



City and County of Swansea

**Minutes of the Scrutiny Performance Panel –
Education**

Committee Room 3A, Guildhall, Swansea

Thursday, 19 December 2019 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
L S Gibbard
M A Langstone

Councillor(s)

M Durke
D W Helliwell
J A Raynor

Councillor(s)

S J Gallagher
L James

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

A Roberts

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Jennifer Raynor

Cabinet Member - Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

Officer(s)

Michelle Roberts
Mark Sheridan

Scrutiny Officer
Head of Vulnerable Learner Service

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A M Day, B Hopkins, S M Jones and L J Tyler-Lloyd

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

Letter and minutes of the 14 November were received.

4 Session looking at Additional Learning Needs Reform and progress in Swansea

Cllr Jennifer Raynor, Cabinet Member or Education Improvement, Learning and Skills and Mark Sheridan, Head of Vulnerable Learner Service provided a written

report for and attended the Panel to answer questions. The following points were noted:

- The report updated the Panel on progress made on the ALN Strategy. It included progress over the 2018/19 academic year, current context including projected pressures and revised plan to mitigate these.
- The local authority is facing unprecedented change in the area of ALN following the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET Act 2018).
- The Welsh Government have created five ALN Transformation Lead posts to work with the four regions and the further education sector to support and challenge LA preparations for the implementation of the ALNET Act 2018 in September 2021.
- Swansea has engaged well at a regional level with the five other authorities in the South West Region that cover the same footprint as ERW and the transformation lead. An ALN Strategy and Implementation Plan has been developed along with an ALN Strategy Steering Group including parent/carers to oversee its implementation.
- Progress has been considered under the seven themes in the regional implementation plan (full detail in report provided):
 - Good progress made under the Awareness Raising Theme
 - Mixed progress with regard to Workforce Management
 - Mixed progress under the theme of Person Centred Practice and Individual Development Planning (IDP). Hearing that further work is needed to embed the use of person centred approach into the culture and ethos of schools and other providers (training has been provided but this needs to be further embedded into schools practice). The Panel heard there are concerns regarding the capacity of the team to manage the conversion from Statements of Special Education Need and LA maintained IDPs (essentially running two systems until transformation is completed).
 - Good progress has been made in understanding the range of early year's settings and providers. Integration of these services have been initiated under the Pathfinder programme.
 - LA continues to have significant concerns regarding the extending of the age range from 19 to 25. Without integrated working between the colleges, health, Adult Social Services, youth offending, education, employers and training providers. We agreed that it is important to ensure there is a good offer of support to enable independent living and employment rather than continuing to rely on education placement to 25. We understood that this will require agencies to work together. What are we doing to develop this integrated working approach? How well prepared are other bodies including particularly for example internally our Adult Social Services.
 - Early dispute resolution and parent partnership are seen as key to avoiding escalating needs, provision and therefore costs. The contract for development of this process has been awarded to SNAP. A parent partnership website for Swansea has gone live and Education are engaging with parents and carers forum.

- Swansea has created two Family Liaison post, which have made a significant impact on the number of tribunals being lodged and work with parents face to face. However, this work is time consuming and raises capacity issues moving forward.
- The authority now has a better understanding of the impact of the new ALNET Act and the draft code that points to the likely statutory obligations of the LA. Staff have been mapping demand and volume of work over the past four years so Swansea has a good knowledge of its situation. It was also explained that reduction in resilience and business continuity might occur due to the list of factors given. The Panel heard that there are concerns about the capacity within education to deliver such a large plan. Therefore, presentations have been made to the Corporate Management Team to emphasise a joined up approach and to bolster the capacity of the Education team to deliver all the projects in the plan.
- The ALNET Act and Code will place a number of mandatory duties on LAs and other responsible bodies such as health boards and WG Ministers from Sep 2021. The report outlined those duties and potential costs.
- The Panel were informed that Swansea is keen to progress the development of a new special school provision. It is also looking to review the number and range of specialist teaching facilities in line with changes in demand.
- Panel recognise that ALNET Act and the implementation of the code will be a huge challenge for not only our education team but for schools, health, adult social services and a raft of other partners. They were pleased to hear that Swansea had made good initial progress in raising awareness and starting to work with other agencies to develop an integrated local offer that meets the needs of learners 0-25. The Panel believe that the two things that will be central to making successful progress will be the necessary funding to enable these projects and good partnership/integrated working. Although, they were concerned that the Welsh Government have said they expect it to be cost neutral exercise. The Panel plan to follow progress closely and will ask for regular updates, as the planning and implementation of this Act progresses.

5 Work Programme 2019/20

The panel were informed of an extra meeting on the 18 February 2020 to look at the Annual Budget Proposals as they effect education matters.

6 For Information - Annual Audit of Schools

The Annual Audit of Schools report for 2018/19 was noted.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm

Chair