



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Thursday, 21 October 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
D W Helliwell

Councillor(s)

A M Day
B Hopkins

Councillor(s)

S J Gallagher
S M Jones

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

A Roberts

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Cllr Robert Smith

Cabinet Member Education Improvement Learning and Skills

Officer(s)

Damien Beech
Rhodri Jones
Helen Morgan-Rees
Michelle Roberts

Head of Primary Phase Unit
Head of Performance Team - Education Dept
Director of Education
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): L James and M A Langstone

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Cllrs Susan Jones and David Helliwell declared an interest on the items on the agenda.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

3 Letters and Minutes

Minutes of the meeting on the 30 September 2021 were agreed.

4 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

5 Verbal Update - Harassment in Schools

The Panel thanked Cllr Robert Smith and Helen Morgan Rees for coming to update them on the current position with regards to harassment in schools. Cllr Smith updated the panel on the actions taken and where they plan to go from here. It was noted:

Officers looked specifically at the Swansea schools that were named on the 'everyone's invited' website. They looked but were not able to cross reference any other concerns highlighted to schools or from schools to the local authority. But we did provide support to schools directly, making sure that they had appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place. Officers report that they felt reassured by what they were told by schools and that safeguarding procedures were in place and that those were robust.

In the meantime, Welsh Government has asked the Commissioner to undertake a thematic review of the issues raised and that work is ongoing has not yet reported but the panel will be interested to see that when it comes out.

Cllr Smith said that we do take this very seriously as a Council, the education child protection and safeguarding officer has led on work linking the pilot for the new relationships and sex education curriculum with the whole education approach to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. He said the actions highlighted are in part in response to the website but also the ongoing commitment by the Council not to see any harassment in our schools. We want to promote positive relationships. We want to respond to issues as they arise. It is about ensuring healthy relationships and ensuring that all learners feel safe and comfortable in the environment in which they find themselves.

The Director said that there was no confirmation that any of the disclosures took place within the school environment, so from what we know, across 91 schools named nationally, there were six in Swansea. But they may be things that happened in the community and not necessarily within the parameters of a school environment, so I think it is important that the schools keep a log of all unacceptable behaviour. Prevention and the promotion of a value-based education including respect and dignity for all pupils is vital.

She also said that our safeguarding training to schools makes it abundantly clear that adults really need to be seen as safe people to go to within a school environment and to be able to disclose and share in confidence. The Panel were concerned about pupils being comfortable enough to raise issues in school but recognised that there are many variables in a pupil's life that may stop them from doing so. They may not be ready to raise it at this particular time in their life, and it may take years for them to be able to build the confidence to disclose at a later date. The Director agreed to provide some more information to the panel about the position of strength we are in on this matter in Swansea.

Panel members raised the possibility of having a telephone line that young people can call if they do not feel they want to go to a teacher or other professional. The Panel heard that places like Childline are very important for this.

6 Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Presentation (A new 10 year plan is being developed, an overview of requirements and the progress made so far)

Cllr Robert Smith and Rhodri Jones attended the meeting to update the Panel on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (WESP) development. The following points were discussed as part of the PowerPoint presentation.

- Statutory and strategic background to the plan
- National targets including: 30% by 2030/31 (approximately 10,500 in each year group) and 40% by 2050 (approximately 14,000 in each year group), transforming the way we teach Welsh and increasing the number of teachers who can teach through this medium.
- WESP requirements
- Overall targets
- Swansea specific targets
- How we get there...
- Our ten year vision
- The seven outcomes

The Panel heard that the vision for the development of Welsh-medium education in Swansea is clear, robust and ambitious. The work to be done is multi-faceted and multi-layered, and the next step after approval of the strategy will be to develop an action plan for the next 10 years. Clear use of data will enable us to set specific targets, which will allow us to measure the impact and success of the work

The issue of every teacher in Wales being able to/or trained to speak the language was raised and how we are going to do that? The panel heard that this will be one of the biggest challenges faced, with the need for the whole profession to get on board with it. Also hearing that it is encouraging that our teacher training providers locally are doing a lot on this with new teachers into the system. Councillor Smith said Universities have been providing sabbatical schemes as opportunities for serving teachers, which is considered important, but that that needs to be supported by Welsh Government as does the initial teacher training need, there needs to be a combined effort on this.

The Panel welcomed the overall 10 year vision and strategic plan for the development of Welsh education and were pleased to see definite actions and proposals to move forward. The Panel recognise that resourcing this plan will not come cheaply and emphasised the importance of ensuring that it is financial supported.

7 Progress with the Introduction of New Curriculum

The Panel thanked Cllr Robert Smith and Damien Beech for providing a report giving a progress update with the introduction of the New Curriculum for Wales here in Swansea. Some of what the Panel heard included:

- Overall, the impact of the pandemic has slowed the LA's and schools' preparations for the new curriculum.
- Despite the pandemic, elements of curriculum development and related aspects continued. For example, schools continued to share good practice related to

teaching and learning through our networks. Practice shared has had a strong focus on developing effective teaching and learning approaches through digital technology. This has led to many innovative approaches being developed that will support the new curriculum well.

- In addition, during the pandemic, the training delivery and offer to governors has been modernised.
- At the national level, despite the pandemic, the Welsh Government pressed ahead with its curriculum reform agenda.
- In the summer term, 2021, the Welsh Government approached Swansea Council to develop a trial for the new RSE framework. Seventeen schools are involved.
- In light of the Welsh Government's, Curriculum for Wales: the journey to curriculum rollout, officers will need to consider re-establishing SCTAG Network and updating the local implementation plan.
- Concerns remain over schools capacity to engage fully with curriculum reform. Currently, the pandemic is affecting school staff significantly, and the ability of schools to release staff for curriculum-related development is difficult. The Welsh Government has recognised this challenge, somewhat, in its new guidance with a more sensitive language around readiness, for example, it states: "We do not expect schools to have perfected or completed all aspects of curriculum design reform by roll-out".
- A significant degree of high-quality professional learning is taking place through support programmes, training and school networks. This needs to continue in a way that is sensitive to the challenges that schools still face in the pandemic.
- School Improvement Advisers and Curriculum Advisers will need to sensitively monitor and support schools in areas related to curriculum development.

8 Work Programme 2021/2022

The Panel accepted the work programme. The Panel wish to include the impact of gas price increases on schools in the February 2022 meeting when the Panel looks at the Annual Budget.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm

Chair