

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 9th June 2022.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey, R.E. Godfrey, W. Gilligan, E.J. Goodjohn, N.P. Hodges, J. Lynch-Wilson, N.B. Marshallsea, J.M. Norman, H.M. Payne, and E. Penn.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector) and G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education).

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts, and the Welsh Language), G.D.D. Carroll and G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing).

32 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

33 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR –

RESOLVED – T H A T Councillor H.M. Payne be appointed Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal year.

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor W.A. Hennessy, R. Morteo (Church in Wales) and I. Cramb (Vale Youth Forum).

35 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 7th April, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

37 INTRODUCTION TO THE LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –

To mark the first meeting of the Committee following the 2022 Local Government Election, the Director of Learning and Skills, with support from various Heads of Service, presented a PowerPoint presentation to apprise Members on the following matters:

- The Council's overarching vision and Corporate Plan Objectives most closely aligned to the remit of the Committee,
- How the work of the Committee was aligned to contributing towards the Wellbeing Goals for Wales which were part of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and how effective scrutiny was enhanced by the Act via the five ways of working,
- The 4 well-being outcomes of the 2020–25 Vale of Glamorgan Corporate Plan and subsequent key themes of the 2022–23 Annual Delivery Plan,
- The scope of the Committee and its role as a Council function to ensure an aspirational and culturally vibrant Vale of Glamorgan providing citizens with opportunities to achieve their full potential, and
- Future challenges and key service priorities going forward for the Learning and Skills Directorate.

Following the Director's presentation, and with no questions raised by Members, the Committee subsequently

AGREED – T H A T the introductory presentation be noted.

38 ANNUAL EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT 202 – 2021 (REF) –

The Director of Corporate Resources advised that Cabinet, on 25th April, 2022, had approved the Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2020–2021 for publication and had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee in order to seek the Committee's views to inform how to continue to address the area of work, with comments being referred back to Cabinet as required.

They advised that the report outlined that the Equality Act 2010 included a public sector equality duty (the 'general duty') and that there were specific duties for Wales. The specific duties included the requirement for the Council to publish an annual report for the previous year, by 31st March each year, to demonstrate the progress made on equalities issues that were contained within the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and any associated equalities activity to improve equality for people living and working in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Following the Director's presentation, and subsequent questions from Committee Members, the Director added:

- Further information regarding the increase in younger people registering to vote would be circulated after the meeting once confirmed with the Council's Electoral Registration Team. Due to the nature in which the Electoral Register was formulated, it was not always possible to identify data relating to a single/specific elector demographic.
- A Community Impact Assessment had been undertaken in March 2021 on the different impacts of the pandemic on Vale of Glamorgan communities. Further reading links would be forwarded to members after the meeting for the benefit of newly Elected Members. Various pieces of work were currently underway across the Council's Directorates in relation to Cost of Living and the Mental Health of Children and Young People. A Personal Safety and Self-Care Development Session was also scheduled for Elected Members in July.
- Work to provide training within schools on cultural appropriateness was already taking place however, it was recognised that there was a way to go before the matter was deemed to be embedded in school culture.
- The Council conducted demographic research during the height of the pandemic. The key finding from the exercise was that different impacts of the pandemic affected different people/demographic groups in different ways. In relation to Council staff specifically, an absence report was considered by Cabinet recently and relevant reading links would be shared with the Committee following the meeting.
- The Ethnicity pay gap was defined as 'the difference between the average hourly pay of ethnic minorities and White British people expressed as a percentage difference'. The Ethnicity Pay Gap Report had been calculated in line with the Gender Pay Gap Reporting requirements and illustrated the 'mean' hourly rate of pay for full-time equivalent employees by Ethnic group.
- Cultural Recovery Grants were not accessible to the Local Authority.
- In terms of the Gypsy and Roma Traveller demographic group, it had not been possible for the Council to collate statistics on how the pandemic had affected the group. Because of the group being small in terms of the number of individuals within the Vale of Glamorgan, it was not possible for the Council to make comparisons to other demographic groups. The Council was not concerned about the group's performance and a report based on all groups deemed as vulnerable within the Vale of Glamorgan area would be presented to the Committee in the future.
- The Council engaged with Stonewall and the Equality and Human Rights Commission for different purposes. The advice offered to the Council by Stonewall remained valuable to the Council, however, any legal advice would be dealt with via the Council's own legal team.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended report, as received in relation to the Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2020–2021, be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the Cabinet report setting out the Council's future focus of activity in delivering the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24.

39 HOW SCHOOLS IN THE VALE HAVE USED THE RECRUIT, RECOVER, RAISE STANDARDS: ACCELERATING LEARNING PROGRAMME GRANT TO SUPPORT LEARNERS (DLS) –

The report, attached at Appendix A to the covering report, summarised the findings of discussions held between improvement partners from Central South Consortium (CSC) and school leaders in the Vale of Glamorgan regarding the use of the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: Accelerating Learning Programme grant (the RRRS grant) in schools. This grant was to support learners who had been impacted most by the pandemic.

The Principal Improvement Partner for the CSC advised that findings in the report were based on discussions undertaken between Improvement Partners from CSC and school leaders and staff. Discussions had involved scrutiny of school development plans and plans relating to the deployment of the RRRS grant. In addition, Improvement Partners had undertaken joint monitoring activities alongside school leaders to monitor the impact of the grant.

The report also featured six case studies from schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. This was to exemplify points raised in the report and to give a flavour of how the RRRS grant had been used and its impact in schools across the Local Authority. The Head Teachers from Ysgol Y Deri (Special school) and Ysgol Sant Baruc (Welsh medium) were also present at the meeting to provide their representations on the use of the grant within their respective schools.

Following the Officer's presentation, and subsequent questions from Committee Members, the Officers and Headteachers present advised:

- Since the 2022 February Half-Term, schools had been able to offer the same level of extra-curriculum/enrichment activities as prior to the national pandemic which was having a positive and powerful impact on pupils.
- Welsh Government sabbatical programmes were available to teaching staff to help improve their Welsh Language Skills with the aim of promoting and encouraging the use of the Welsh language in schools and increase the number of fluent teachers. Partnership working between English and Welsh medium schools was also encouraged to work collaboratively on projects through the Welsh medium.
- Recruitment of Learning Support Assistant (LSA) staff continued to be extremely difficult due to higher salaries being available in other professions. Schools would often try to recruit LSAs using an agency but, unfortunately, the agencies had very few persons, if any, available.
- The data, as set out within one case study at Appendix 1 to the report, was based on the September 2020-21 cohort and therefore further assessments would be taking place in the near future.
- Children not yet returning to school full-time as a result of the pandemic was no longer a factor for the schools present at the meeting.
- The RRRS grant was not available to support home schooled pupils however, a separate grant had been made available to support home schooled children during the pandemic. In addition to the directed grant funding, the Local

Authority also provided additional wellbeing support for home schooled pupils and their families. The overall number of pupils home schooled in the Vale of Glamorgan had increased during the pandemic but not to the same extent as other Local Authorities in Wales. This had been attributed to the levels of liaison and engagement with home school families through-out the pandemic which allayed parent fears.

- The home school team for the Vale of Glamorgan remained a small team with limited resources but officers echoed Members' comments that the success of the home school support during the pandemic be better publicised.
- The sentiments behind the new Welsh Government Act that sought to reorganise the Additional Learning Needs provision in schools were extremely positive. However, the matters of funding and implementing the requirements of the Act were difficult and daunting, especially for main-stream schools. An early hurdle was the ability to release ALNCo staff from schools in order to provide training on the changes set by the legislation.
- Recruitment levels of Welsh speaking teachers remained low with the number of new Welsh schools increasing quicker than the employment of teachers. The recruitment of student teachers in the first instance also remained low which meant there were more roles than individuals available. Modern teaching was a complex role and therefore it was also difficult to retain individuals in the profession. However, Welsh Government had recently announced an engagement plan to attract and recruit individuals into the profession.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the findings of the report regarding the use and impact of the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards (RRRS) Grant in Vale of Glamorgan schools be noted.

(2) T H A T the support provided by schools to support learners who have been impacted most by the pandemic be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the covering and appended report in relation to the current use and impact of the RRRS grant including case studies of how the grant was used in schools as well as the universal and targeted support that schools have provided for pupils who have been impacted most by the pandemic.

40 4TH QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2021/22 AND PROPOSED ANNUAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2022/23 (CX) –

The purpose of the report was to report progress on 2021/22 Scrutiny recommendations and to confirm the Committee's proposed Annual Forward Work Programme for 2022/23.

On behalf of the Chair, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer directed members through the various appendices of the report with key points of interest being:

- In relation to recommendation tracking, all 2021-22 recommendations were labelled as 'completed'.
- The Committee's Draft Forward Work Programme for 2022-23 took account of any points referred to the Committee by Cabinet as per the 2022-23 Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme.
- Only two items of slippage were reported from the 2021-22 Forward Work Programme due to reporting timelines being interrupted by the Local Government Election in May 2022 therefore, the Committee was in a healthy position looking forward to the 2022-23 Municipal year.

With no comments or questions from Members, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendix A to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme for 2022/23 attached at Appendix C to the report, in the context of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee Annual Forward Work Programme 2022/23 content, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the 4th Quarter Forward Work Programme 2021/22 attached at Appendix B to the report be noted.
- (4) T H A T the Committee's proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2022/23 attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.
- (2) To align with section 7.6 of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Roles and Responsibilities Protocol.
- (3&4) Having regard to the contents of the draft Forward Work Programme (Appendix D) and subsequent discussion at the meeting.

41 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT –

RESOLVED – T H A T the following matter which the Chair had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

42 SCHOOLS BUDGET AND ADMISSIONS FORUM REPRESENTATION (DLS) – **(Urgent by reason of the need to confirm the relevant Budget and Admission Forum representative(s) so that Future forum meetings may be arranged as soon as possible for the new Municipal term)**

The Chair advised that there was currently a vacancy on both the Admissions Forum and Budget Forum for a representative from the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee to join the Schools' Budget Forum and the Schools' Admissions Forum. It was therefore requested that the Committee nominate a representative to join each group.

With no comments or questions from Members, the Chair proceeded to hold a Committee vote on the nominations put forward. The Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T Councillor Emma Goodjohn be appointed as the Scrutiny Committee Representative on the Schools Budget Forum.
- (2) T H A T Councillor Naomi Marshallsea be appointed as the Scrutiny Committee Representative on the Schools Admissions Forum.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) To ensure that the Forum includes a Member of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee as well as the Cabinet Member for Education, Arts, and the Welsh Language.