaen as the regional banker and then notionally to the local authorities but passported to the EAS. The Challenge Adviser added that the partnership between Newport and the EAS was excellent and that statutory powers were used well, with good communication between them before exercising powers. There was variation in all regions for how statutory powers were used.
- Members raised concern over the impact of funding decreasing year on year on the future service provision. The Challenge Adviser clarified that if the EAS got to the point where the capacity of the team was reduced as well as the expertise then that would be a

genuine red risk, but that was not currently the position. It was advised that this issue is high on the EAS agenda and reports were shared.

- A Member commented that the consultant had not looked at the risk register however in Newport's inspection the risk had a good result and this was key information that should be looked at.
- There was discussion about Head Teachers managing their schools budget. It was clarified that as with many senior roles it was a requirement of the Head Teacher's Job Description and that they were accountable for everything including finance although they had close links with the Finance Team and their Governing Body received budget proposals and had a key role in determining how the budget was allocated.
- A Member asked what support was provided to Governing Body Finance Sub-Committees. It was explained that training offered is included in the Cluster Training Menu options.
- It was asked what would be the general priorities for the EAS moving forward if things became difficult. Members were advised that the core business plan need to be delivered as the national agenda for Wales and the EAS business plan. The Joint Education Group (JEG) Committee commissioners signed off the business plan, so the EAS would work with JEG members to decide upon would get signed off.

The Chair thanked the invitees for attending.

Conclusions:

The Committee made the following comments:

- Following the responses provided to its questions, the Committee accepted that the performance / categorisation of schools was one element of the Value for Money report upon the EAS Service, and that the biggest impact on performance was teaching in the classroom and leadership. However, it expressed concern that for the EAS Region the number of Secondary and Primary schools in the Red category was above the Wales Average.
- While they were concerned about the negatives associated with being categorised as a Red school, the Committee was satisfied that appropriate resources and extra support were being provided accordingly.
- The Committee welcomed the recognition of the importance of and the involvement of pupils to ensure pupil voice in Schools.
- Whilst the Committee was satisfied with the Value for Money of the EAS at this time despite the reduced funding, it expressed concern the future reductions in funding may have an impact on value for money and service delivery.
- The Committee welcomed the evidence of a good partnership between the EAS and the Local Authority and were assured by the presentation upon the collaborative approach.
- The Committee requested that a report upon Value for Money included in the Annual Forward Work Programme for consideration in 12 months' time as a separate report, but at the same Committee as the EAS Governor Support Report would be scheduled.
- The Committee would welcome the inclusion of comparative information upon other regional improvement services in future reports, when shared.

- The EAS should promote to Green Schools that it is open to them to request a Challenge Advisor attends to present the report to the Governing Body.

Comments to the Partnership Scrutiny Committee – People:

- The Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships Committee in considering the Education Achievement Service Regional Value for Money Report 2017-18, expressed concern regarding the high number of Primary and Secondary Schools in Red Category for 2018 on a Regional basis. The Committee requests that the Committee bear this in mind when looking at Key Stage 3 and 4 School Performance in Newport.

5 Public Services Board - Well-being Plan 2018-23

Attendee:

- Tracy McKim (Policy Partnership & Involvement Officer)

The Policy Partnership and Involvement Officer introduced the final Well-being Plan 2018-23, which had been adopted by the Public Services Board following consultation with the Committee and stakeholders.

A short animation video charting and explaining the development journey of the Well-being Plan was presented to the Committee, which would be made available to the public in Welsh and English.

Members asked the following:

- A Member raised the need for a sustainable travel plan. Members were advised that this is included as one of the 5 Integrated Interventions of the Well-being Plan and that the Committee would receive update reports upon the progress of the delivery of the Plan.
- A Member enquired which other organisations had been involved. It was advised that Sustrans and Natural Resources Wales had been involved and ideas were being discussed including bike sharing which had been successful in Cardiff.
- How had the Plan been received - Members were advised that the Plan had been well received by partners and the Future Generations Commissioner is very happy with it. The buy-in was strong and more would be done to publicise the plan and communicate it widely.

Actions:

The Committee **agreed** to formally receive the plan.

The meeting terminated at 7.45 pm