



Draft Annual Report of the Education & Skills Service Transformation Committee to Annual Council – 16 May 2024

Education & Skills Service Transformation Committee – 17 April 2024

Transforming Education: Additional Learning Needs, and Right Schools in Right Places

Purpose:	To provide Council with progress made to the Transforming Additional Learning Needs and Right Schools in Right Places transformational goals, following contribution from the Education & Skills Service Transformation Committee during 2023-2024.
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan 2022-2028, Education & Skills
Consultation:	Education & Skills Corporate Delivery Committee, Access to Services, Finance and Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the draft report be approved and referred to Council.2. Council endorses consideration of future consultation on the specific proposals that will emerge from delivery of the transformation programmes, which will be presented to Cabinet in future reports.
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1. Introduction

1.1 In accordance with the Terms of Reference for Service Transformation Committees, the role of the Education and Skills Transformation Committee is to:

- Contribute to future policy and/or service design
- Consider mechanisms to encourage and enhance public participation in development of policy and service models
- Work with Senior Officers and Cabinet Members in a Team Swansea approach
- Consider and where appropriate, invite relevant organisations/individuals to contribute to policy development and service design discussions

1.2 On 14 June 2023, it was resolved that the Committee work plan would focus on two Education transformational goals throughout the 2023-2024 municipal year:

- Transforming Additional Learning Needs
- Right Schools in Right Places

1.3 This report details the contribution of the Education and Skills Transformation Committee towards the progress of the programmes in place to realise these goals.

1.4 In addition to the work plan items listed above, the Committee met informally on 20 September 2023 with a workshop to consider the complex topic of home-to-school transport, which impacts upon both areas of transformation. The Committee, alongside officers from Education, Legal and Transport, explored current practices and the challenges currently facing the local authority. Ideas for potential solutions were discussed.

2. Transforming Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

2.1 The first meeting for this work plan item in September 2023 was to provide context and outline the preparatory work undertaken to support a key area of ALN transformation, the Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places (SSSP) programme.

2.2 The SSSP programme was developed following an extensive review of Specialist Teaching Facility (STF) provision in Swansea. This review identified that there was a necessity to enhance and improve the offer across Swansea, in response to increasing levels of need and the current placement and designation of existing STFs across the County.

2.3 The SSSP programme aims to enhance provision available for children with ALN, implemented within five years.

2.4 The Committee were informed of a high level of engagement with a range of stakeholders to inform the review, which resulted in the

establishment of a change team and a set of principles to underpin future provision. These principles outline an expectation of a consistent, high-quality offer for all learners, where their needs would be supported through a continuum of appropriate provision.

- 2.5 Two pilot projects were developed to compliment the SSSP programme. The first project was to pilot an inreach/outreach provision, based in the Dylan Thomas School cluster and hosted by Townhill Primary School. The pilot provides access to specialist staff and resource for children from across the locality to receive a specific period of intervention. The aim of the pilot is to seek solutions to the identified provision gap for children who need some additionality but do not meet the profile of requiring an STF. The second project was to undertake a pilot of utilising school minibuses to minimise the number of individual taxis arriving on school sites, whilst aiming to improve the wellbeing experiences for learners who travel to STFs.
- 2.6 The context and current challenges were discussed by the Committee with agreement to explore further with more detailed data analysis in the next meeting of this workplan item.
- 2.7 A second report was presented to the Committee in December 2023, alongside a verbal update by the Head of Vulnerable Learners Service. This report included a wide range of data analyses that outlined current and future trends. Key themes from the data highlighted an increasing trajectory for all areas of need. It identified that the current model struggles with the current demand and that there was a strong case for change. Learners attend schools whilst on waiting lists for diagnosis by the Local Health Board, therefore it is clear that support should meet need, not diagnosis.
- 2.8 The Head of Vulnerable Learners Service shared key findings from a recent thematic review by Estyn, with a key recommendation around quality assurance. A recent publication by the National Association of Educational Leadership identified the requirement for systemic change, wider than the local authority.
- 2.9 An update on the Dylan Thomas Cluster Enhanced Provision project and future evaluation to inform the overall provision offer was discussed.
- 2.10 The Committee discussed in detail the progress around the minibus pilot. The initial pilot has been concluded and evaluated, with a successful outcome. Positive feedback around learner wellbeing and readiness to learn was observed, in addition to financial savings on this method of travel. The pilot schools have adopted the project on a permanent basis, with documentation produced to support a wider rollout. The Committee asked a number of questions around the considerations that needed to be made in order to roll the project out more widely.

3. Right Schools in Right Places

- 3.1 The first meeting for this work plan item in July 2023 was to provide the current position and case for change for the school estate in Swansea.
- 3.2 The Head of Education Planning and Resources provided an overview of the current school estate, including:
 - Number of schools
 - Number of learners on roll in each year group
 - The number and percentage of surplus capacity in schools
 - The condition categories that support prioritisation of capital maintenance (with a caveat that there can still be issues with suitability to provide the curriculum or accommodate additional needs in schools with sound condition)
 - The Display Energy Certificate profile of schools
- 3.3 Home-to-school transport was discussed, highlighting the significant financial pressures it places on the Education Directorate budget.
- 3.4 A number of reasons were outlined to inform the case for change. This included:
 - A declining birth rate
 - Shift in demand from English-medium to Welsh-medium
 - Inward migration, with high application rates for faith schools
 - The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
 - Condition and suitability of school buildings
 - Financial considerations
 - The Local Development Plan impacting upon placement of demand
- 3.5 The Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL) programme was explained, that can support local authorities to improve the school estate. A Strategic Outline Programme was in development for Cabinet approval prior to formal submission to the Welsh Government by the end of March 2024.
- 3.6 It was recommended that a ten-year school organisation plan should be produced for consideration by Cabinet, with stakeholder input. The plan should dovetail with the SCfL programme and other relevant plans and contain:
 - Key demographic information
 - A statement of assumptions in respect of provision for pupils
 - Policies and principles linked to school organisation
 - Diversity of provision
 - Accessibility of provision
 - Parental preference and popular schools
 - Energy efficiency

- 3.7 The Committee discussed the report and noted some key considerations, including:
- The importance of openness, transparency and sensitivity during planning
 - Catchment areas reviews and implications
 - Complexities surrounding sixth-form provision and impact upon the environment of travelling to alternative providers
 - The benefits of a workshop around home-to-school transport
 - Seek agreement on the optimum figure regarding surplus spaces to ensure reasonable maintenance costs per pupil
 - Examining the configuration of schools to use buildings more effectively
 - Timescales and descriptions of key plans, alongside ensuring all plans are dovetailed, e.g. Flying Start
 - Interpreting and reviewing Local Development Plan pupil projection data
- 3.8 A second meeting for this work plan item was held in November 2023. Following discussion in the previous meeting, the Head of Education Planning and Resources Service proposed the development of a Strategic School Provision Plan (SSPP) for consideration by Cabinet.
- 3.9 The aim of the SSPP would be a co-constructed, contextual document to support the Council, schools, parents and local communities with understanding the rationale for changes within the school estate. It would be a key reference document for school organisation proposals and would align with the SCfL Strategic Outline Programme (SOP). It was suggested that the timescale for the SPP would run in parallel with the SOP, i.e. nine-years.
- 3.10 It was suggested that the contents of the SSPP could include:
- Past, current and projected pupil numbers for each school and geographical area
 - A breakdown of pupil numbers into English-medium, Welsh-medium and Faith provision
 - The location of housing developments and strategic sites within the Local Development Plan
 - Trends in parental choice
 - Significant changes to numbers on roll that could trigger a review of accommodation
 - Pupils who are educated other than at school
 - Turnover of pupils
 - ALN provision
 - Condition and suitability
 - Display Energy Certificate
 - Accessibility, including transport
 - Vocational provision

- 3.11 The Committee discussed the suggested contents and key areas for consideration were raised, including:
- Travel time
 - The need to include all buildings and not just main buildings,
 - The Audit Commission guidance on sixth-form numbers and sustainability of provision moving forward
 - The impact upon schools that are affected by high turnover rates, particularly in the city centre
 - Consideration of including amenity space in the SSPP
 - The significant rising building and maintenance costs for school buildings
- 3.12 A third meeting took place on this work item in January 2024, where a draft version of the plan was shared for discussion, named the Strategic School Provision Plan (SSPP). It was noted that further detail would be added once the data from the 2024 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) was published.
- 3.13 A range of questions were discussed on the draft SSPP with suggestions to consider other areas including the use of visuals, information on breakfast and after school clubs, the potential impact of the Local Development Plan and housing developments, and the consultation process and stakeholder involvement.

4. Progress to the end of the Municipal Year 2023/2024

- 4.1 Following the input of the Education and Skills Service Transformation Committee and other stakeholders, the change team for Supporting Sufficient Specialist Places has developed a statutory proposal for the future of specialist provision to support learners with ALN. Following final refinement, a detailed proposal will be provided to Cabinet in June 2024, with a recommendation to proceed with formal consultation. The planning of school places, including STF places, must be determined under the School Organisation Code. The proposal will follow the relevant guidance under the Code.
- 4.2 The Strategic School Provision Plan has been enhanced following feedback from the Committee. Following submission of the Strategic Outline Programme, the SSPP will be finalised and presented to Cabinet in July 2024, with a recommendation to adopt the plan to support future cases for change within the school estate in Swansea.

5. Integrated Impact Assessment Implications

- 5.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

5.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

5.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None