

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
LEARNING COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY** held remotely by video-
conference on Thursday, 27 May 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Wyn Thomas (Chairman), Councillors Bryan Davies, Euros Davies, Marc Davies, Odwyn Davies, Rhodri Davies, Endaf Edwards, Keith Evans, Paul Hinge, Hag Harris, Gwyn James, Alun Lloyd Jones, Mark Strong, Lynford Thomas and Ivor Williams

Also in attendance: Councillor Rhodri Evans, Gareth Lloyd, Catrin Miles, Catherine Hughes and Ray Quant (Cabinet Members)

Officers in attendance:- Mrs Meinir Ebbsworth, Corporate Lead Officer – Schools, Mrs Non Davies – Corporate Manager – Culture Services, , Mr Silyn Roberts – Challenge Advisor, Mrs Menna Jones – Senior Athro Bro ,Mrs Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Mrs Dana Jones, Democratic Services and Standards Officer

(10:00am – 12:10pm)

1 Apologies

Councillor John Adams- Lewis and Meirion Davies apologised for their inability to attend the meeting

Councillor Alun Lloyd Jones and Ivor Williams would be leaving the meeting early due to prior commitments.

2 Personal

The new chair, Councillor Wyn Thomas thanked the previous chair, Councillor Endaf Edwards on his work during his term and to Mrs Lisa Evans, Democratic and Standards Officer for her support, especially in attending ERW meetings. The new chair also thanked both and wished Councillor Thomas well in the forthcoming year.

The Chair also wished Councillor Paul Hinge well as Chairman of the Council.

Mr Mike Hayes and Mr Gari Jones from ESTYN were welcomed to the meeting as observers.

**3 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act**

2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

None.

4 A verbal update in relation to support for the Schools Service during the COVID 19 period

The Corporate Lead Officer- Schools updated Members with the position of the school service during the Covid19 period and in particular the wellbeing and mental health of pupils. The following information was provided in a presentation :-

- Update
- Centre Determined Grades
- Supporting Pupils
- A taste of the work targeting specific skills
- Physical Health

Thanks were expressed to all staff in the schools during this challenging time and the provision provided online to teach pupils.

5 Music Service: Using Virtual Provision in Future

It was reported that since the first lockdown in March 2020 Ceredigion Music Service had continued to deliver instrumental/vocal lessons on the Microsoft Teams platform with the aim of ensuring that pupils continued to engage with tutors and demonstrated progression on their musical learning journey.

The service was the first in Wales to deliver virtual lessons and as such demonstrated sector leading practice which resulted in the Service, guided by Gareth Lanagan from the e-sgol project, providing training and assistance to other music services across Wales. The Music Service staff worked tirelessly to adapt to new ways of working, learning to use the different platforms needed to deliver online lessons – eg Flip Grid and Teams. The virtual provision ensured that pupils were able to continue to engage - with approximately 55% of pupils continuing with their studies.

Members were informed that Securing a virtual provision throughout the period March 2020 to March 2021 had been a major accomplishment for the Service. Other Local Authorities in comparison drastically reduced their provision with some discontinuing all Music Service provision during periods of lockdown.

Numbers:

665 pupils were able to access tuition during the year

Strings	91
Woodwind	144

Brass	139
Piano	135
Percussion	53
Vocal	64
Harp	14

In comparison numbers for the previous year were as follows:

Strings	356
Woodwind	196
Brass	315
Piano	57
Percussion	104
Vocal	98
Harp	55

In reviewing the past year and planning for the future the Service acknowledged the following merits and challenges of a virtual provision:

Merits

- The Music Service was able to continue to engage with pupils
- Continuity and progression for pupils
- Experimenting with innovative ideas such as the Virtual Peri Tour – an introduction to instrumental/vocal lessons with large numbers of pupils able to be reached in one session
- Savings in terms of budget and time spent travelling from one location to another
- The West End of Wales project has demonstrated how online performances could serve to promote the Music Service and reach new audiences

Challenges

- Internet connection including poor sound quality can cause issues for pupils and tutors
- Difficulties in tuning instruments – stringed instruments in particular
- Difficulties in providing accompaniment as a result of online delay
- Difficulties in repairing instruments
- Absence of group/ensemble/concert work and the associated social interaction which encourages progression
- Difficulties for beginners without the necessary initial practical tuition and demonstration
- Creating online performances such as the West End of Wales project performances requires a high degree of technological input and external expertise

Factors being considered in moving forward

It was reported that acknowledging that the Service has adapted well and had explored new and innovative ways of delivering its provision the Music

Service and the Corporate Manager for Culture would consider the following in moving forward:

- When safe and purposeful to do so recommencing face to face provision in schools would enable the Service to rebuild numbers to pre-pandemic levels and re-establish school ensembles
- Virtual provision could be offered to schools at certain times as a trial in the first instance. This would help with timetabling issues which result from other school activities such as school trips, GCSE and A Level examinations etc.
- Virtual provision could enable the Music Service to reach the wider community e.g. Care Homes, Rural Community Groups, Hospital Wards. Pre-recorded performances or live streamed performances by individuals or ensembles could be made available as lunchtime or evening concerts
- A series of pre-recorded demonstrations similar to the Virtual Peri Tour could be created and made available to schools or parents enabling the Music Service to reach out to a greater number of potential pupils
- To enable the service to deliver a high quality virtual provision it would need to overcome some of the connectivity issues and invest in key equipment.

In conclusion it was reported that virtual provision in terms of one to one tuition and performances could and would continue to be used in the future – particularly as the threat from further Coronavirus-19 outbreaks continues. Whilst virtual provision had been successful, it cannot however replace the impact and importance of face-to-face tuition. The Music Service would therefore look to develop a blended model for the future, combining virtual and face-to-face provision to ensure the best possible learning experience for its pupils.

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to note the report presented and to congratulate the service on their achievement and enthusiasm during this difficult time.

6 Partnership Agreement between LA and Schools 2021-24

It was reported that Section 197 of the Education Act 2002 is a Wales only provision that empowers the Welsh Government (“WG”) to require that local authorities form a partnership agreement with the governing body of all schools that are maintained by the authority. The purpose of a Partnership Agreement is to enhance and sustain partnership working between the LA and schools.

The Partnership Agreement specifies the arrangements for the review of the agreement and must be reviewed every 3 years.

The proposed Partnership Agreement between the LA and schools is for September 2021 until August 2024.

The main changes in the document were summarised as follows:

- Changes in Ceredigion contacts/ contact details
- Changes due to change in legislation e.g. ALN Transformation/ GDPR etc
- Changes in School Improvement arrangements due to Ceredigion withdrawing from the ERW consortium

Section 2 of the Partnership Agreement may be further adapted during the period of the Agreement in accordance with the Welsh Government's 'School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, improvement and Accountability.'

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to recommend that the Partnership between the LA and Schools 2021-24 be for Cabinet approval

7 **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32**

The CLO Schools provided Members with a breakdown of the process of Implementing the WESP, to include the democratic and consultation process. It was reported that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was a 10 year plan for 2022-2032 and would be submitted to the Welsh Government by 31 January 2022. It was required to plan according to 7 statutory outcomes to develop and strengthen the position of the Welsh language within education.

Outcome 1: More nursery children/ three year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

Outcome 2: More reception class children/ five year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

Outcome 3: More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another

Outcome 4: More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh

Outcome 5: More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school

Outcome 6: An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) (in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

Outcome 7: Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh

The CLO-Schools provided Members with an update on the position of Ceredigion Schools on each of the above outcomes and the data to support the current and future positions.

Following a detailed presentation and questions from the floor, it was AGREED to recommend to Cabinet that the plan be sent out to public consultation.

8 To confirm the Minutes of the previous Meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes

It was AGREED to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 11 March 2021

9 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

It was AGREED to note the Forward Work Programme presented subject to the following:-

A report on the feedback of the consultation on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 in the November meeting.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 September 2021

Chairman:_____

Date:_____