

Minutes of the Meeting of LEARNING COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held at the Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video conference on Thursday, 28 September 2023

PRESENT; Councillor Endaf Edwards (Chair), Councillors Euros Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Amanda Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Chris James, Gareth Lloyd, Ann Bowen Morgan and Mark Strong

Also in attendance: Councillors Wyn Thomas (Cabinet Member) and Bryan Davies (Leader of the Council) together with Mrs Cathryn Charnell-White (Co-opted Member with voting rights)

Officers in attendance: Mr Barry Rees, Corporate Director, Mrs Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer:-Lifelong Learning and Chief Education Officer, Mr Clive Williams , Corporate Lead Officer: Schools and Deputy Chief Education Officer Mr Gwion Dafydd, Corporate Manager, Accountability and Progress, School Services, Mr Gareth Lanagan, School Support Advisor, Ms Mair Hughes, Headteacher, Penglais School, Mr Gareth Hughes, Post 14 Curriculum Co-ordinator, Mrs Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Mrs Dana Jones, Democratic and Standards Officer

(10:00am-12:45pm)

1 Apologies

Councillor Paul Hinge apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.

2 Personal Matters

Best wishes were extended to Mrs Mary Davies as she was currently absent from work due to illness.

Congratulations were extended to the scheme 'Bwyd & Hwyl over the summer period at Aberystwyth.

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

Councillors Endaf Edwards, Euros Davies, Marc Davies, Meirion Davies, Amanda Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Chris James, Ann Bowen Morgan and Mark Strong declared a personal interest in item 5 as they were all school governors.

4 GCSE and A Level Results 2023

The Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Councillor Wyn Thomas presented the report and stated that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, external examinations in their traditional form -were not held in school in the Summer of 2020 nor the Summer of 2021. For the Summer of 2022, Qualifications Wales decided that the National results would reflect a halfway point between the results of Summer 2019 and Summer 2021. To that end, the 2023 results were not comparable with previous years.

The provisional percentages for Ceredigion was reported (official data would be available in early October).

THE CURRENT SITUATION:

GCSE Results 2023

National Comparison – Summer 2023 exams (WJEC GCSE only)

	Ceredigion 2023	Wales 2023
Grade A* - A	24.8%	21.7%
Grade A* - C	68.6%	64.9%
Grade A* - G	97.2%	96.9%

A range of indicators are considered when evaluating results locally. These look at pupils' best grades at the end of Year 11:

Indicators	Definition	Ceredigion 2023
5A*-C(IM)	Percentage of pupils who have gained 5 GCSEs grades A*-C (or equivalent) including Language and Maths/Numeracy	55.0%
5A*-C	Percentage of pupils who have gained 5 GCSEs grades A*-C (or equivalent)	66.0%
5A*-G	Percentage of pupils who have gained 5 GCSEs grades A*-G (or equivalent)	92.2%
5A*-A	Percentage of pupils who have gained 5 GCSEs grades A*-A (or equivalent)	22.4%
Welsh	Percentage of pupils who have gained a GCSE grade A*-C in Welsh First Language	70.1%

English	Percentage of pupils who have gained a GCSE grade A*-C in English Language	62.3%
Mathematics	Percentage of pupils who have gained a GCSE grade A*-C in Mathematics	58.5%
Numeracy	Percentage of pupils who have gained a GCSE grade A*-C in Mathematics Numeracy	57.2%
Science	Percentage of pupils who have gained a GCSE grade A*-C in Science	62.8%

A Level Results 2023

National Comparisons – Summer Exams 2023 (WJEC A-levels only)

	Ceredigion 2023	Wales 2023
Grade A* - A	37.5%	34.0%
Grade A* - B	61.4%	n/a
Grade A* - C	82.5%	n/a
Grade A* - E	99.1%	97.5%

It was AGREED to note the report for information and to congratulate all pupils and staff on their achievements.

5 The Post-16 Education provision in schools

The Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Councillor Wyn Thomas presented the report and Mr Barry Rees, Corporate Director, Mrs Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer:-Lifelong Learning and Chief Education Officer, Mr Clive Williams, Corporate Lead Officer Schools and Deputy Chief Education Officer provided a power point presentation highlighting its content.

It was reported that at the Cabinet meeting held virtually on 11 January 2022, it was agreed that it would be timely to undertake a review of the post-16 provision in Ceredigion. The aim of the review was to provide an analysis and appraisal of the current post-16 provision in Ceredigion and identify sustainable options for the future, along with their potential advantages and disadvantages.

The aim of the review was to:

- create a set of agreed principles that were learner-centric
- offer a range of accessible and sustainable options whilst ensuring that the voices of the learners, governors, parents, headteachers and Local Authority officers were an integral part of the process

- ensure that full consideration had been given to the findings and recommendations of Estyn’s national reviews and the background to Welsh Government’s current policy, including the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- consider rurality and the implications for carbon footprints.

There was also a wider context to this review, namely:

- Welsh Government’s decision to establish the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) which would be responsible for the strategy, funding, and oversight of the further education sector, including colleges and the sixth forms in schools.
- Estyn’s Thematic Report regarding Post-16 Partnerships (January 2021).
- The opportunities available through the Mid Wales Growth Deal, the Economic Strategy, and the Regional Partnership Board with regards to the needs and skills of the workforce for the future and the central role of the Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) in the collection and analysis of information.
- The need to ensure a broad and quality vocational offer, along with a wider offering of A-Level subjects, which allows learners to pursue different combinations of subjects and to specialise in their interests, regardless of where they live in the county.
- Estyn Report – A review of the current 16-19 curriculum in Wales (October 2022)

It was agreed that a set of “agreed principles which were learner centric” should be created, to ensure that the voices of learners, governors, parents and headteachers are an integral part of the report.

Members were informed that 6 principles were created -

- 1) The needs of the learner should be prioritised over any organisational needs.
- 2) The generally high standards in Ceredigion schools should be maintained and improved.
- 3) There should be more fairness and equal opportunities for all learners across the county in terms of the offer, advice and guidance, pastoral care and wellbeing, travel requirements, learning pattern and access to support. This includes ensuring bespoke and specialist support for pupils with additional learning needs ensuring a continuum of education for them in the absence of a special school in the county.
- 4) The Welsh-medium offer should be improved to be at least consistent with the English medium offer to increase the number of Welsh speakers in Ceredigion and to contribute to a bilingual workforce and community.
- 5) Access to a wide range of quality academic and vocational courses should be ensured, increasing the number of vocational courses currently available for pupils in all parts of the county.
- 6) The governance of the post-16 provision should promote the above principles, consider the strategic quality improvement processes, ensure that expenditure was kept as much as possible within the post-16 budget and

allow decisions to be made that consider environmental sustainability and carbon footprint.

A key part of the review included gathering the views of a broad group of stakeholders. Surveys were sent to key groups, namely learners, parents / carers, teachers and employers, and a total of 1,306 responses were received from these individuals. In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives from educational providers, the local authority and other partners.

The responses were analysed and placed under six main themes -

- Wide choice
- Language
- Location
- Connections with the world of work
- Collaboration between schools or the establishment of centres of excellence
- Teachers and good, unbiased advice

The next step was to consider the current situation, i.e, the number of pupils, the financial situation, the range of subjects available to the learners etc, and to produce options to consider that look at the advantages and disadvantages in the context of the principles.

In short, the review asks for views regarding four possible options:

Option 1: Maintain the Current Situation

Option 2: Develop the Current Situation

Post-16 provision would continue on the 6 existing sites. The 6 current Governing Boards would continue with their current roles in terms of governance up to 16 but agree with the Local Authority to form a Strategic Board which would manage the Authority's post-16 budget, ensure suitable arrangements for joint planning of the curriculum and then commission the provision from the schools, e-sgol and other partners.

Option 3: Provision in some schools

This option would be a development of Option 2 above. It would mean closing the post-16 provision at one or more sites. Then, as in Option 2, those Governing Boards would continue with their current roles in terms of governance up until the age of 16 and agree with the Local Authority to form a Strategic Board that would manage the Authority's post-16 budget, ensure suitable arrangements for joint planning of the curriculum and then commissioning the provision from the schools, e-sgol and other partners. The Board would also be responsible for monitoring the quality of the provision and make recommendations to the Local Authority and the providers for improvement.

Option 4: One Centre

This option would offer a more far-reaching change. It would mean closing the current post-16 provision and establishing a Centre of Excellence, involving a range of partners, at one or more suitable geographical sites. A Governing Body independent of the schools would be responsible for the funding and the curriculum and would appoint a small number of core staff to steer and manage the work.

Following questions from the floor on the options presented, it was AGREED to recommend to Cabinet to undertake a Feasibility Study to consider Option 2 and Option 4 in the Review, however, Option 3 should also be considered if the information provided for Option 2 and 4 was not viable.

6 To confirm 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 previous meeting of the committee.

Matters Arising

Item 8- It was reported that the EnsureEquity for all pupils Workstream would be visiting Cwrtnwydd on the 20 October 2023. All other Members on the Committee were also invited to attend.

7 To consider the draft Forward Work Programme

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

- (i) Update report on the 14-16 qualifications be presented at the next meeting; and
- (ii) The six month update on Child Sufficiency Assessment would also be presented

8 Any Other Business

It was AGREED that a letter of concern be sent to the Welsh Government from the Chair of the Committee regarding the likely real-terms cut in the County Council budget for 2024/25 and its subsequent impact on the education service and specifically the County's schools.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 November 2023

Chairman: _____

Date: _____