



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 17 December 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
S J Gallagher
L James

Councillor(s)

A M Day
D W Helliwell
S M Jones

Councillor(s)

M Durke
B Hopkins
M A Langstone

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

J A Raynor
R V Smith
N Brazil
Helen Burgum
Beth Titley

Cabinet Member Education Improvement, Learning, Skills
Chair of the Education Policy Development Committee
Gower College
Bishop Gore Comprehensive School
Careers Wales

Officers

Helen Morgan Rees
Chris Rees
David Bawden
Michelle Roberts

Interim Director Education
Leader of Learning – Digital Competence
14-19 Education Officer
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): Cllr L Tyler Lloyd
Co-opted Member(s): A Roberts

1 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Disclosures of interest were received from Cllrs Mike Day, Mike Durke, Myles Langstone and Susan Jones.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

Letter and Minutes were received by the Panel.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 Swansea Skills Partnership

Helen Morgan Rees, Director of Education gave a presentation on the current position and priorities of the Swansea Skills Partnership (also known as PSA), including:

- That it began from a recommendation to Cabinet June 2018 from work carried out by the Education Policy Development Committee. With the aim of meeting the opportunities provided by Swansea Bay City Deal and to ensure robust local arrangement for partnership to feed into regional partnerships.
- The purpose of the PSA is to
 - promote and develop Swansea as a 'Learning City' and to be the best in the UK
 - promote and develop Swansea as a 'Learning City' – aligning providers with a shared vision and values
 - develop a local action plan to promote and develop Swansea as a 'Learning City' to inspire children and young people
 - in partnership develop a road map for skills or the learning pathway to reinforce the messages about agreement and collaboration at all levels in education
 - identify and further develop cohesive opportunities for Swansea learners
 - monitor and evaluate progress against the local action plan and ensuring appropriate linkage to the RLSP action plan
 - further develop careers advice including apprenticeships and work-based learning and expand the focus to include key stage 3 and primary pupils
 - further develop initial teacher training and continuous professional development opportunities for school based staff
 - ensure apprenticeships and work-based learning align to future skills needs
- It now needs to evolve including membership, momentum, its key focus areas, Covid opportunities. Further work is needed to develop further.
- Some key outcomes of the PSA so far include: Building digital capacity, advice and guidance for careers, next steps in learning and future occupations and raising awareness of the Swansea Bay City Deal.

The Panel then discussed Partnership with a cross section of its membership, hearing.

- It has been successful to drill down and focus on certain areas including for example on digital capacity and good quality careers advice.
- Partnership had lost momentum a bit and there has been degrees of traction.
- Panel pleased to hear about the positive outcomes from this partnership working including:
 - Digital learning was an obvious choice and links closely to the City Deal project and has also been useful in the current Covid situation.

- Focusing on careers advice and guidance for learnings to help them make the right choices.
- The Panel were keen to hear about the Platform called 'My Choice' has been developed and it unique to Swansea area. The Panel heard that until now advice and guidance for vocational learning was not in one place for Year 11's to go and where opportunities are. A platform was therefore developed to do this. Schools can gain impartial advice and guidance, it also have common applications forms for 6th Form, Colleges and work based learning. Learners can also see what is happening in Swansea, possible future opportunities and gives links to other websites. Welsh Government are looking at the Platform to see how it can be shared as good practice for others to use.
- The Panel heard that digital learning and capacity has changed completely over the past 9 months and is now a must. It is important for young people to know what digital careers are and will be available especially with the new arena and potential job opportunities. Discussion raised the City Deal and how it is important that young people in Swansea are skilled enough to get the top jobs as well as other available roles. The Panel felt it was important to include the business community on the Partnership and would like to see this progressed.
- The Panel were also told about the continued importance of professional development for Teachers, colleges and universities in how lessons are taught using devices and technology, getting the right Pedagogy.
- Panel was pleased to hear that the PSA was exactly what the Education Policy Development Committee had in mind when it made its recommendation to Cabinet in 2018. Pleased to see curriculum is and will be more aligned to future skills needs locally and nationally. The Panel agreed with the Chair of the Policy Development Committee when he said a vocational element should form part of every child's educational experience. He was happy with what the partnership can deliver believing it needs to be a dynamic and able to change as things develop including with developing the new curriculum and general work based skills.
- The Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills told the Panel that the strength of the partnerships is having organisations on it that have their fingers on the pulse as far as the business community is concerned like for example colleges who have food links with employers. Also that their needs to be a broader perception of what employment in the future is about, for example employers need to be flexible, with good transferable skills and able to market themselves.
- It is time to start to think about what is next for the partnership. Need to keep momentum and Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) has been identified as it does involve a number of partners. The example of the good work on NEETs at Pentrehafod Comprehensive School was raised. This shows what can be achieved and with all partners involved a lot more can be achieved.
- Councillors were pleased to hear about the commitment, knowledge and experience that individual members of the Partnership are bringing to the table and working together to improve the learning and opportunities of young people in Swansea.
- There are a number of different partnerships out there, is there any duplication of activity was asked? The Panel heard that there are other partnerships and there is some overlap but this is not duplication and is beneficial to Swansea like for

- example work around the new curriculum and a good quality learning offer and there has been some benefit from regional programmes afforded by the region.
- The Panel asked how lessons are learnt within the Partnership so it can improve. The Panel heard that the Partnership use information locally to inform planning locally and has demonstrated that projects so far.
 - Partnership has worked well having representative from outside of Swansea like Neath Port Talbot, is positive to be able to work across borders and with a wide range of partners to the benefit of our learners.
 - The Panel were told that to improve and progress further they will now need to:
 - Revisit the purpose and original intentions and include more fresh thinking including involvement from the business community.
 - Refresh priorities moving forward.
 - Build on current momentum (critical not to lose momentum now especially moving out into the post Covid world)
 - Focus on a couple of key sub groups one of which should be NEETs.

The Panel were pleased to hear about the positive impact the partnerships is having especially in relation to digital learning and careers platform. The Panel look forward to seeing how the Partnership develops in the future by building on these good early foundations. The Panel would like to emphasise the need to engage the local business community and look to include it on the partnership moving forward (and will ask for further information on this aspect). Positive to see sub group to look at NEETs which is a vital area that can be influenced by all partners moving forward. Agreeing the next steps must include a focus on challenges faced by vulnerable learners. Councillors thanked all those who attended the meeting saying the Panel can now see a route map for the future of the Partnership.

6 Verbal update - Covid Education Recovery Plan

The Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning and Skills and the Director of Education outlined the current position in relation to Covid and its impacts on Education.

- In December there was a ministerial directive to go to remote learning which felt like the right thing to do. But more difficult for primary schools to do remote learning as pupils less able to do self-directed learning.
- Attendance level had plummeted to 44% prior to directive. The best part of term the attendance above 80%
- 92 out of the 94 schools in Swansea had been effected by positive cases. The highest incident school had 69 cases, with a number of schools having above 25 cases.
- There has been so far 938 positive cases in schools and then more children of school self-isolating.
- The disruption has been significant.
- The Panel were told that not all pupils will start back on the 4 Jan and it will be a mixed bag depending on the situation at the time. The ability of schools to operate safely will determine whether they go back to face to face teaching at start of term. Start on both safety and staffing.

- Important to learn from those schools who have had high positive rates but it seems that community transmission rates are key. Considering things like zoning schools differently etc.
- Working in partnership with Public Health Wales to identify any patterns around schools which is helpful in learning and understanding this.
- Lateral flow testing proposed to prevent self-isolating for contacts in schools. Practicalities and logistics make this difficult to implement and needs to be looked into more.

7 Education Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/2021

Due to the current pressure on the Education Department, the Panel have agreed to postpone all items scheduled in January and February apart from receiving a verbal education Covid update and the Annual Budget as it relates to Education. This will be reviewed in early March.

8 For Information - Annual Audit of Schools

The Annual Audit of School Report was noted.

The meeting ended at 5.27 pm

Chair