

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - People

Date: 5 November 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors D Williams (Chair), J Cleverly, H Thomas, J Watkins, J Richards and S Marshall

In Attendance: Councillor G Giles – Cabinet Member Education and Skills

S Morgan (Chief Education Officer), K Rees (Assistant Head of Education - Inclusion), Weston (Service Development Manager), K Keane (Assistant Head of Education - Engagement & Learning) and D Cooke (Scrutiny Adviser)

Apologies: Councillors M Linton, C Townsend and T Watkins

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on the 17 September 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 were **accepted** as a true and accurate record.

3 Mid Year Service Plan Report - Education

Attendees:

- Councillor G Giles, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
- Sarah Morgan, Chief Education Officer

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills introduced the report and gave an informative overview to the committee highlighting that the Education service served all maintained schools in Newport and provided support for pre-school settings for pupils who were educated other than at school. The Cabinet Member continued in saying that the service was responsible for nine secondary schools, 43 primary schools and two nursery schools. In addition, there was a pupil referral unit and two special schools. Newport was one of the five local authorities in the EAS regional consortium for school improvement. The service consisted of 11 teams that provided the following support:

- 21st Century Schools
- Early Years
- Education Welfare
- Education Business Support
- Gwent Education Minority-Ethnic Support (GEMS)
- Gwent Music
- Healthy Schools

- Inclusion Enrichment Team
- School Admissions
- Pupil Referral Unit
- Youth Engagement and Progression

In 2018/19, the Council received a positive report from Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. It was recognised however that further work was required by the Council's Education Service to continue its development and improve education in Newport. These were captured within the Service Plan 2019/20.

The Wellbeing Objectives were outlined as, Objective 1 – improving the skills, education and employment opportunities. Objective 2 – promoting economic growth and regeneration, whilst protecting the environment. Objective 3 – enabling people to be health, independent and resilient, in line with the corporate themes: Aspirational People and Resilient Communities.

Members asked the following:

- Chair, referred to the 'Managing Weapons in School' Policy and asked if there was a concern regarding weapons in Newport Schools. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills explained that there had been seven incidents in one year, the range of incidents were explained to the Committee, including the use of fake guns at a play in Llanwern School. The Committee however, were assured that incidents were extremely rare. Links forged with Police and Youth Offending Scheme to put packages in school to focus on preventative work were in place. The policy promoted a process in order to be proactive should any further incidents arise.
- Members of the Committee asked Officer about attendance figures. There was an example raised about a pupil at Newport High School that only needed to attend one hour a day. The Chief Education Officer would look into this, as it would not give an accurate reflection on attendance figures and was more likely to be a phased re-introduction into the school.
- Members of the Committee felt that there was not enough information to support the red and amber headings under the Service Area Risks, such as 21st Century Schools Band B, which was a concern. The Chief Education Officer explained that the risks measure a set period of funding and costs could rise over time, for example, the risk relating to Brexit meant that costs could increase. There was a pot of money however there were some costs that could not be predicted such as building work. The score of 5 was relatively low but Education Services were mitigating as much as they could by forecasting spending and pacing projects.
- The Committee asked why the Toolkits for Schools showed amber Safeguarding Risk (under Service Area Risk) but not under the Pupil Wellbeing in Education. The Chief Education Officer explained that the Pupil Wellbeing showed Education in isolation however the Service Area Risk referred to the corporate service area, including social services, therefore showing data across the council.
- A further query relating to the Toolkit was raised by the Committee. The Plan showed that 15% of schools were using toolkit. The Chief Education Officer explained that all schools have safeguarding in place but not all were using the Toolkit, as Estyn had allowed the schools different options, including the Local Authority (LA) Self Evaluation format or the schools own paperwork. Whilst there was no uniformed approach at some point in the future, there would be cluster training and the Education Safeguarding Officer would aim to sustain a long-term uniformed process, this would take time but the Committee was assured that there was nothing wrong with different systems currently in

place. The Chief Education Officer was happy to provide the Committee with examples of the Toolkits used by schools.

- The Chair referred to the Service Area Risks highlighting concern regarding the Schools Finance/Cost Pressures. There was lengthy debate regarding Caerleon Comprehensive School and their current deficit, if there was a solution, or what the Committee might be able to do which might have a positive impact upon their situation, as well as what influence the new Chief Executive may have to address these concerns. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills advised that the main issue was funding. Dissemination of funding from Central Government to the Local Authorities Education budget was discussed at length, as well as how budgets were delegated to Governing Bodies to monitor. The LA recognised that there was a need to monitor schools actions to ensure that they were spending within their means otherwise; it would become a council risk. There was however, no lack of support or advice to schools from the LA.
- The Committee asked what was currently in place with regard to the promotion of access to Welsh Medium Education and if this would be on the increase, as there was only one pupil within the four schools that needed Welsh-medium education. The Chief Education Officer advised that whilst the Council was providing a learning resource space we must consider whether the population existed to support this and should therefore be mindful of the cost. It was noted that there was a shortfall in teaching materials for those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in the medium of Welsh. The Assistant Head of Education (Inclusion) advised that there was a Welsh Starter Planning Group to support this and it would be discussed at the ALN cluster. There was also a lack of resources for ALN published in Welsh but the LA were working more proactive for training practices for Welsh Support Assistants with a view to looking at National sharing as well as within Newport. Funding from Welsh Government and a development plan being implemented with teachers. Funded IDPs would give an idea of young people that needed additional funding. This was being monitored regularly, as it was a fine line because of costs. In addition, the Committee asked would English-speaking schools be affected by funding, such as a shortage of school equipment. This would be an individual school issue and lack of equipment would need to be addressed with the relevant school.
- The Committee asked why out of school childcare before and after school was showing as amber, as the 2,266 child care places were provided by the private sector. The Chief Education Officer agreed that all out of school childcare was provided by private sector and Education Services were working on this constantly to encourage more nursery places. It was however shown as amber because although it was run by the private sector the schools could lose the premises.
- The Committee highlighted that there was a reduced number of officers dealing with attendance, which might have an impact on officers managing attendance in schools. Whilst only one officer post had been lost, there might be concern during the winter months. With this in mind, was Education Services coping with the officers in place. The Chief Education Officer informed the Committee that attendance had improved this year. What helped improvement of attendance was the different ways of working, which had helped schools improve their attendance. Officers would try to be proportionate and work together corporately as a team across the services. There might be an impact but this would not necessarily present itself until next year. Education Welfare Officers were working on larger caseloads across Newport and relying on schools to improve attendance and look at long-term absences. This was a happening across Wales and could be a risk if there were further staffing reductions. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills took the opportunity to mention the fantastic job schools were doing under the circumstances. In addition, the Committee asked if there would be a Performance Measure review and what would be the changes to schools, were there any ideas on expectations. The Chief Education Officer advised that schools were measuring system absence rather than attendance, there was a high level of absence in Newport;

there was an all member seminar on this issue. Each secondary school would have six targets for KS4 on unlocking potential.

- The Committee asked if there was an increase in intake of pupils in secondary schools. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that there had been a population growth, pupils migrating into city and Post 16 pupils changing schools across Newport. Both Lliswerry and Llanwern had surplus spaces; this was explained by the Service Manager for Resources and Planning as bubble classes, which came through from primary to secondary schools. There was an increase in housing estates around Newport; however, there were still sufficient spaces. With this in mind, Education Services had a group in place for ALN and the wider school population. Some schools would expand through 21st Century Schools and catchment places. Additional schools in Newport would be costly and therefore had to make the best use of schools in place already. The increase could be managed for the next five years and figures were just under the Welsh Government excess mark. Additionally, if a sibling was in the same school but in sixth form, this would not be taken into account as they could change their pathway at that point.

The Chair thanked the Officers for attending.

Conclusion - Comments to the Cabinet

The Committee noted the Mid-Year Service Plan Report.

The Committee wished to make the following comments to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:

1. The Committee recommended that Officers and Cabinet Member utilised the Youth Council and Pupil Voice engagement opportunities when taking decisions and actions that would impact on the lives of young people in Newport. They stated that this must be done in a timely manner when the input of the young people could shape the decision, and not be done in a tokenistic gesture. Feedback to the young people on how their input would also be vital in closing the engagement cycle and positively reinforcing the work done by the young people.

4 Scrutiny Adviser Reports

Attendee:

- Daniel Cooke – Scrutiny Adviser

a) Forward Work Programme Update

The Scrutiny Adviser presented the Forward Work Programme, and informed the Committee of the topics due to be discussed at the next two Committee Meetings:

19 November 2019, the agenda items being:

- Children and Young People Services – Mid-Year Service Plan Review
- Adult and Community Services – Mid-Year Service Plan review

14 January 2020, the agenda items being:

- Education, Children - 2020-2021 Draft Budget Proposals and MTFP
- Young People Services - 2020-2021 Draft Budget Proposals and MTFP
- Adult and Community Social Services - 2020-2021 Draft Budget Proposals and MTFP

b) Action Sheet

There were no actions outstanding.