

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Thursday, 29 September 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Jon Harland, Carol Holliday, Alan Hughes, Terry Mendies, Gareth Sandilands (Vice-Chair, in the Chair) and Andrea Tomlin

Co-opted Members for Education, Neil Roberts for item 5

The Lead Member for Education, Children and Families, Councillor Gill German and Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage, Councillor Emrys Wynne were in attendance at the Committee's request for item 5.

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Governance and Business (Monitoring Officer) GW
Head of Education (GD)
Planning and Resources Manager (IL)
Programme Manager (JC)
Service Manager, Business Support & Communities (NJ)
Contract Officer (E J-D)
Scrutiny Coordinator (RhE)
Committee Administrator, Host (KJ)
Democratic Services Officer, minutes (KE)

KL Care LTD representative for item 7, Hafan Deg Day Centre

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Hugh Irving (Chair) and Councillor Paul Keddie, along with Co-opted Member Kathleen Jones (Catholic Church Education Scrutiny Member). Councillor Elen Heaton, Lead Member for Health and Social Care had also tendered her apologies for business item 6, in her role as Lead Member she had been required to attend a national conference relating to her portfolio.

In the Chair's absence the Vice-Chair, Councillor Gareth Sandilands, chaired the meeting.

Councillor Andrea Tomlin was welcomed to her first meeting as one of the Independent Group's representatives on the Committee.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following Committee members and Lead Members/observers declared a personal interest in business item 5 in their capacities as governors on the following school governing bodies:

Councillor Ellie Chard	Ysgol Tir Morfa, Rhyl
Councillor Carol Holliday	Ysgol Clawdd Offa, Prestatyn
Mr Neil Roberts	Ysgol y Parc, Denbigh
Councillor Gareth Sandilands	Ysgol Clawdd Offa, Prestatyn
Councillor Emrys Wynne	Ysgol Brynhyfryd and Ysgol Borthyn, Ruthin

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that their interests were solely personal as business item 5 referred to the county's schools and education provision in general.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No items of an urgent nature had been raised with the Chair or the Scrutiny Co-ordinator prior to the commencement of the meeting.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 July 2022 were submitted. It was:

Resolved: - that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2022 be received and approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

No matters were raised with regards to the contents of the minutes.

5 SCHOOL CATEGORISATION ACCORDING TO WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION

The Lead Member for Children, Education and Families introduced the report (previously circulated) on the Welsh Government consultation on Welsh Language categorisation in line with its ambition for a million Welsh speakers by 2050, outlining the potential implications for Denbighshire's schools and pupils.

The Head of Education explained that since 2007 schools in Wales had been designated into five categories, ranging from English medium, English medium with significant use of Welsh, dual language and Welsh medium. There would be three new categories under the proposed new system in the primary sector. It was recognised that the categories could be confusing:

New category 1:	English language (historically category 5)
New category 2:	Dual language
New category 3:	Welsh medium (previously category 1)

There would be a sub-category between each of those categories for schools to use for a transitional period. The majority of schools within Denbighshire already fitted into those three categories.

In line with Welsh Government's Welsh language ambition even schools in category 1 (English medium) would be expected to provide 15% of education curricular and extra curricular) through the medium of Welsh as a minimum.

The few schools which previously fitted into category 4 – provided between 20% and 50% of education in Welsh - would be placed into a transitional category for up to 6 years whilst they prepare to become a dual language setting.

One of the core principles in introducing the new arrangements was that schools should not offer less Welsh-medium provision in the future than had been ~~the~~ offered in the past.

In the secondary sector there would also be 3 new categories, but Category 3 Welsh medium would be divided into two sub-categories:

Category 3:	Welsh Medium
Category 3P:	Designated Welsh Medium

It was anticipated that by January 2024 the categories in the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), a statutory return that schools needed to complete for Welsh Government, will have changed and existing categories would no longer exist.

If there were any substantive changes under the reorganisation process – regulated alteration under section 42 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 – the proposals would have to go out to consultation. The plans would be monitored as part of the Welsh Education Strategic Group's (WESG) work. This Group comprised of the two lead members and two representatives from Scrutiny Committees.

The Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage reiterated the importance of the measure to reach the goal of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Resources had been implemented to assist teaching staff to improve their Welsh language skills, including a 12-month Welsh language sabbatical course provided by Bangor University that not only taught the Welsh language but also the methodology for teaching Welsh in schools, and for using conversational Welsh as part of normal daily life in schools.

The Minister for Education and Welsh Language had announced that Welsh lessons for teachers in Wales were to be provided free of charge in addition to young people aged 18 to 24 who wished to continue to improve their language skills.

An experienced head teacher had been seconded for the academic year to work on the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), which included the re-categorisation of schools, and further posts had been funded by the seclusion of grant funding to assist in the transition arrangements for schools.

It was recognised that there were instances where parents of children did not have any knowledge of the Welsh language but it was important to share communication from the Welsh Education Strategic Group (WESG) which highlighted the requirement by many organisations (e.g. North Wales Police) to possess a certain level of Welsh language for their employment policies in order to get parents on board.

It was advised that the WESG, working in partnership with Menter Iaith, Poppeth Cymraeg, Yr Urdd, Mudiad Meithrin, would have a role to play to promote and provide Welsh classes for adults. There were also facilities within Denbighshire's libraries for Welsh learners, both children and adults.

The Welsh Government had already approved the Council's 10-year Welsh in Education Plan in July 2022. However, an action plan had to be submitted to Welsh Government by the end of December 2022 on the implementation of the plan. The action plan would have timescales and key milestones that would require reporting on annually.

There could be implications in relation to Welsh medium transport. Denbighshire operated under the Learner Transport Measure which was likely to be amended by Welsh Government moving forward to dovetail with the categorisation changes. The Authority would need to issue new clarification guidance as to where Denbighshire's Transport Policy sits – historically category 1 and 2 for Welsh medium schools changing to category 3 – until the Learner Transport Policy was revised. Any changes that had a marked impact on school transport would be presented to scrutiny.

At the conclusion of an in-depth discussion the Committee:

Resolved: - subject to the above observations to receive the information provided, and –

- (i) acknowledge the changes that will be required in some of the county's schools going forward if the Authority is to ensure compliance with the Welsh Government's vision and requirements in relation to Welsh language education provision; and***
- (ii) that a progress report be presented to the Committee in the autumn of 2023 outlining the planning and implementation work undertaken to date with respect of securing the delivery of Welsh Medium Curricula and Non-Curricula provision in the County's Schools in accordance with the Welsh Government's vision.***

At this juncture, with the Committee's agreement, the order of business on the meeting's agenda was varied with business item 7, the Committee's 'Scrutiny Work Programme' report, discussed ahead of item 6 'Hafan Deg Day Centre Update'.

6 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Coordinator introduced the report (previously circulated). There were four items listed for the next Performance Scrutiny Committee on 24th November:

1. Council Performance Update (quarter 2)
2. Corporate Risk Register (September review)
3. Cefndy Healthcare, options appraisal for future business delivery and
4. Christ The Word – response to Estyn inspection.

It was suggested that the fourth item could be quite an in-depth discussion which would benefit from a pre-meeting to discuss a questioning strategy.

A progress report on Denbighshire's Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan had been deferred to spring 2023 at the behest of the Service pending the conclusion of a review of the Strategy by the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group.

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group was scheduled for 24th November. The Committee members were encouraged to submit referral forms for items they felt that merited scrutiny.

The Committee were referred to appendix 3 of the report – Cabinet's forward work programme – should they identify an item that required scrutinising and appendix 4 progress with Committee resolutions for information.

It was:

Resolved: - subject to the above inclusions and amendments to confirm the Committee's draft forward work programme, attached at Appendix 1, to the report.

The Committee retired for a break at 10.55am prior to reconvening at 11.05am

7 HAFAN DEG, RHYL

The Service Manager, Business Support and Communities introduced the report (previously circulated) which was an update on the effectiveness of the transfer of the facility and the services provided at Hafan Deg day centre to an external provider, focussing on the position post pandemic recovery and looking for scrutiny to support continuing with plans for the Service and the practice of regular monitoring.

The Committee heard that Hafan Deg had closed for business during the pandemic but was now back open, fully operational and had a good attendance by citizens. There were some areas identified for improvement in line with other social care settings. The Council intended to work with the provider to improve and develop the service. Meanwhile, the Contract Team continued its ongoing monitoring of the KL Care Ltd. service provision at Hafan Deg.

The service provider representative in attendance informed the Committee that due to illness attendance numbers were slightly lower than usual at present. Work was ongoing to re-engage with local supermarket eateries to offer lunch trips and afternoon teas for clients and arrangement for a Christmas Dinner was anticipated shortly.

Responding to the Committee's questions officers advised that:

- The day centre was originally outsourced in 2018 due to concerns over its cost effectiveness as the building was deemed to be under used and required maintenance. It was agreed that whoever took over the service would also take over the lease of the building and use it as a community hub in addition to the day care service.
- The day centre was currently open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday – 10:30am to 3:30pm.
- The centre had a minibus that was used to pick citizens up for attendance at the day centre, free of charge.
- The minibus service was working at full capacity. It picked up clients from Rhyl and Prestatyn. Dial a ride was recommended for their service if seats were unavailable on the minibus.
- The centre did offer the facility to bathe clients but the service was not often utilised.
- The day centre could accommodate 25 clients comfortably without requiring extra staff, at that time there were on average 10 clients attending the day centre.
- The contract for the day care centre was for 5 years initially, work was ongoing to expand its use throughout the community. A decision would be made within the next 6 months on how to move forward with the contract.
- Prior to Covid leaflet drops were undertaken at GP surgeries to promote the service at the day care centre, it was agreed to restart the leaflet distribution.
- There was an agreed set price for day care service, £54.60 per person, per day plus £6.00 for meals and refreshments. This formed part of the contract between the Council and the provider and was in line with fees set regionally for day care services.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee thanked the representative from KL Care for attending the meeting and for answering their questions. Members then:

Resolved: - subject to the above to –

- (i) receive the information provided;***
- (ii) request that elected members be provided with an information report on the background to the decision to outsource the delivery of day care services at Hafan Deg; and***
- (iii) support the continuation of the practice of quarterly monitoring, with a view to securing that plans for the Centre are delivered and key milestones achieved.***

8 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

None.

Meeting concluded at 11.35am