

No.

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 5th December, 2019.

Present: Councillor G.C. Kemp (Chairman); Councillor Ms. R.M. Birch (Vice—Chairman); Councillors A.R.T. Davies, S.J. Griffiths, N.P. Hodges, T.H. Jarvie, Mrs.J.M. Norman, A.C. Parker, Mrs. S.D. Perkes and N.C. Thomas.

Co-opted Members: Mrs. J. Lynch-Wilson (Parent Governor – Primary Sector).

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), Councillor G.A. Cox, Councillor N. Moore, Mr. H. Price (Headteacher of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg).

487 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor Mrs. S.D. Perkes and Mr. H. Gapper (Welsh Medium Education) and Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church).

488 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 14th November, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

489 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillors T.J. Jarvie and A.C. Parker declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 4 – Proposal to Increase the Number of Primary School Places in Cowbridge to Meet Increased Demand as a Result of Recent and Proposed Housing Developments Through the Amalgamation of Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive School. The nature of their interests was that both Councillors were Local Authority appointed Governors for Cowbridge Comprehensive School. Both Councillors had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on such matters.

490 PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN COWBRIDGE TO MEET THE INCREASED DEMAND AS A RESULT OF RECENT AND PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS THROUGH THE AMALGAMATION OF Y BONT FAEN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND COWBRIDGE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL (REF) –

Cabinet, on 4th November, 2019, had approved the Director of Learning and Skills' proposal to increase the number of primary school places in Cowbridge to meet the increased demand as a result of recent and proposed housing developments through the amalgamation of Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge

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Comprehensive School. Cabinet had resolved that the report be referred to this Committee for consideration as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

The Head of Strategy for Community Learning and Resources presented the report which outlined the Director of Learning and Skills' proposal to increase the number of primary school places in Cowbridge to meet the increased demand as a result of recent and proposed housing developments, and to undertake a statutory consultation as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 ("the Code"), on a proposal to establish a new 2006 place 3-19 all through school from September 2022 through the amalgamation of Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive School by:

- Changing the age range of Cowbridge Comprehensive School from 11 – 19 to 3 – 19;
- Increasing the capacity of Cowbridge Comprehensive School from 1,586 places to 2,006 places to accommodate 420 English medium primary school places with 96 part time nursery places;
- Constructing a new school building on the Cowbridge Comprehensive School site to accommodate the primary and nursery phases; and
- Discontinuing Y Bont Faen Primary School as an entity while transferring all staff and pupils to the new building for September 2022.

The proposal would result in an addition 210 primary places to meet increased demand for English medium primary school places as a result of recent and proposed housing developments within the catchment area and would address the condition and suitability issues with the existing buildings.

The Officer explained that the proposal had been selected as the preferred route out of a number of options which had been explored by the Directorate, which had also included proposals to build on the current site for Y Bont Faen Primary School, and building a new school on a proposed site within the Darren Farm housing development. The Officer explained that the Directorate had identified that the current site of Y Bont Faen Primary School would not be suitable for building a 420 place school due to issues with access for construction and needing to relocate the current 210 pupils attending the school at present. The Officer also explained that development of a new school building would not be able to take place on the Darren Farm site for some time as the site would not transfer from the developer to the Local Authority until more dwellings had been built. The Officer also highlighted that the Darren Farm site would be ideal for Welsh medium expansion in the future as it had better access to the A48, and was therefore better situated for a Welsh medium school which would have a wider catchment area.

The preferred option for accommodating the increased demand for English medium primary school places was therefore to utilise space on the site of Cowbridge Comprehensive School by developing a new school building there. The Directorate had then been faced with the choice of whether to keep both schools on the same site but separate, or to amalgamate the schools into one, with one leadership structure and one Governing Body.

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The Local Authority already had a model for implementing amalgamation, having successfully done so at Ysgol Bro Morgannwg and Llantwit Learning Community. The Officer explained that under an amalgamated structure, the primary and secondary phases would still be kept separately in different buildings, with separate access and different Heads of Phase. He also stated that this would not be a cost saving exercise as the amalgamated school would receive the same amount of money that both schools would have received separately. The Officer also wished to emphasise that from the Directorate's perspective this exercise had not been carried out to fix any problems or issues at the schools in question, as neither school was underperforming.

The Officer then highlighted some of the anticipated benefits of amalgamating both schools, and stated that it would mitigate or eliminate the risks of having two separate schools on one site. An amalgamated school allowed for better personalisation of the learning and teaching experience and the development of individual pupils, whose learning would no longer be prescribed by their date of birth in line with changes to the curriculum under the Curriculum for Wales. The Officer also noted that a 3-19 school would reduce the impact of transitioning from primary to secondary phase for pupils, and an amalgamated school also allowed for better consistency across phases in terms of quality assurance, monitoring and tracking pupil performance and it made it easier to facilitate Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision under a single governance structure. The Officer also noted that the sharing of best practice was already taking place between Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive, but amalgamation would allow both schools to build upon this further.

The 21st Century Schools Project Manager continued by outlining the consultation process, which he stated was subject to statutory process as set out in the Code. The consultation would run from 18th November, 2019 to 10th January, 2020 and would include a number of drop in sessions and consultation sessions for the local community and staff, Governors and pupils at the schools. The Officer explained that feedback would be grouped into key themes to form a consultation report which would be approved by consultees and referred back to Cabinet. An objection report would also be compiled, along with a Council response, and the Officer anticipated that the process would be completed by the end of the 2019/20 academic year. The Head of Strategy for Community Learning and Resources stated that engagement for drop in sessions in particular had been good so far and that the Director had received 65 responses to the consultation to date.

The Officer then introduced Mr. Hywel Price, the Headteacher of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg who had been invited to speak at the Committee to give his perspective on the benefits and challenges posed by amalgamating previously separate primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Price began by explaining that he had no prior experience of working in a 3-19 environment and had had no experience working in the primary phase prior to the school's amalgamation. He stated that initially there had been significant concerns around school governance, particularly that the primary phase of the school would be overshadowed by the secondary, however he reported that there was significant

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primary representation in the school's governance from numerous parents and members of staff. Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg had a management team of six, five of whom were secondary trained and with the remaining member the primary lead and Assistant Head, however Mr. Price noted that this was proportionate to the makeup of the school with over 1,600 of the pupils being secondary and 210 of them primary pupils.

Mr. Price echoed the Head of Strategy for Community Learning and Resources in noting the benefits of amalgamating schools in terms of better consistency across phases in learning and teaching strategies, pedagogy and a reduced impact on pupils when transitioning from primary to secondary phase, and that amalgamation had helped the school to avoid the traditional dip in performance identified in Year 7 pupils.

Mr. Price noted that pupils in the primary phase of amalgamated schools were afforded better opportunities than pupils in other primary schools which fed in to the secondary school, through their access to specialist facilities and teachers for subjects such as modern foreign languages, technology, PE and science. Mr. Price also highlighted that amalgamation had much improved the school's capacity for early intervention for ALN pupils and had allowed them to implement a whole school tracking and monitoring system for these pupils. Mr. Price explained that amalgamation had also facilitated increased lesson observation between staff members and the sharing of best practice, and that amalgamation could provide a good opportunity for a school to engage with the Curriculum for Wales.

Mr. Price did note however that there were some challenges presented by amalgamation, for instance the provision of better opportunities to pupils in the primary phase of the amalgamated school in terms of facilities and specialist teaching could cause ill feeling among those situated in other primary feeder schools. Mr. Price also highlighted that a 3-19 school was eventually judged by its Key Stage 4 results, which could cause possible tension between the primary and secondary phases, however as explained by the Head of Strategy for Community Learning and Resources previously, this should not present as a problem in this instance as neither Y Bont Faen Primary School nor Cowbridge Comprehensive School were underperforming at present.

With Mr. Price having concluded his statement to the Committee, the Chairman thanked him for his time and asked if Committee Members had any questions at this time.

A Committee Member asked for clarification as to whether the Directorate's decision not to proceed with developing a new school building on the Darren Farm development site was related to the availability of financial resources. The 21st Century Schools Project Manager clarified that the Local Authority would not be granted access to the site in question until 150 dwellings had been built, and therefore development could not go ahead until this had occurred. The Officer also highlighted that the site would be more appropriate for Welsh medium education provision as it had good access to the A48.

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There being no further questions from Committee Members at this time, the Chairman then invited public speakers to provide their verbal representations to the Committee.

Representatives from Y Bont Faen Primary School were invited to speak first.

The first public speaker was Rev. Heather Weddell, a Community Governor at the school, who began by stating that the new Curriculum for Wales recognised that good physical, mental and emotional wellbeing underpinned successful learning, and that primary children would achieve the best positive outcomes in a nurturing culture. She continued by explaining that extensive and regularly available outside space was essential in order to allow children to play and exercise, thereby improving their health and reducing obesity. However, she saw no evidence that the younger children at the proposed amalgamated school would have on offer their own flexible access to outside and sports facilities not already used by the comprehensive school or other bodies. Rev. Weddell agreed that a new building was needed but that its location and outside provision needs would have to be specifically appropriate for the primary aged children, and Y Bont Faen Primary School would therefore need its own Headteacher with full decision-making responsibilities, supported by specialist trained staff and its own catering and caretaking staff, together with a Governing Body specifically appointed to work within the school. She therefore could not support the proposal in its current form.

The next public speaker was Mr. Terry Williams, Chair of Governors at the school, who began by saying that he was totally opposed to the proposal in question and that there was no sound educational evidence to support it. Mr. Williams continued by noting his concern with regard to the timing and management of the proposal and consultation process, highlighting that it was taking place at a time when most families, school staff and pupils were especially busy ahead of and during the Christmas period. Mr. Williams also stated that there had been very little time between himself and the Headteacher of Y Bont Faen first gaining knowledge of the major proposal to change education provision in Cowbridge on 23rd October, and the announcement thereof being made public on 24th October, and he expressed that he felt this pre-empted the outcome of the consultation.

The Committee welcomed the next public speaker who was Mrs. Rowena Harbour, a Community Governor at the school, who began by saying that she could not find any empirical evidence to suggest that children performed better in an all age 3-19 school, and having read Estyn reports of some all age schools in Wales, she had not been able to find any evidence to show that such schools were performing better after becoming 3-19 schools. Mrs. Harbour continued by asking the Committee how they could expect improvement on the fact that 100% of the children at the end of Key Stage 2 in Y Bont Faen had achieved their expected levels in 2018 and 2019. Mrs. Harbour concluded by asking what were the qualifications and experience of those involved in the preparation of the proposal from the primary and Foundation phase education perspective.

With the Chairman having asked whether the Committee Members had any questions for Mrs. Harbour, a Committee Member asked her to clarify whether,

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having found no evidence for improved school performance following amalgamation, had she found any evidence for worsened performance. Mrs. Harbour responded that she had found evidence to support this and referenced Abertillery Learning Community, where the report of the amalgamated school had not been as good as those of the schools which had formed its component parts. All had previously been Good or Excellent whereas now Abertillery Learning Community was rated Adequate. The Vice-Chairman stated that it was impossible to compare Abertillery Learning Community and the proposed amalgamation in question as they had been formed in entirely different circumstances. At Abertillery Learning Community four feeder primary schools and a comprehensive had been amalgamated, and this was not comparable to the proposal in Cowbridge of one primary school and a comprehensive school amalgamating.

The Committee's fourth public speaker was Ms. Gayna Morris, a Local Authority Appointed Governor at the school. Ms. Morris began by stating that she was not opposed to replacing the current school building at Y Bont Faen Primary School, however she raised significant concerns regarding the school's loss of identity and independence. Ms. Morris stated that the proposal at present raised more questions than it answered and that it did not contain any evidence to support that there would be specialised primary phase management at the amalgamated school.

The final speaker representing on behalf of Y Bont Faen Primary School's Governing Body was Ms. Lorry Davies, a Parent Governor at the school. Ms. Davies expressed concern that having attended both the Governors and Parents consultation meetings held the previous week, she had received conflicting answers to the question "Would all staff remain in their current roles?". At the parent consultation Ms. Davies had been told that the Primary Headteacher would remain in their current role and would manage their own budget for the primary phase, however in the Governors' consultation she had been told all staff may not remain in their current roles and it would be the Governing Body of Cowbridge Comprehensive School who would be responsible for developing a staff structure. Ms. Davies stated that any questions raised should have received the same answers across consultations. Ms. Davies concluded by agreeing that a new building was needed for the school, but that Y Bont Faen needed to keep its operational independence at all costs. She explained that because of a lack of consistency of answers and she was not able to support the current proposal.

With all speakers representing the Governing Body of Y Bont Faen Primary School having made their oral representations, the Chairman invited the next public speaker, Mrs. Debra Thomas, the Headteacher of Cowbridge Comprehensive School, to make her oral representation. Mrs. Thomas began by commending the bold and innovative approach taken by the Director of Learning and Skills and the challenge issued to collaborate outside of traditional siloed thinking. Mrs. Thomas highlighted that the proposal could improve the education of children in the lowest funded Local Authority in the country and that the leadership staff at Cowbridge Comprehensive School, having approached the proposal vigorously, had agreed that they were unanimously in favour of the proposal as it offered opportunities to promote equality, equity and pioneering approaches to education in the Vale of Glamorgan.

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A Committee Member asked Mrs. Thomas when she and the leadership staff at Cowbridge had become aware of the proposed model. Mrs. Thomas replied that she had been invited to meet with the Director of Learning and Skills and the Head of Strategy for Community Learning and Resources the Wednesday before October half term.

The next public speaker was Ms. Hilary Drew, Chair of Governors for Cowbridge Comprehensive School, who began by stating that she would be delighted to have Y Bont Faen Governors join the Governing Body at Cowbridge Comprehensive School. Ms. Drew explained that whether the proposal went ahead or not would make no difference to Cowbridge Comprehensive School given its proven record of providing the highest quality of education, however she noted that an amalgamation would provide staff at both schools with an opportunity to deliver a clear and consistent shared vision and school ethos, and facilitate a better understanding of development across phases in a safe and convenient environment.

The Committee then welcomed the next public speaker, Mr. John Homfray, who began by stating that he had initially been sceptical of the proposal but the presentation by the 21st Century Schools Team on 19th November had won him over. In particular, Mr. Homfray highlighted the benefits offered by the larger school facilities that were available in Cowbridge Comprehensive School. Mr. Homfray echoed the previous public speaker's view that the Governing Body was taking a relaxed approach to whether the proposal went ahead or not, but he reiterated that he would be supportive if it went ahead.

The next public speaker was Ms. Terri Vaughan-Taylor who began by stating to the Committee that she was highly supportive of the exciting opportunity outlined in the proposal, and that it would be beneficial to the education of pupils and to the community of Cowbridge. Ms. Vaughan-Taylor continued by highlighting the current importance of the Wellbeing Agenda which was pupil and person centred, and explained that an amalgamated school afforded an opportunity to ease the transition between phases as this could be stressful in terms of pupils' wellbeing and social development. Ms. Vaughan-Taylor also noted that there would be benefits in terms of ALN provision in that the highly specialised tutors in Cowbridge Comprehensive School could work with pupils in the school's primary phase.

The Committee welcomed the next public speaker who was Mr. Michael Jose, who began by acknowledging that the two schools in question were schools with long histories who had their own identities and this proposal would effectively merge them into one school. However, as a parent whose own children had attended Cowbridge Comprehensive School, he highlighted that his son had flourished through the drama and music departments at Cowbridge in particular, and saw there being much benefit from older students in the secondary phase being able to go into the primary section of the school to help and share experiences.

The Committee's final public speaker was Mr. Steven Blackman, who stated that from his own experience working in business management he had utmost praise for

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business management practices that he had observed in Cowbridge Comprehensive School from Mrs. Debra Thomas and the rest of the Business Management Team.

There being no further representations to be made by members of the public, the Chairman then invited Vale of Glamorgan Councillors, not Members of the Committee, to make their verbal representations to the Committee.

Councillor G.A. Cox declared a personal interest as a Local Authority appointed Governor for both Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive School, but that he had dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak on the matter. He further noted that he was speaking as a Member of the Local Authority Council rather than as a School Governor and that his comments were included in the report, together with those of his fellow Ward Members, and that these were made before any contact with any of the staff or Governors of the schools.

Councillor Cox expressed that he had been pleased at the mention in the report of the need for a new building for Y Bont Faen Primary School, however his enthusiasm had been tempered with the report recommendation to “discontinue Y Bont Faen Primary School as an entity” and to “increase the capacity of Cowbridge Comprehensive School to accommodate 420 English medium primary school places and 96 part time nursery places”, which the Councillor suggested could cause disquiet and concern in the local community. The Councillor continued by stating that the report promoted what officers considered to be the benefits of the proposals and in his view, this might well influence the result of the consultation exercise. However, he was certain that other experts would reject this benefit analysis and propose that Y Bont Faen continue to stand alone. The Councillor noted that Y Bont Faen School had a good reputation with parents and the wider community and had been ranked “Good” in its latest Estyn inspection and that in its 2019 Key Stage 2 results 100% of pupils had achieved their expected learning outcomes in all core subjects. The Councillor concluded by stating that it was difficult to see how amalgamation would improve on current provision in the school, but saw a potential risk that the amalgamation could lead to a loss of expertise in primary education among the staff and Governors and stated that, in his view, the best solution would be for Y Bont Faen to remain as a separate entity while increasing the current level of good co-operation between the schools in question.

A Committee Member asked the Councillor where, in his view, the new site for Y Bont Faen Primary School should be. Councillor Cox replied that he had no issue with Y Bont Faen’s new building being situated on the same site as Cowbridge Comprehensive School, but in his view both schools should remain independent of one another.

The Chairman then invited any Committee Members who were also local Ward Members if they would like to contribute.

A Committee Member stated that his views were reflected in the joint response from Ward Members included in the report, and that he had not heard anything at the Committee meeting so far that had changed his mind. The Councillor continued by expressing the view that amalgamation was unnecessary and was a complication in

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the process of increasing primary places in the Cowbridge area, and therefore moved an amendment to the recommendations in the report and asked that the Committee endorse the proposal to increase the number of primary schools places at Y Bont Faen Primary School and to relocate to a new site adjoining Cowbridge Comprehensive School, however to reject the proposal to amalgamate Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive School and to discontinue Y Bont Faen Primary School as a separate entity.

The Committee then moved on with discussions with the Head of Standards and Provision seeking to clarify a point raised previously by a public speaker regarding Abertillery Learning Community, in that since amalgamation the level of performance at the school had decreased. The Officer clarified that the school had previously been in "Significant Improvement" and this was still the case now. The Officer noted that with regard to Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive School, both were either rated as "Excellent" or "Very Good" at present and there was no reason why this would not continue to be the case following amalgamation.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration then sought to address concerns raised previously by a public speaker regarding the timing of the consultation process, noting that Council processes were tied up in statutory obligations and timings. The Cabinet Member continued by highlighting that there had been a plan to bring the consultation to the public earlier, however she had not been happy with the report and there had therefore been a delay as she did not view launching consultation as a decision to be taken lightly.

The Cabinet Member explained that there were 12 new schools due to be built and a school expansion planned in the Vale of Glamorgan, with six of these projects to be delivered by September 2021. There was therefore time pressure to get through all of the necessary consultations for these projects, and delaying the consultation for the proposal in question by a fortnight could have potentially delayed the building of a new school for Y Bont Faen by a year. Furthermore, the Cabinet Member highlighted the enviable position both schools were in in terms of their current performance, and asked Committee Members to consider what could be achieved with the opportunities presented by amalgamating into a 3-19 school, particularly in respect of the fact that exactly the same budget would be received by an amalgamated school as the two schools would have received separately, and that with a streamlined management structure and leadership team, much of this budget could be directed into benefitting learning and teaching within the school.

The Cabinet Member concluded by emphasising that the proposal in question was the preferred model, that it was subject to a full consultation process and that Cabinet would fully consider all feedback brought to them as part of the process.

The Vice-Chairman then addressed the Committee and expressed that she felt that little consideration had been given by those opposed to the proposal to the opportunities presented to Y Bont Faen Primary School by amalgamating with a larger entity. The Vice-Chairman continued by highlighting that transition from primary to secondary phase could be dramatic and it could take time for pupils to adjust, therefore in her view the opportunity for a child to go all the way through a

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school without having to transition was fantastic. In respect of staff wellbeing and security, the Vice-Chairman noted that from the report it appeared there was no danger offered to employees at either school. Furthermore, the Vice-Chairman noted that the opportunity presented for better traffic planning would be beneficial to the community, highlighting that in her own Ward there were at least six schools operating separately, with traffic at drop off and collection time causing chaos locally, and that the proposal of bringing schools together in one place could be a good move.

The Vice-Chairman concluded by noting that in her view, the development of children and the quality of nurture would not change, and neither would staffing. The process would mainly comprise of a change of buildings for pupils. Furthermore, the Vice-Chairman stated that she had not been shown that there was any disadvantage to the amalgamation of schools and that she had not been presented with any evidence to demonstrate that it would have a negative impact on pupils.

A Committee Member stated that 3-19 schooling was not new or unique to this region, that it had been used with great success elsewhere and was in fact the preferred model in Scandinavian countries, therefore concluding that he would not be able to support the previously proposed amendment to the recommendations.

A Committee Member stated that he had visited the site of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg and that the benefits of the amalgamated system had been obvious to him. He agreed with those who were concerned about the poor condition of Y Bont Faen Primary School and acknowledged that the situation needed to be remedied, however he queried, if local Members were happy for the new building to be on the same site as Cowbridge Comprehensive, why were they not happy for amalgamation to take place. The Committee Member added that the amendment to the recommendations proposed previously had the potential to de-rail the consultation and could potentially put back the build of a new school for Y Bont Faen Primary School which was not an outcome that anybody wanted.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that this discussion was part of the consultation process and that recommendations made as part of the Committee's business during this meeting would not result in any final decisions being made overall.

Having voted on the previously proposed amendment to the recommendations, this was not carried, and the Committee subsequently agreed to endorse the recommendations in the report. It was therefore

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Scrutiny Committee endorse the resolutions as contained in the reference from Cabinet dated 4th November, 2019 (Minute No. C141).

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee is consulted on the proposal as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

491 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING SUMMARY REPORT – NOVEMBER 2019 (REF) –

Cabinet, on 18th November, had considered the report and referred it to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Director of Learning and Skills presented the report, which was a mid-term summary and provided an overview of the priorities of the Corporate Safeguarding Group work plan and work plan updates.

The Officer explained that the Annual Report which had come to the Committee in September had identified five areas for improvement, and while an update on progress would be contained within a future report, this report served as a reminder for Committee Members of those key areas. The Officer concluded by reminding Committee Members that there was a corporate responsibility to ensure that there were effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults who required specific Council services.

A Committee Member asked the Officer for clarification with regard to the kinds of training or refresher courses which were available to keep Local Authority staff up to date, as outlined in Section 2.3 of the report. The Officer replied that there was a rolling programme of training available in the Local Authority and that those who required training were expected to undertake the relevant level of training on an annual basis. With regard to schools in particular, the Officer stated that INSET days were arranged to provide training for the whole school where appropriate.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To provide Members with an opportunity to exercise oversight of this key area of corporate working.

492 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-24 (REF) –

Cabinet had considered the above report at its meeting on 18th November, and referred it to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration as part of the consultation process. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation presented the report which set out how the Council had developed the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. The report set out proposals for consulting on the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 from 25th November, 2019 to 20th January, 2020, including the involvement of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, the Council's partners and the public. The report set out the timetable for reviewing the consultation findings and the development of a final draft for consideration by the Learning and Culture

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Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet prior to the publication of the new Strategic Equality Plan by 31st March, 2020.

The draft Plan set out the Council's new strategic equality objectives which were a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 and the specific duties for Wales. They would frame how the Council would deliver its vision for "working together for a fairer future" and support the Council's Corporate Well-being Objectives.

A Committee Member highlighted that within the report Additional Learning Needs seemed to have been subsumed under the umbrella of Disability and queried whether there was a reason for this or whether the report should look at separating these as the needs attached to both were very different. The Officer replied that this could certainly be considered as part of the consultation process.

Subject to the Committee Member's comments, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To provide Members with an opportunity to formally consider the draft Plan as part of the consultation process.

493 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21 AND REVISED BUDGET 2019/20 (DLS) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report which outlined that the 2019/20 budget had been amended for internal transfers and technical adjustments. The overall budget for the Directorate had increased by £200k to £105.809m. The Officer continued by noting that the Council was required under statute to fix the level of Council Tax for 2020/21 by 11th March, 2020 and in order to do so, would have to agree a balanced revenue budget by that date.

The Officer concluded by noting that the Council's provisional settlement had not yet been announced by Welsh Government and was expected this year in December, with the final settlement being received in February 2020. Even though this crucial information had not yet been received, the budget setting and consultation process had to commence in order to meet statutory deadlines.

A Committee Member noted that within the report under the profile for this year, it was indicated that £500k had been taken from reserves, and expressed that he felt that it might have been helpful to consider this before the budget was set. The Committee Member queried whether it would be possible to set a more realistic budget to avoid a similar situation the following year. The Officer replied that the contribution was being funded by a one off underspend, that the Council tax surplus could not be relied upon in perpetuity and acknowledged that whilst there was currently internal borrowing taking place, as reserves lessened the Local Authority may need to look at borrowing externally which would incur additional costs.

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It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the amended revenue budget for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Initial Revenue Budget Proposals for 2020/21 be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To note any changes to the 2019/20 budget.
- (2) To note the proposals for the 2020/21 Budget.

494 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2020/21 TO 2024/25 AND CAPITAL MONITORING 2019/20 (DLS) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report which submitted the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for the 2020/21 to 2024/25 to Scrutiny Committees for consultation. The report provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme for the period 1st April to 30th September, 2019 and details of the scheme were shown in Appendix 1. The report also set out changes to the 2019/20 Capital Programme.

The Director of Learning and Skills addressed the Committee as she wished to draw their attention to Appendix 1 which demonstrated that the state of the building at Y Bont Faen Primary School (as was discussed under Agenda Item No. 4 earlier at the meeting) was being addressed by the Directorate.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21 to 2024/25 be noted.
- (2) T H A T the changes to the 2019/20 and future years' Capital Programme be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To note the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21 to 2024/25
- (2) To note amendments to the 2019/20 and future years' Capital Programme.

495 QUARTER 2 2019/20 PERFORMANCE REPORT: AN ASPIRATIONAL AND CULTURALLY VIBRANT VALE (DLS) –

The Director of Learning and Skills presented the report which outlined the Local Authority's progress at Quarter 2 (Q2) (1st April to 30th September, 2019) towards achieving its Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes for Year 4 of the Corporate Plan 2016-20 as aligned to Well-being Outcome 3 "An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale".

The Officer stated that overall good progress had been made in delivering the Corporate Plan in relation to the Well-being Outcome 3 Objective of "raising overall standards of achievement" and "valuing culture and diversity". This had contributed to an overall Green performance status for the Outcome at Q2. Furthermore, the Officer noted that 98% (63/64) of planned activities aligned to An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale had been attributed a Green performance status reflecting the exceptional progress made during the quarter.

The Officer continued by highlighting that out of the 40 performance measures aligned to this Well-being Outcome, data was reported for one Performance Indicator (PI) for which a Green performance status was applicable. The majority of PIs contributing to this Well-being Outcome were annual indicators (19 related to school academic data and a further 20 were annual) and would be reported at end of year when the data became available.

The Officer explained that there was a need to progress the draft policy in relation to the "Code of Practice for Ethical Employment" including concluding mandatory training to all staff covering employment issues relating to modern Slavery and human rights abuses in line with the 2015 legislation. This action was attributed an Amber performance status for the quarter (AC10).

The Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources drew the Committee's attention to PI CMP/051 on page 32 of Appendix A to the report which demonstrated an increase in the number of visits to public libraries during the year per 1,000 population. The number for 2019/20 was 2,711.1 compared to 2,410.2 in Q2 of 2018/19, and had significantly exceeded the Q2 2019/20 target of 1,242.75. The Officer highlighted that the RAG status of this PI had changed from Red to Green and added that this was largely attributable to libraries having supported the Local Authority by facilitating the provision and collection of recycling materials following changes to Waste Management across the Vale. A Committee Member expressed agreement with the Officer and noted that usage of libraries for this purpose had enhanced footfall and encouraged attendees to utilise other services and access various activities within their local libraries.

The Officer concluded by advising Committee Members that the report sought their consideration of future performance results as aligned to Well-being Outcome 3 and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. It was subsequently

No.

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving key outcomes in line with the Council's Year 4 priorities for Corporate Plan Well-being Outcome 3 – “All Vale of Glamorgan citizens have opportunities to achieve their full potential” be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified, be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to secure continuous improvement outlined in the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 and reflecting the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.