

**Minutes of a Meeting of the  
LEARNING COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY** held remotely by video-  
conference on Thursday, 15 December 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillor Wyn Thomas (Chairman), Councillors Bryan Davies, Marc Davies, Odwyn Davies, Rhodri Davies, Keith Evans, Endaf Edwards, Lloyd Edwards, Hag Harris, Mark Strong and Lynford Thomas

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Catrin Miles and Catherine Hughes (Cabinet Member)

**Officers in attendance:-** Mrs Meinir Ebbsworth, Corporate Lead Officer – Schools, Mrs Menna Sweeney, School Support Advisor, Mr Gwion Dafydd, Corporate Manager- Accountability and Progress, Mr Gareth Lanagan, Post 14 Curriculum Co-Ordinator, Dafydd Charles, E-sgol Cymru, Miss Lowri Evans, Team Manager – Youth Work and Engagement, Mr Gwion Bowen, Children & Young People's Participation Officer, Mrs Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Mrs Dana Jones, Democratic Services and Standards Officer

(10:00am –11:35am)

- 1 Apologies**  
Councillor Euros Davies, Paul Hinge and Alun Lloyd Jones apologised for their inability to attend the meeting
- 2 Personal**  
Sincere condolences were extended to Councillor Gareth Davies and Mrs Julie Davies and their family on the sudden loss of their son.
- 3 Disclosures of personal and prejudicial interest**  
None.
- 4 A verbal update in relation to support for the Schools Service during the COVID 19 period**  
The Corporate Lead Officer – School updated Members upon Reintroduction of Distance Learning from Monday 20th December until the end of the Christmas term. It was reported that it had been agreed in the last few days that the county's schools would be reverting to distance learning from Monday 20th December until the end of term.  
  
The decision was based on the expectation of an imminent rapid and sudden increase in the Omicron variant, especially within the under 25 age bracket and also due to the daily challenges encountered in a number of schools due

to staff absences. The aim was to minimise contacts in order to prevent the spread of the virus over the coming crucial weeks. There was a clear medical advice that a third dose of the vaccine was an effective means of managing the new variant and the Local Health Board encourages everyone who wished to receive the vaccine to do so as soon as they receive their invitation.

Planning was now underway for the reintroduction of distance learning which would ensure continued provision and a structured end of term. ICT equipment would be provided to families if needed, and the request for this should be made through the school. Any pupil attending a specialist resource unit would be able to continue to do so until the end of term.

Payments/vouchers for any pupil claiming free school meals would be adjusted to take the distance learning days into account. Also, parents who were key workers, and cannot make alternative childcare arrangements, could have access to a childcare hub if necessary during this period.

All parents/guardians were informed by letter last night on these arrangements and a further letter from the individual schools would also be sent in relation to pupils lesson arrangements. In relation to the arrangements in January, it was reported that there were a number of meetings arranged over the Christmas period with the Welsh Government to discuss this current position with the virus.

## **5 Welsh in Education Strategic Plan**

The Corporate Lead Officer – School reported that it was statutory for each Local Authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for the decade 2022-2032. On 15th June 2021, Ceredigion's draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) received Cabinet approval to go to consultation for a period of eight weeks. To avoid consultation over the Summer holidays, the consultation began on 20th September and closed on 12th November 2021.

In order to provide a full and detailed response to the comments made during the consultation, the Welsh Government needs to publish the document 'School categories according to Welsh-medium provision'. A draft copy of this document was published in December 2020 for the consultation period. However, the final copy has not yet been published, although this was expected before the end of the 2021 calendar year. The content of this document will be crucial in providing a response to the consultation on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan in Ceredigion.

The original timetable for submitting the consultation comments and responding to them will therefore be adjusted as a result of the above. The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will now receive the consultation response on 17th February, with Cabinet receiving the report on 22nd February 2022.

It was AGREED to note the current position.

## **6 E-sgol project in Ceredigion and Wales**

The Corporate Manager- Accountability and Progress reported that E-sgol was a blended learning initiative (funded by Welsh Government and coordinated by Ceredigion) to deliver online teaching and learning opportunities using direct; real-time and interactive learning approaches. E-sgol provided support to schools around the skillsets and the range of pedagogical approaches needed to maximise the learner's experiences.

The initiative initially focussed on enabling rural schools to maintain the options of subjects where there were non-sustainable learner numbers in post-14 and post-16 learning. Initially, schools worked across a cluster of no more than six schools, which were within travelling distance of each other. The lesson was delivered using a blended learning approach, while learners were encouraged to travel to the teacher's school every half term. Otherwise, the lessons use Microsoft Teams, through Hwb, to ensure there are no unnecessary costs to the school(s).

The project had expanded considerably as a result of COVID, with more schools across Wales now receiving support.

The officer provided this information via a presentation.

Following questions and comments on the project, it was AGREED to note the current position.

## **7 Ceredigion Youth Council Meeting Minutes**

The Team Manager – Youth Work and Engagement reported that in order to meet one of the requirements of the legislation, Local Authorities were expected to work with relevant partners to:

- Support a County Youth Forum/Council as a representative body of young people to act as a channel for young people's views across their local authority and represent those views to local and national decision-making bodies.
- They should aim to be as inclusive as possible in terms of geographical spread, age, gender and to represent specialist needs and more marginalised young people.
- For County Youth Forums/Councils to operate effectively, they would need to be adequately supported by Local Authorities who should consider what support was required to do this.
- They should be informed and linked to their local democratic structures.
- They would also need to be effectively linked into national participation structures such as Young Wales, the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the National Assembly for Wales.

Children and young people have the human right to have opinions and for these opinions to matter. It states that the opinions of children and young people should be considered when people make decisions about things that involve them, and they shouldn't be dismissed out of hand on the grounds of

age. It also says children and young people should be given the information they need to make good decisions. Article 12 (Respect for the view of the child - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

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Ceredigion Youth Service was responsible for coordinating and managing the Ceredigion Youth Council since it was first established in Autumn 2015. They meet three times a year (once each term) and host an event at the end of their year 'in office'. At present, Youth Council meetings take place virtually, but ordinarily, they would be based at the chamber in Penmorfa.

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED that Ceredigion Youth Council minutes were presented to both the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, for information, each term.

**8 Feedback on the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee workstream**

It was AGREED to note the feedback report presented and to thank officers for their work following the introduction of the ALN code, within a short period.

**9 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 20 September 2021.

**Matters arising**

None.

**10 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme**

It was AGREED to note the content of the Forward Work Programme subject to noting the following:-

- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan would be presented at the 03 February 2022 meeting
- The Play Sufficiency Assessment would be presented with the Child Sufficiency Assessment at the 02 March 2022 meeting
- An update on the Dyffryn Aeron school be provided at the 03 February meeting

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 February 2022**

**Chairman:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_