

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 27.05.21

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

TITLE: Music Service: Using Virtual Provision in Future

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Update members on the work of the Music Service in 2020-21 and outline the Service's considerations for 2021-22

BACKGROUND:

Current situation

Since the first lockdown in March 2020 Ceredigion Music Service has 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.

Securing a virtual provision throughout the period March 2020 to March 2021 has 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 acknowledges 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

Acknowledging that the Service has adapted well and has explored new and innovative ways of delivering its provision the Music Service and the Corporate Manager for Culture will consider the following in moving forward:

- When safe and purposeful to do so recommencing face to face provision in schools will 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.

Conclusion

Virtual provision in terms of one to one tuition and performances can and will continue to be used in the future – particularly as the threat from further Coronavirus-19 outbreaks continues. Whilst virtual provision has been successful, it cannot however replace the impact and importance of face-to-face tuition. The Music Service will 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.

RECCOMENDATION (S):

The Committee accepts the report as an update on the work undertaken by the Music Service in 2020-21

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