



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 2 September 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor R V Smith (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

J P Curtice
O G James
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

M Durke
L R Jones

Councillor(s)

B Hopkins
M B Lewis

Officer(s)

Damien Beech	Head of Primary Phase Unit
Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
Helen Morgan-Rees	Head of Achievement & Partnership Service
Stephanie Williams	Principal Lawyer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor M A Langstone and Nick Williams

43 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the code of conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

44 Minutes.

Resolved that the minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee held on 8 July 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

45 Implications and Preparation for the New Curriculum in Swansea Schools.

The Chair outlined that the report was the culmination of the PDCs work and meetings over the past months.

He thanked all the officers, schools and partner organisations who had attended the various meetings and contributed to the committees review.

He outlined that the report had been inevitably delayed by the massive impact of Covid 19 on the Council and the Education Service in particular. He thanked the Officers from the department for their assistance in drafting the report.

He referred to the excellent and wide ranging examples of good practice that already exist in Swansea schools, and indicated that this report should place them on a more formal footing going forward.

Helen Morgan-Rees then outlined the background and rationale behind the drafting of the report and referred in detail to each of the nine main recommendations contained in the report.

Members of the committee discussed the report and made comments relating to its compilation and asked various questions of the officer linked to the report and the evidence submitted and discussed during its review, the officer responded accordingly.

The Committee welcomed and supported the report.

Resolved that report be approved and referred to the meeting of Cabinet on 17 September 2020.

46 Covid 19 - Update.

Helen Morgan-Rees and Damien Beech provided the committee with a detailed and comprehensive update relating to the Authorities response to the Covid 19 lockdown period and the closing and subsequent reopening of schools.

They referred to the initial impact of closing schools and then following the advice from Welsh Government that schools were to be 're-purposed' and became emergency childcare settings to help support those most in need, including people involved in the immediate response to the coronavirus crisis outbreak such as NHS, care and key workers.

They outlined that during the period of school closures for the purpose of statutory education, the priorities of the Welsh Government and that of all its partners across the education system, was amended to support:

- the safety of all our learners and our education workforce;
- the physical and mental health and well-being of all our learners and our education workforce;
- the ability of all our learners to keep learning; and
- learners' transition back into school and onto the next phase of their learning when the time comes.

They outlined that an Emergency Education Board (EEB) was established and meetings quickly convened, the board's membership included senior officers from the education directorate and both headteachers from both the primary and secondary sectors.

Information and advice was distributed to schools initially on a daily basis from this group.

The EEB then created a task and finish group to revise the original risk assessment and operational plan issued to schools at the start of the closure period. This group

included headteachers, officers, school leadership and trade union representation. The revised documentation was shared with schools and was continually updated as part of the re-opening of schools task & finish group's remit.

A regional Continuity of Learning (COL) Plan Board was also then created and officers from both the primary and secondary phase teams joined the board to offer support and advice.

Following the Minister for Education's announcement on 3 June that all schools would re-open to offer their learners the opportunity to attend sessions to 'check in, catch up and prepare' (CICAP). Schools offered the sessions on a reduced basis taking into account the scientific advice and information available at the time and the measures that needed to be put in place to help reduce the risk of possible transmission.

To give schools a better understanding of the number of pupils to anticipate, the re-opening of schools task and finish group issued a survey to all parents and carers in Swansea. The survey asked whether parents and carers would be sending their children back to school for CICAP sessions, what they would like to see in place in terms of safety measures and what their concerns were. It also took the opportunity to ask respondents their views on the distance learning offer from their child's school.

The considerable and extensive amount of work and preparation undertaken by officers in preparing the necessary risk assessments prior to the CICAP was also outlined and commended.

The risk assessment process and advice remains ongoing during the new term, but it is up to both governing bodies and senior leadership teams in schools to take the responsibility going forward.

There was also a survey undertaken called 'Coronavirus and Me' which was aimed at children and young people and sought their views on the impact of the pandemic on their well-being and attitudes to returning to school.

The results of both surveys were outlined in detail in the report and the results of which were shared with schools, with the department also undertaken an extensive exercise and preparing school by school data results which were sent to individual schools.

The importance of getting young people back into schools and colleges in the autumn term was outlined and discussed for all the reasons and factors outlined and detailed in the report.

The improved liaison, collaboration and appreciation of roles between departments of the authority and outside/partner organisations has also proved to be an area of benefit throughout the lockdown period and beyond due to more improved joint working arrangements.

The Chair and Committee thanked the Officers for their detailed and informative update report on this issue.

47 Workplan 2019/2020.

The Chair reported that Cabinet was due to consider a report on 17 September relating to Covid, which could impact on the work of the PDC.

He indicated that as such, it would be advisable to cancel the PDC meeting scheduled for 9 September and the meeting on 14 October could then consider any additional information and topics highlighted by Cabinet in formulating its workplan for 2020-2021.

Resolved that the meeting scheduled for 9 September be cancelled.

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

Chair