



City and County of Swansea

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

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Monday, 12 February 2024 at 3.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
J D McGettrick

Councillor(s)

S M Jones
F D O'Brien

Councillor(s)

S Joy
A J O'Connor

Co-opted Member(s)

Beth Allender

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Robert Smith, Cabinet Member

Officer(s)

Kelly Small
Michelle Roberts

Head of Education Planning and Resources
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A Davis, A M Day and B Hopkins

119 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

120 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

121 Minutes

The Panel agreed the minutes of the 18 January 2024.

122 Letter/s

The letter to the Cabinet Member relating to the 18 January meeting was received by the Panel.

123 Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

124 Annual Budget Proposals - as they relate to Education matters

The Panel thanked the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and the Head of Education Planning and Resources for attending the meeting to discuss the Annual Budget as it relates to education matters. They provided a presentation that covered:

- Overall school budget for 204-25
- Central budget and central staffing
- Additional Learning Needs
- Service review
- Charges to schools
- Other savings

The following points were raised by the Panel and will be forwarded to the Service Improvement, Finance and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel for discussion and inclusion in their letter to the Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy.

- We recognise that it is a challenging budget but were encouraged that the cabinet member and education department have carefully considered the options available to them in order to make the best of the monies available.
- We were concerned about the continual reduction in the level of reserves held by schools. Whilst we recognise the need for the money to be spent wisely, it is important for schools to have a good level of reserves to act as a buffer if and when needed.
- We noted from the contribution made by the Swansea Schools Budget Forum, who are one of the Statutory Consultees, that when it comes to the settlement Swansea receives from Welsh Government for education it is 'relatively poorly ranked at around 17/18th of 22 Welsh local authorities'. As a Panel we would support putting pressure on Welsh Government to work to improve Swansea's position.
- We welcomed the news about the ALN mini bus pilot and look forward to hearing more about this as it develops.
- We welcomed the news that Welsh Government are likely to pay for the £5 million (received as part of the Barnet consequentials) uplift in teachers' pension costs for Swansea.
- Concern was raised with regard to grants received from Welsh Government flatlining and the impact that this will have on our overall education spending.
- We felt it was good that the council received a one-off payment this year but did express concern about what might happen in future years.
- We noted the overspend in Home to School Transport again this year. We will keep a scrutiny eye on how this progresses over the coming year.
- We welcome the enhancing of 'in county' provision, thereby reducing the potential for so many out of county placements. However, we did notice that

there are large savings projected for ALN and felt it was important that this does not affect the overall ALN outcomes in Swansea moving forward.

- Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank both schools and the central education team for the work they do in these challenging times.

125 Work Programme

The Panel accepted the work programme noting that an extra meeting 19 February had been arranged to look at school organisation in relation to the amalgamation of special schools in Swansea.

126 For Information - Recent Individual School Inspection Outcomes List

The information was noted by the Panel. The Panel asked that future reports contain a little more context including some of the positives at the schools.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm

Chair