



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 8 July 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 Education Achievement & Partnership
Stephanie Williams	Principal Lawyer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): M A Langstone and Nick Williams

39 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

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

40 Minutes.

Resolved that the minutes of the Education & Skills Policy Development Committee held on 11 March 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

41 Education Service Update and Further Discussions on Workplan for 2020/2021.

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the first meeting of the Committee since the start of lockdown and the effects of Covid 19 pandemic.

He reported that during the pandemic, the work on the draft cabinet report on the New Curriculum had obviously been put on hold as officers had to deal with other more urgent matters. He also stated that the 3 topic areas agreed by members at the last meeting for future review may well need to be revisited and/or added to in order to include any particular issues that have arisen as a result of Covid 19.

Helen Morgan-Rees reported that officers had recommenced work on the draft report on the new curriculum and stated that it would be ready for member's consideration by the end of July.

She then gave a verbal update to the committee on how the department had adopted a 'continuity of learning plan' during the pandemic, the two main aims of this plan were to protect pupils' wellbeing and learning through high-quality support and distance learning and to work with headteachers, local authority officers, networks and unions to shape new ways of working.

This approach had contained the following ten main objective areas:

- Support the digitally disadvantaged families;
- Provide advice and guidance to support families (wellbeing and learning);
- To share high-quality resources and best practice to support wellbeing and distance learning across schools;
- To provide high-quality Continuous Professional Development (CPD) resources and opportunities for schools;
- Consider approaches to mitigate against gaps widening between groups of pupils (e.g. pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, Additional Learning Needs, English as Additional Language etc.);
- Promote Welsh Language learning (including supporting pupils in Welsh Medium schools from English speaking backgrounds);
- Provide guidance and support to schools and governors on school business;
- Consideration on how schools could reopen safely;
- Technical support for schools with assessed grades for GCSE and A-Level & other matters related to exam cohort pupils, i.e. Yr10/12;
- Transition – primary/secondary and secondary/post-16.

She outlined the extensive scoping and research exercise undertaken to establish those digitally disadvantaged pupils and that in excess of 550 devices and 400 home wifi kits had been supplied to those pupils to enable home learning to be undertaken, some of which had been funded from Welsh Government grants.

The development of the Swansea Virtual School (SVS) <https://swanseavirtualschool.org/> had proved to be an excellent development that one that given the timescales involved, the authority could be extremely proud of. The virtual school contains a wide ranging supply of information, model online lessons, advice for pupils/parents/carers and links to CPD for staff.

She outlined the childcare provisions put in place in schools for 'key worker' children, and outlined the approach developed to assist young people with mental health issues and those with ALN needs.

The support and advice given to governing bodies was also outlined.

She indicated that it was likely that the blended learning programme of school/digital/home provision would continue well into the autumn term dependant on the re-infection rate and advice from Welsh Government.

She outlined the work done with the year 11 cohort for 2020 and the assessments undertaken for this year's exam results. 2021's year 11 and how their studies/exams will be affected remains a concern and is yet to be decided. The current year 6's transition to secondary school is also an area of issue, although virtual tours and online introductions to the new school and teachers have assisted the situation.

Damien Beech then outlined in more detail the high quality CPD and resources in place and available for schools and their staff via the SVS and the well established various primary and secondary networks. The website also signposts teachers to areas of best practice and details online activities that can be utilised.

He indicated that a very successful webinar relating to blended learning had been held last week with over 300 teachers 'attending'. A further webinar was also being held today regarding online classrooms.

He also outlined that ERW had also released resources to assist with the development and provision of Welsh language classes. He also indicated that ten staff had signed up for sabbatical classes. He also detailed the links developed with the Book Trust Cymru and an online Theatre group.

He outlined the enormous amount of research, work, effort and co-ordination that had gone into the planning for the reopening of schools. He detailed the good practice observed, risk assessments undertaken, and the input of schools, unions, HR, legal, and the transportation section that went into the reopening. Parents were also consulted on the proposals.

He outlined that the huge task needed to acquire the necessary PPE for each school which was also sourced, procured and distributed to schools prior to their re-opening.

He re-iterated that work and planning remains ongoing for the new term in September subject to any further lockdowns, whether local or national, and following advice from Welsh Government.

Member of the committee asked many questions of the officers around the topics and issues covered above, the officers responded accordingly.

The Chair wished to place on record both his and the committee's thanks and appreciation for all the work and effort undertaken by both officers centrally within the education department and all the school based staff in providing and sustaining the education provision for young people across the city in extremely stressful and very difficult circumstances both during lockdown and since the partial easing of restrictions and the re-opening of schools.

Members of the committee echoed and supported the comments from the Chair.

The Chair indicated that as the draft cabinet report would be available at the end of July, a special meeting of the committee would need to be arranged in August to consider this, the special meeting could also receive an update from officers and a scoping report covering the areas raised and discussed above including topics such

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as digital infrastructure and capability, distance/blended learning, schools design/layout, feedback from parent surveys etc.

Agreed that a special meeting of the committee be held on Wednesday 5 August at 4pm to consider the two reports outlined above.

The meeting ended at 4.52 pm

Chair