

No.

LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 7th October, 2024.

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

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

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

Co-Opted Members: M. Werrett (Church in Wales) and G. Van Der Burgt (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector).

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), C.P. Franks, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

445 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.”

446 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors S. Campbell, W. Gilligan and N.P. Hodges; G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education); E. Woodfield and I. Da Silva (Vale Youth Council).

447 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor A. Asbrey declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 3 – Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for Summer Term 2024 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow Up. The nature of the interest was that Councillor Asbrey was a Governor for Dinas Powys Primary School and she remained in the meeting for the duration of the item.

Councillor E.J. Goodjohn declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item Nos. 5 – Youth Service Update 2023-2024 and 7 – Youth Engagement and Progression Update. The nature of the interest was that the Councillor’s youngest child was a member of the Vale Youth Council and was also part of the Rights

No.

Ambassador Programme. The nature of the interest meant that Councillor E.J. Goodjohn remained in the meeting for the duration of the items.

Councillor E. Goodjohn declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item 5 – Youth Service Update 2023-2024 and Agenda Item No. 7 – Youth Engagement and Progression Update. The nature of the interest was that the Councillor's family member was a member of the Vale Youth Council and was also part of the Council's Rights Ambassador Programme. The nature of the interest meant that Councillor E. Goodjohn remained in the meeting for the duration of the items.

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 3 – Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for Summer Term 2024 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow Up. The nature of his interest was that Councillor Hennessy was a Local Authority Governor for Rhoose Primary School. Councillor Hennessy stated that he had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on related matters.

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

Estyn inspected quality and standards in education across Wales. During the summer term 2024, four primary schools (Evenlode Primary, Rhws Primary, Dinas Powys Primary and Romilly Primary) were inspected. Two of the schools, Rhws Primary and Dinas Powys, were inspected using the new Estyn framework being piloted for September 2024.

None of the four schools were in statutory follow-up (Significant Improvement and Special Measures) or Estyn Review. One case study of interesting or innovative practice was identified at both Evenlode Primary and Romilly Primary. A 'spotlight' highlighting interesting or innovative practice had been included within the inspection reports for Rhws Primary and Dinas Powys.

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.

The update report included two case study presentations from the headteachers for Evenlode Primary School (R. Foster) and Romilly Primary School (K. Williams).

Councillor Marshallsea asked a query for the headteacher of Evenlode Primary School and how was the ethos of the school reflected and embedded in marking. In reply, R. Foster stated that the school used live marking in the moment so teachers would give pupils verbal feedback or little signals. There would also be continual reflection of undertaken by teachers, so they understood how to move lessons forward.

No.

Councillor Asbrey stated that she was pleased to hear that there were no lesson observations as they caused stress to a majority of teachers.

M. Werrett (Co-opted Member) stated that it was good to see coaching being used in the primary schools and she asked how that was progressing. In reply, R. Foster stated that it was being undertaken at the school, which was in conjunction with the implementation of a low threat environment. The Deputy Headteacher was undertaking the coaching role to have professional conversations with the teachers. It was important for teachers to have sufficient time in order to learn and develop and to be able to have peer assessments and reflection times on areas that required further focus. Coaching was crucial to reflection and moving forward, with the low threat environment about assisting and helping teachers.

Councillor Hennessy asked a query for K. Williams and how was pressure on the budget impacting the school implementing improvement programmes. In response, K. Williams advised that there were difficult budget challenges facing the school, but there were priorities to deliver and so the school would have to spend money on those priorities. The focus would be to consider what things were of a low cost but had the highest impact on teaching and learning. For example, investing in the professional learning, which was usually provided in house and so was of a relatively low cost. It was important for the school to have sufficient teachers and learning support assistants to educate the children and provide a safe environment, and so was where a large bulk of the budget was allocated.

There being no further queries, the Chair thanked both headteachers for their contributions.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the inspection outcomes of the four schools inspected during the Summer term be noted and congratulations be passed on to the schools as there was no follow up Estyn activity.

(2) T H A T the progress of the two schools in special measures be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

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

(2) In order for Members to be aware of the progress of the two schools in special measures.

No.

449 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE UPDATE (DLS) –

The Vale of Glamorgan (VoG), like all Local Authorities (LAs) had longstanding obligations to ensure that all children of school age received a suitable and full-time education at school or otherwise.

Improving attendance had been a consistent focus for the LA. The link between good attendance and learning was clear. Good attendance supported pupils in having the best possible chance in life and maximising their potential, both in terms of academic achievement, social/emotional development and future employability.

The VoG, along with all LAs in Wales, had seen a decline in the attendance figures at both Primary and Secondary Schools since the Covid-19 pandemic. There had been an upward trend from last year within all LAs including the VOG.

In October 2023, the Welsh Government altered the threshold for persistent absenteeism from 80% to 90%. This change had inevitably seen an increase in the number of persistent absentees but the number of learners under 80% had also not decreased significantly due to the ongoing impact of disengagement following the reopening of schools after the lockdowns.

In response to this downward trend in attendance the LA had continued to implement a range of strategies together with a number of new approaches to help support schools with the challenge of getting attendance figures back to pre-pandemic levels and beyond.

Year to date (YTD) attendance for secondaries was 85.63%, last year (2022-23) the total secondary attendance was 84.6% so this represented a year on year increase.

YTD attendance for primaries was 92.4 %, last year (2022-23) this was 91.6 % so this represented a year on year increase.

There was a 6.8% difference between primary and secondary attendance. However there had been bigger increase at 1% for secondary schools from last year with an increase in primary schools at 0.8%.

At the end of 2023/2024, the VoG was ranked 7th in Wales for overall school attendance with an attendance rate of 89.4%. The Welsh average for this year was 89.0%, and the LA in first position had an attendance rate of 90%.

Councillor Payne stated that they attendance rate appeared to have plateaued, with roughly around a 5 to 6% deficit, particularly in terms of secondary education. Councillor Payne queried what was being done to improve the attendance rate for the 5 to 6% of those families that had to be re-engaged. In reply, the Acting Lead Inclusion Manager stated that there was slow progress, but it was also important for the Inclusion Service to be cautious and not miss other children that were missing school time and who were just below the 90% attendance target. The Inclusion Team worked with a range of Council partners such as Housing as there could be a range of issues that needed to be addressed. The Inclusion Service carried out home visits to have conversations and build up relationships, it worked

No.

collaboratively with schools and it did a lot of signposting to support services and partner agencies.

Councillor Marshallsea queried the current level of attendance at Pencoedtre High School. In reply, the Acting Lead Inclusion Manager stated that attendance at the school had increased at the start of the year but there had been a recent dip. Attendance at the school was still a concern and information would be shared with the Members. Councillor Haines commented that it would be useful if attendance rates were provided for all schools.

Councillor Hennessy stated that safeguarding for Governors should be mandatory. In reply, the Acting Lead Inclusion Manager agreed but that was not something that she could action.

The Cabinet Member, Councillor Birch, with permission to speak, stated that the focus was about overcoming all barriers that a child may have which prevented them attending school. Understanding those barriers should be something that was part of the governor training programme.

The Chair referred to paragraph 2.1 of the report and the pilot project in two secondary schools where home visits were undertaken by the Enforcement Team. The Chair asked what sort of conversations were being had with parents. In reply, the Acting Lead Inclusion Manager stated that the Enforcement Team would have a direct conversation with the family that they were at risk of being issued a Fixed Penalty Notice. That would come after a lot of engagement work by the Inclusion Team and where families had failed to respond.

There being no further comments or queries, the Committee

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee receives a further progress update report in 12 months (September 2025) in order to evaluate progress made in relation to the overall attendance levels and the impact of the “Miss School Miss Out” campaign, the launch of the school attendance toolkit, the enhanced training and support for schools and any intervention pilot projects launched within schools.

Reason for recommendations

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

450 YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE 2023-2024 (DLS) –

In March 2024, Estyn inspections had been undertaken within the Youth Service and across the Local Government Education Service more generally. Good practice from the Youth Service was highlighted in both reports, encompassing a single

No.

recommendation for the service in relation to the Welsh language offer. The relevant actions in relation to the recommendation were now embedded within the Service's Team Plan. The outcome of the Estyn report was evidence of the strength of the service and its impact upon the lives of young people across the Local Authority.

The Youth Service was awaiting formal ratification from Welsh Government of achievement of the Gold Youth Work Quality Mark, following a positive assessment in July 2024. This award further evidenced the clear strengths of the service.

The Youth Service had implemented changes to its delivery model, accreditation offer and management structure as part of its continued post-covid recovery. This ensured the best value for money, improves the quality of the service available to young people, and supported some of the most vulnerable young people in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Youth Service had raised concerns regarding the risks around its reliance upon grant funding, with reviews of Welsh Government Youth Support Grant funding taking place alongside the future uncertainty of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Councillor Hennessy offered his appreciation and thanks to the support and hard work of the Youth Service.

Councillor Payne commented that the summer provision was excellent with a broad spread of activities. She stated that there was always the case for additional funding and she was sure that the Scrutiny Committee would be keen to consider any potential future funding streams.

Councillor Asbrey referred to the improvement action to develop opportunities for Welsh medium and bilingual youth work provision, and she asked whether there was sufficient funding to achieve that objective. In reply, the Engagement Manager stated there was £50,000 per year to deliver services bilingually. That meant that in terms of running youth clubs, there was also a Welsh youth club that was run alongside that delivery in a school. The current delivery model was based around the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), where the Council needed to look at how it delivered youth services and to ensure that services were offered to young people bilingually. Alongside that there was the active recruitment of staff with the necessary Welsh language skills and putting staff through courses and training. Provision had been provided through the Shared Prosperity Fund, but there were challenges around the budgets, so the service would need to look at the delivery model and how that was resourced.

Councillor E. Goodjohn stated that the report referred to 19 new assessors being trained and 13 staff having refreshed their training in relation to the C-Card scheme. Councillor Goodjohn wanted to clarify whether those numbers were for the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff or just the Vale element of the service. In reply, the Engagement Manager confirmed that the staff were specific to the Vale with that service already operating in Cardiff and so that was brought across to the Vale.

In terms of future budgets, the Engagement Manager stated the Welsh Government consultation in relation to Youth Services was ongoing and it was hoped that the

No.

Council would be advised by 24th December, 2024 but that did not give the Council much time to plan future provisions. There would also need to be consideration of future staff pay awards and also the impact of increased pension liabilities which would have an impact on the level and range of activities that the service could provide.

Councillor Marshallsea referred to the work being undertaken by Her Voice Wales and she gave a congratulations to them for their Youth Excellence Award.

Councillor Lynch-Wilson commented on the use of the V-pod which was greatly appreciated by the community of St. Athan. She stated that she was glad that it was not completely going and that it would be replaced by smaller vehicles. In reply, the Engagement Manager stated that the V-pod would be used up until Christmas and then the service would consider how it could be repurposed and used elsewhere. It had been replaced by a smaller vehicle which meant that everyone in the team would be able to drive it and it was also an electric vehicle, so it would help with the Council's Green Strategy.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made by the Youth Service in the last 10 months be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee receives a further progress update report in December 2025 regarding delivery, awareness of grants and any potential risks post March 2025.

Reason for recommendations

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

451 EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS) AND PUPIL ENGAGEMENT SERVICE (DSL) –

The Pupil Engagement Team was established in 2021-22 to support schools with young people who required bespoke education provision in settings often other than at school. This provision often took place on an interim basis to support learners whilst more permanent plans were determined to better meet their social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

Current EOTAS numbers within the Local Authority had reduced slightly to 44 as of the census week in 2024, this had reduced from the previous two years (2021/22 and 2022/23) where the number of EOTAS numbers were 45.

In 2023/24 there were increased challenges in relation to learners who were at risk of exclusion, medical isolation and those requiring bespoke 'interim' provision until specialist or out of county placements could be found.

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Budget constraints for the service, together with schools' budgets, posed a greater risk for those learners who were most vulnerable and those needing emergency provision or specialist.

Schools continued to utilise a range of 14-19 learning provision which complemented their curriculum offer and was quality assured by schools directly.

The Pupil Engagement Team supported schools to widen their offer of work placements to broaden the curriculum offer for those learners who were considering seeking employment at post 16.

Councillor E. Goodjohn asked how long it took to get people back into mainstream education. The Engagement Manager stated that the difficulty for the service was that for a permanent school exclusion, the service would support the young person from day 16 or the day after an appeal hearing and so, would put in place an interim provision and look to identify an alternative school. There was the added complexity of school transport and the fact that some parents were struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Therefore some cases had been extremely challenging and it was known to take 6 to 9 months to find a suitable alternative school place. The duration would vary from case to case.

With regards to the AV1 telepresence robots, the Engagement Manager advised that information on those would be circulated to the members of the Committee.

Councillor Payne referred to the links between the 5 or 6% of pupils with low school attendance that were difficult to reach and the pressures on staff from young children having more complex and additional needs. In reply, the Engagement Manager advised that in terms of preventative work, the only provision provided was through Cardiff City Football Club. There were limited spaces within the Youth Service which was currently at full capacity. The service would not provide so much support to the 5% to 6% which provision centred around emotionally based school avoidance. Wider needs of children would be support via the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators. The Youth Service, depending on the needs of the young person, would be able to offer some well-being activities. In addition, the young person may meet with a tutor and an Educational Psychologist to assess need and to consider the next steps. The role of the Youth Service was to ensure that there was some sort of provision for the learner that best met their EOTAS needs, which included a 25 hour provision that could include things such as work experience.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the developments made by the Pupil Engagement service and recognise the ongoing progress, opportunities, and risks for EOTAS learners within the Local Authority and the associated impact of the team's work be noted.

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(2) T H A T Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee receives a further progress update report regarding updated information (based on the EOTAS return for Welsh Government) and the impact of learning for those in EOTAS settings.

Reason for recommendations

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

452 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRESSION UPDATE (DLS) –

The report brought to Members' attention the percentage of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the Vale of Glamorgan (VoG) Local Authority (LA) in 2023/2024. This included updates in relation to the NEETs and homelessness prevention agendas from Welsh Government and the work being undertaken locally within the VoG.

The report consisted of annual destination data of school leavers conducted by Careers Wales on behalf of Welsh Government in October 2023, with the statistical report for the destination survey being released in April 2024.

The data highlighted that the level of young people classified as NEET had reduced in National Curriculum Year (NCY) 11 by 0.29%, whereas in NCY 12 and 13, the figures had increased by 0.36% and 0.74% respectively. The LA remained below the Welsh average for NCY 11 and 13, which saw a decrease of 0.05% for NCY 11 and a comparable increase of 0.75%. The Vale was above the Welsh average for NCY 12 this year, which had been influenced by the increase in the number of LAs with low numbers of NEET young people leaving year 12 compared to previous years. Locally this was reflective of a slightly higher number than previous years of those leaving year 12 without returning to year 13.

Year 11 young people classified as NEET across the LA was 1.20%, below the Welsh average of 2.00%.

Year 12 young people classified as NEET across the LA was 0.60%, above the Welsh average of 0.50%.

Year 13 young people classified as NEET across the LA was 3.20%, below the Welsh average of 3.60%.

Careers Wales noted in the 2023 data that across Wales, 2.00% of the combined year 11, 12 and 13 cohorts were known to be NEET. It was also noted that across Wales, there had been an increase of 0.70% for year 13 leavers who were leaving as not available for education, employment or training. This was reflected locally within the Vale's figures, where an increase of 0.75% for this cohort had been seen.

In February and March 2024, Estyn inspections were undertaken within both the Youth Service and across the Local Government Education Service (LGES) more generally. The NEETs prevention agenda featured within both inspections, and

No.

positive feedback was received, particularly in relation to the excellent quality of internal and external partners to target groups of young people.

The report highlighted the current financial risks for future provision and staffing beyond March 2025, when current grant funding through Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and the Welsh Government Youth Support Grant (YSG) was due to end or be reviewed.

Councillor Payne queried how many young people were accessing the Celt Plus initiative. In reply, the Youth Engagement Senior Officer stated that they were not part of delivering that service but he would send through information.

Councillor E.J. Goodjohn offered thanks to the team for their support provided specifically to two children within her Ward. She also thanked the team for all their support work and for the range of engagement activities that they carried out for all back grounds.

There being no further comments or queries, the Committee

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the progress made in the last eight months of the continued implementation of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) aimed at reducing the number of young people classified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the Vale of Glamorgan be noted.

(2) T H A T the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee receives a further progress update report in July 2025, moving the annual feedback to a more pertinent time in the annual cycle which would be a more timely update following the official destination release in April each year.

Reason for recommendations

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

453 GOVERNOR TRAINING REPORT FOR THE 2023/24 ACADEMIC YEAR (DSL) –

The report provided commentary and a statistical summary of the attendance and evaluations received for online governor training courses held during the 2023/24 academic year.

The 2023/24 academic year continued to see a high number of Vale governors attending a record number of training sessions / courses. A summary of attendance over the last 10 years was provided within the report.

89 virtual courses / sessions were held and 676 Vale governors attended during the 2023/24 academic year.

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The Chair stated that he was in support of the suggestions within paragraphs 2.10 to 2.17 of future versions of the report and he queried what were the timescales for implementation. In reply, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that work had already begun which would assist Governors to understand some of the wider challenges facing schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. The Learning and Skills Directorate would look to piggyback on existing Governor meetings in order to provide an overview of some of the pressure areas and to help with engagement.

The Committee was keen for the safeguarding training for Governors to be considered as a mandatory requirement, and for there also to be consideration as to whether it was required specifically for education purposes when other safeguarding training was provided in other aspects of Members' roles.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the suggestions within paragraphs 2.10 to 2.17 of the report for future versions of the report be endorsed.

Reason for decision

To ensure that the report remained relevant going forward due to the changing circumstances highlighted within the report.

454 1ST AND 2ND QUARTER RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2024/25 AND UPDATED COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2024/25 (DCR) –

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

- 2023-24 Recommendation Tracking (Appendix A);
- 1st Quarter Recommendation Tracking April to June 2024 (Appendix B);
- 2nd Quarter Recommendation Tracking July to September 2024 (Appendix C); and
- Updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25 (Appendix D).

Having considered the report, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A to C of the report be agreed.

(2) T H A T the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25 attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

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Reason for recommendations

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

455 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.

456 PROGRESS UPDATE ON YSGOL LLYN DERW (DLS) –
(Urgent by need of Updating Members on the Status of the Ysgol Llyn Derw Development Programme Following its Contractors, ISG, Entering into Administration)

On 20th September, 2024, ISG Ltd entered into administration. Following this announcement, all of ISG's UK operations ceased to trade with immediate effect, and no further work would be undertaken on existing UK contracts, including for construction, fit out and engineering services.

ISG were appointed to deliver the build programme for Ysgol Llyn Derw, a satellite site for Ysgol Y Deri, at Cosmeston, as part of the Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning programme.

The Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning team took immediate action to minimise any disruption to the programme, and a plan was currently being executed with precision.

Councillor Hennessy queried the amount paid to ISG so far. In reply, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that he did not have the specific figure at hand and that it would be sent through. He added that payments had been broken up and spread over a period of time with the last payment made a few weeks ago. ISG had been paid for work that they had undertaken.

Councillor Haines asked for clarification in regards to any future re-tendering exercise which may lead to a higher price being paid by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. In response, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that there were Welsh Government Intervention rates. The next stage would require a number of various surveys to be undertaken to assess exactly where the work can be picked up from. Until those surveys had been carried out the Council would not fully know the financial implications and further updates would be provided over the coming months. The Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources added that the Council had a very good relationship with Welsh Government and every other local authority that had employed ISG would be in the same position. He stated that he expected Welsh Government to be very reasonable particularly as they had already provided some assurance in relation to the Intervention Rates.

There being no further comments or queries, the Committee

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RECOMMENDED – T H A T the action being taken in response to the notification of ISG Limited entering into administration in relation to Ysgol Llyn Derw be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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