

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 27th June, 2024.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

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

Co-Opted Members: M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector), G. van der Burgt (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector), G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education), E. Woodfield and I. Da Silva (Vale Youth Council).

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), R. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

164 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair 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.”

165 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Councillor H.M. Payne be appointed Vice-Chair for the Municipal year.

166 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 11th April, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

167 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor E. Goodjohn declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Agenda Item 6 - Summary of Estyn’s Inspections of the Local Authority’s Education Service and the Youth Service Spring Term 2024. The nature of the

interest was that Councillor Goodjohn was involved in the inspection of the Youth Service. Councillor Goodjohn left the meeting for the duration of the item.

168 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025-2030, PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE CALENDAR 2024/25 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 6th June, 2024 was presented.

The report presented the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Calendar for 2024/25 which outlined the activities that would be subject to consideration by Members throughout the year. The report also outlined how it was proposed to engage with Elected Members in shaping the processes, key plans and reports aligned to the Annual Performance Calendar to enable the performance requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E) to be met and contributed to the national goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFG).

This year there were two additional aspects of the Performance Calendar that required consideration – the development of a new Corporate Plan and the arrangements for undertaking a Panel Performance Assessment (PPA).

The report set out the approach being taken to develop the new five year Corporate Plan 2025-2030 which would be published in April 2025. Work on a new Corporate Plan would include the development of new Well-being Objectives and a more outcome focused approach.

The report detailed the scope and indicative timetable for undertaking the Council's Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) in Autumn 2024. Introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, the purpose of the PPA was to provide independent, external challenge to help inform the Council's improvement journey by building on its own annual self-assessment. The PPA would assess the extent to which the Council was meeting the performance requirements (that was, exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively and exercising good governance) and also presented the opportunity to consider work being undertaken as part of the development of the Corporate Plan 2025-30. It was proposed that the focus for the PPA concentrated on the changes being made and the approach being taken to deliver what was needed to make the Council more outcome and future focused and to increase the organisation's resilience.

The key findings and learning from the review of last year's Annual Self-Assessment approach were also detailed within the report as were proposals to further enhance the process in readiness for the 2023/24 self-assessment.

The Council's self-assessment covering the period 2023/24 would be published in December 2024. This timeline aligned with existing performance management arrangements and would enable key performance and governance related insights

to be brought together throughout the year into a summary judgement on how well the performance requirements of the LG&E Act were being met.

Appendix A to the report contained information regarding the rolling programme of collaborative work with Members throughout the 2024/25 Annual Performance Calendar to develop their skills and knowledge and strengthen their involvement in shaping and refining the key plans, reports and processes that would support them in their key role of assessing whether the Council was achieving its Well-being Objectives, delivering value for money and improving the well-being of its citizens.

Councillor E. Goodjohn queried how would the Council ensure that the independent assessment would assist in the development of the new Corporate Plan. In reply, the Director of Learning and Skills stated that the proposed timetable was integrated in that it was planned for the PPA to be used to facilitate the Council in finalising the new draft Corporate Plan. Therefore, the Panel would be used as a form of confirmation that the Council was going in the right direction. Feedback from the Panel would be considered.

Councillor E. Goodjohn also queried what sort of discussions had the Council had with other Local Authorities. In response, the Director stated that in terms of the PPA, it was a new approach although a pilot had been carried out with one other Local Authority. Therefore, the Council was at the front of the assessment process and it was too early in terms of identifying lessons from other Councils. It was also important to note that each PPA would be particular to each local Council, particularly in terms of the inspection regime and framework.

Councillor Payne referred to the make-up of the PPA and noticed that there was representation from the Voluntary Sector. Councillor Payne commented that it would also be a good idea if there was representation from the Youth Council. In reply, the Director agreed with Councillor Payne and greater youth representation was something that Estyn had recognised and encouraged.

In reply to a query regarding what was the Council doing to ensure that the Self-Assessment fully considered the broad range of views raised by residents, the Director stated that a range of engagement activity was planned and those would be shared with the Committee outside of the meeting.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Calendar 2024/25 and the proposed approach to engaging with Members be agreed.

(2) T H A T the comments of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet, with particular emphasis on the Committee's request for there to be Youth representation on the Panel Performance Assessment.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

169 SUMMARY OF ESTYN'S INSPECTIONS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY'S EDUCATION SERVICE AND THE YOUTH SERVICE SPRING TERM 2024 (DLS) –

The purpose of the report was to update Members on the outcome of Estyn's inspections of the Vale of Glamorgan's Education Service and Youth Services.

The Vale of Glamorgan's Education and Youth Services were inspected by Estyn as a pilot under a revised inspection framework and approach during February and March 2024. The full reports on the outcome of the Youth Service and Education Service inspections were included at Appendices A and B to the report.

The new Estyn framework saw case studies of innovative or effective practice replaced with cameos in the body of the report. The Education Service inspection report did however include a case study which could not be captured in a cameo. In all, the Youth Service report contained 4 cameos and the Education Service report 5 cameos and a case study.

Overall, the inspections affirmed the commitment of the Vale of Glamorgan Council to providing high-quality education and youth services, with particular strengths in inclusivity, partnership working, and continuous improvement. The Youth Service received one recommendation: Develop opportunities for Welsh medium and bilingual youth work provision

Education Services received two recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: Sharpen the focus of evaluation and improvement processes.
- Recommendation 2: Improve the quality and use of information about learning and teaching in schools to enable the Local Authority to best direct its resources towards areas for improvement.

No follow up work was identified by Estyn in relation to Youth and Education Services. Actions to address the recommendations would be identified and progressed as part of the Council's improvement planning and performance monitoring arrangements.

Councillor Payne highlighted the comments made by Estyn of the high quality of work within the Youth Service. Councillor Payne stated that as a youth worker herself who had been involved in an inspection 2004 she was aware of how difficult it was for such a comment to be made during an inspection. Councillor Payne therefore commended the service for the fantastic outcome following the inspection.

Councillor Marshallsea stated that she also wanted to highlight two quotes within the inspection in that the quality of the youth work was consistently high and that whatever the barriers, the service would never give up on the needs of its young persons. Councillor Marshallsea therefore expressed her thanks to the team. She also queried how would the Youth Service develop Welsh language opportunities. In response, the Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing stated that there were some exciting plans around the Estyn recommendation. Estyn had identified that within the Youth Service there were staff members with some skills around the medium of Welsh but who lacked a bit of confidence in using that skill. Therefore, a process would be developed to allow opportunities so staff could be upskilled. There was also an aim to foster a culture and ethos where staff felt comfortable and confident using their language skills.

Councillor Hodges stated that it was true that it was a very good report, and he was pleased that the one recommendation from Estyn had been covered and the Council had plans in place to address that recommendation. Councillor Hodges issued a word of caution in that the financial challenges of the country would mean that budget reductions were likely to be imposed and any cuts to Youth Services needed to be resisted.

Council Leader, L. Burnett, with permission to speak, referred to the first paragraph of the inspection report which was about the vision to create strong communities with a bright future, and which underpinned all decisions. The inspection had highlighted the strong work with a focus on delivering the best for our young people. That was down to the culture within the Directorate and was also a positive reflection on the Director of Learning and Skills. The Leader praised the Director and the strong team that had supported her since her appointment 8 years ago, referring to the school building programme, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the positive outcomes of the Estyn inspection.

Councillor Haines stated that there were 19 schools in the Vale with a budget deficit or likely to have a budget deficit within the next five years. Therefore, Councillor Haines queried what were the plans for the Council in tackling those deficits. In reply, the Director of Learning and Skills stated that the Council had taken appropriate action and was working closely with those schools. Those schools would also be included in the Council's Transformational Programme in order to assist them with bringing their budgets back into a balance. In addition, the Council would support those schools in order to develop a Budget Recovery Plan and the Council would assist them in identifying actions that could be taken to reduce expenditure. One area of work that would be encouraged was around school clusters which, for example, enabled scope to reduce procurement costs. Although the financial outlook would be challenging for the foreseeable financial years, the Director stated that she was optimistic that by working together and working across the Council with all schools, solutions could be found.

Councillor Haines added that Welsh Government needed to recognise that there was poverty in the Vale, which required additional funding. The Director further stated that schools required more funding but that would be down to the funding received from the UK and Welsh Governments. If the funding formula was

reviewed then it was hoped that more money would be allocated into the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Chair referred to a comment in the report about youth workers and particularly the Wellbeing Team playing a significant role in supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing. The Chair queried whether the officer could expand and provide more detail. In reply, the Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing, stated that the Youth Wellbeing Team was accessed through the Families First advice line and it was a referral based system in which the Team would look to establish relationships with the young people on a one to one basis. The Team would look to engage in a form of mentoring type capacity using their youth work skills to engage young people in order to build a relationship in order to try to address the needs of the individuals. The Team had a lot of close working with schools particularly around issues relating to disengagement. The Team included the good practice of sharing skills around the staff group, for example one of the team members was very skilled and experienced in terms of outdoor learning so that would be their main focus and was something that would be passed on to other Team members. Therefore, the Team would be able to provide a range of different approaches in their day to day work with the young people in order to assist them with engaging with the Council and the schools. The main objective was about the young person feeling that they had a relationship with a trusted adult so that potential barriers could be overcome that would help to build up the confidence of the young person.

Councillor Birch, Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language with permission to speak, stated that there were other aspects to highlight within the Estyn report particularly in relation to case studies and cameos. It had been highlighted by that the Departments worked well with each other in order to promote education, and so departmental co-operation was praised highly. The Cabinet Member referred to some cameos such as one relating to anti-racism which highlighted the continued professional development of Council staff. Therefore, the Cabinet Member asked the Committee to place on record thanks and congratulations to the whole department, particularly to the staff for which the inspection had been emotionally, physically and psychologically very stressful. Therefore, the Cabinet Member wished to place on record thanks and appreciation to the two departments for the positive inspection outcomes.

Subsequently, the Committee

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the outcome of the Estyn Inspections of Education and Youth Services be noted, and the Department be congratulated for the positive inspection report.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

170 SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES FOR SPRING TERM 2024 AND UPDATE ON SCHOOLS IN STATUTORY FOLLOW-UP (DLS) –

The purpose of the report was to update Members on Estyn outcomes of schools inspected during the spring term 2024 and progress of schools in statutory follow-up.

Estyn inspected quality and standards in education across Wales. During the spring term 2024, two primary schools (Ysgol Gymraeg Dewi Sant and St Andrew's Major Church in Wales Primary) were inspected. Neither of the two schools were in statutory follow-up (Significant Improvement and Special Measures) or Estyn Review.

Two schools from the Vale of Glamorgan, Ysgol Pen y Garth and Pencoedtre High School, remained in Estyn statutory follow-up category. Both schools were in Special Measures following their inspections during the autumn term 2022. The progress of both schools was monitored by Estyn on a termly basis. Llanfair Primary was in Estyn Review following their inspection in spring 2023. Progress the school had made towards addressing their recommendations would be reviewed about 12-18 months after the publication of the inspection report.

Councillor Marshallsea referred to a recent visit by the Members of the Scrutiny Committee to Pencoedtre High School and she commented on how relaxed and confident she felt from visiting. Councillor Marshallsea stated that it was clear that the Headteacher had developed a structured environment within the school and there was a well thought out plan of how the school would be improved. That was testimony in that 12 new teachers would be starting in September. Councillor Marshallsea stated that she would feel confident in sending her children to that school and that she would also feel confident in working at Pencoedtre.

Subsequently it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress of the two schools in Special Measures be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee's congratulations be sent to the two schools inspected during the Spring term as there was no Estyn follow up activity.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order to forward the Committee's congratulations onto the two schools inspected during the Spring term.

171 4TH QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2023/24 AND PROPOSED ANNUAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2024/25 (DCR) –

The report advised Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the proposed Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25:

- 4th Quarter Recommendation Tracking January to March 2024 (Appendix A);
- Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme 2024/25 (Appendix B);
- Proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25 (Appendix C)

The Chair commented that two reports listed for the July meeting, relating to the Youth Engagement and Progression Update and Education Other Than at School reports had slipped to the September meeting.

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 2024/25 attached at Appendix B, in the context of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee Annual Forward Work Programme 2024/25 be noted.
- (3) T H A T the Committee's proposed Annual Forward Work Programme schedule for 2024/25, attached at Appendix C, 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 Protocols.
- (3) For public information.