

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2024

REFERENCE FROM LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:  
4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2024

“ CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY  
2025-2027 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2024 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources.

Councillor H. Payne queried how did the strategy account for those children not in education or were not homeschooled including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). In response, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources referred to the exponential increase in the number of children with ALNs, with the Council priority aimed to ensure that local children were able to access local provision in their local schools as much as possible. The Strategy referred to the specialist support that was available, which was not just the Special School, but also resource bases such as Hafan and Horizon plus a number of Hearing Impairment Centres. There were lots of different opportunities for children to access support. The Council did have a duty of care to ensure that it provided those facilities to students, so part of the Council's work was around assessing the needs of the children, and it was found that there had been a significant change in demand, and for some of those with more complex needs, there were challenges with them being able to physically access provision particularly for some of the older school estates. The Council also had specific duties under the Equalities Act for example, that related to ensuring safe access to schools and around promoting positive outcomes for disabled children and encouraging participation. The Head of Service stated that the provision around ALN was probably full, and as demand would likely increase, it was important to ensure that facilities were as accessible as possible. In terms of those home educated, the Strategy would have a limited impact.

Councillor Payne also commented on the positive benefits of building the second Ysgol Y Deri school through providing extra capacity for additional learning needs.

The Chair, Councillor R. Thomas, referred to the specialist outreach services that supported children with learning difficulties across mainstream schools, and he queried whether there were differences in terms of how individual schools engaged with and interpreted the Strategy. The Head of Services stated that comprehensive training was provided for all schools around understanding what their roles were in terms of meeting needs and their duties of care to students. In addition, training ensured school staff had the skills and access to deliver their duties. There was an expectation that every school had to meet the required standard, which meant that

there was a lot of continual development work with staff. Councillor R. Birch (Cabinet Member) with permission to speak, stated that all schools had an Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator whose role was to look after and identify the needs of children with ALNs. The Director of Learning and Skills added that all schools would have access to all specialist teachers and a comprehensive learning programme was available which was produced each year based on feedback received from schools. If a school considered that it required more support in a specialist area, then the Council could offer further nuance support and individual training sessions would be provided. It was also important to recognise that there was a specific skill set within the Council's specialist teachers which were complimented by staff at Ysgol Y Deri, but if some provision was found deficient, then further support was available on a regional basis or from a neighbouring Local Authority.

Subsequently, the Committee

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the comments of the Committee be referred back to Cabinet for their consideration, as part of the proposed consultation exercise, including:

- The importance of assessing and considering the needs of the children that are not in education and not homeschooled and how the Council accounts for them as part of the Strategy, including any additional learning needs they may have;
- The positive benefits of building the second Ysgol Y Deri school through providing extra capacity for additional learning needs;
- The importance of continued provision of comprehensive and agile specialist outreach services that support children with learning difficulties across mainstream schools in the Vale of Glamorgan, to the same high standard.

#### Reason for recommendation

For Cabinet to consider the comments of the Committee as part of the proposed consultation exercise.”