

**Minutes of the Meeting of Learning Communities Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
held Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron /
remotely via video conference on 30 March 2023**

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

Also present :- Mr Jonny Greatrex (Co-opted Member)

Also in attendance: Councillors Wyn Thomas (Cabinet Member)

Officers in attendance: Mrs Meinir Ebbsworth, Corporate Lead Officer Schools, Mrs Elen James, Corporate Lead Officer – Lifelong Learning & Culture, Ms Gillian Evans, Corporate Manager, ALN Inclusion & Wellbeing, Ms Nia James, Corporate Manager, Learning Services, Ms Catrin Petche, Team Leader Education Inclusion Service, Mrs Laurie Hughes, Wellbeing Advisory Teacher, Learning Services, Miss Lowri Evans, Corporate Manager, Early Help Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Mrs Lisa Evans, Scrutiny and Standards Officer and Mrs Dana Jones, Democratic and Standards Officer

(10.00-12:50pm)

1. Apologies & Personal Matters

None.

The Chairman stated that this was the last meeting for Mrs Meinir Ebbsworth as she was leaving her post as the Corporate Lead Officer Schools. All Members and the Cabinet Member thanked her for her work and commitment in improving education in the County since her appointed six years ago especially during the pandemic, and wished her well for the future. In response, she also thanked Councillors, Staff and teachers for their work, commitment and support as the Corporate Lead Officer Schools.

2. Disclosures of personal interest/prejudicial interest

None.

3. Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 - Action Plan

Consideration was given to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 - Action Plan. In accordance with section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 every Local Authority in Wales was expected to submit a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) to the Welsh Government. The plan drawn up complies with the Welsh Government Welsh in Education Strategic Plans regulations 2019; the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was adopted by Ceredigion Council Cabinet on 22nd February 2022. The plan was approved by the Welsh

Government on 20 July 2022.

It was strategically planned for the following areas to develop and strengthen

the Welsh language:

Outcome 1: More nursery children/three year olds educated through the medium of Welsh

Outcome 2: More reception class children/five year olds educated 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: An increase in the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh

Following its approval under section 85(7) of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 local authorities must take all reasonable steps to implement their WESP and prepare an action plan which would be monitored annually in the form of a review report. The Action Plan sets out the Local Authority's position in 2022 in these areas and explains the aim in 5 years and how this is achieved. Additionally, the aims for the end of the Plan's life in a decade were set out. The Action Plan presented specifies a 5-year overview of the procedures, and there was a more detailed operational plan for the first two years noting the responsibilities of specific staff to fulfil the necessary actions.

The draft action plan was submitted to the Government on 23 December 2022. Confirmation was received on 28 February 2023 stating that the actions and timetable are clear and appropriate. The comments received have been incorporated into the action plan presented. The Welsh Government considers the action plan to be a live, flexible document that would need to be amended along the way according to local needs and developments. The action plan would be monitored every term by the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Forum and sub-committees as necessary.

One of the steps set out in the Action Plan was to start the consultation process for changing the language medium in the Foundation Phase of five schools in the county. In order to ensure consistency in the admission

age of the five schools it was agreed in the WESP that three schools would change their admission age to 3 years instead of 4 years. In accordance with the 2018 School Organisation Code, consent was required by the Council's Cabinet to start the consultation process and a paper would go before Cabinet on 2.5.23. If consent was given by Cabinet at that meeting, it was aimed to follow the following timetable in terms of the statutory process of carrying out a consultation.

30 March 2023	Scrutiny Committee
2 May 2023	Cabinet
15 September – 30 October 2023	<p>Publishing Consultation Documents</p> <p>School Organisation Code 3.4 <i>The consultation document must be published on a school day of the school or schools subject to the proposal and consultees must be given at least 42 days to respond to the document, with at least 20 of these being school days.</i></p>
9 January 2024	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>School Organisation Code 3.6 <i>The proposer must publish a consultation report on their website or that of the</i></p>
	<p><i>relevant local authority. The report must be published at least two weeks prior to the publication of a statutory notice</i></p>
22 January – 19 February 2024	<p>School Organisation Code 4.1 <i>Publishing a statutory notice The statutory notice must be published on a school day but not on a school day which includes a session which is devoted (wholly or mainly) to improving teaching standards or management practices of staff at the school (INSET days). The objection period must include 15 school days (in addition to the day on which it is published). It must be published for 28 days</i></p>
4 June 2024	

	<i>relevant local authority. The report must be published at least two weeks prior to the publication of a statutory notice</i>
22 January – 19 February 2024	School Organisation Code 4.1 <i>Publishing a statutory notice</i> <i>The statutory notice must be published on a school day but not on a school day which includes a session which is devoted (wholly or mainly) to improving teaching standards or management practices of staff at the school (INSET days). The objection period must include 15 school days (in addition to the day on which it is published). It must be published for 28 days</i>
4 June 2024	Cabinet Decision to proceed or not

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to recommend to Cabinet:-

- (i) to adopt the Action Plan for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032, to be implemented from the beginning of the Summer term 2023 and to review it annually;
- (ii) that the Action Plan would be monitored through the WESP Language Forum meetings and the Bilingual Futures Committee;
- (iii) that an annual report on progress against the Action Plan for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was presented to the Language Forum, the Bilingual Futures Committee, the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to the Cabinet; and
- (iv) in accordance with the School Organisation Code, that the Local Authority starts the process of changing the language medium in the Foundation Phase at Comins Coch, Llwyn yr Eos, St Padarn's, Plascrug and Cei Newydd schools. Additionally, a consultation regarding changing the admission age at three schools namely Comins Coch, St Padarn's and Cei Newydd would coincide with this. These consultation periods would commence on 15th September 2023.

4. Sustainable infrastructure principles for education

In November 2018, the Welsh Government updated its statutory code in terms of school organisation and introduced a presumption against closure clause for rural schools. The definition of a rural school has been determined by the Welsh Government using the rural and urban categories of the Office for National Statistics, and as a result, 28 schools in Ceredigion have been defined as rural schools.

Following the Cabinet's decision on 15 September 2021, the School Review Policy was abolished and the handbook was adopted to match the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code. A workshop was held to present the handbook. With the Education Development Document up to 2020 having come to an end, it is timely to present a document that outlines the principles of the service for the future.

Currently, the statutory code requires Local Authorities to follow a series of more detailed procedures and requirements when drawing up a proposal to close a village school, when consulting on that proposal, and when deciding whether the proposal to close a rural school should be implemented.

Before deciding whether to proceed with a consultation, a proposal paper must be prepared and submitted to the Learning Communities Work Stream. Following the meeting of the Scrutiny Work Stream, the proposal paper is submitted to the Cabinet to consider whether to:

- a) Approve the proposal and proceed to conduct a statutory consultation
- b) Reject the proposal
- c) Offer an alternative option

The proposal paper would then be presented to the Learning Communities Scrutiny Committee before holding a Statutory Consultation.

Any decision will be based on the Principles in Appendix A together with the requirements of the School Organisation Code

(<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-10/school-organisation-code-second-edition.pdf>)

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to

- (i) recommend that the Cabinet approve the Sustainable Infrastructure Principles Document for education; and
- (ii) confirm the membership of the cross-party work stream which would discuss any proposal papers brought forward in accordance with the School Organisation Handbook

5. Update in relation to Elective Home Education

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Ms Catrin Petcher, Team Leader Education Inclusion Service who provided Members with a power point presentation on Elective Home Education. The following information was outlined:-

Legal Background

Number of pupils who were Elective Home Educated

Illustration of Ceredigion

Home visits completed in the last 12 months

Number of pupils who have become home educated
Number of children who had returned to school
Duties
School Attendance Orders
Safeguarding
Working with Parents

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to note:-
(i) the current numbers of home educated children in Ceredigion; and
(ii) how Schools Services were reviewing the provision of home educated children

6. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mrs Laurie Hughes, Wellbeing Advisory Teacher to provide information on the recent changes to Sex Education and the introduction of RSE in Curriculum for Wales(CfW). This was to ensure that as a Local Authority (LA) they had suitable RSE policy that could be adopted and adapted by schools to support them in embedding the new curriculum and provide support, information, consistency and clarity. She presented the following information in her power point presentation:-

- Background
- What is RESE?
- Policy Content
- Current Situation
- Support to Schools

It was AGREED:-

(i)to adopt the contents of the Ceredigion RSE policy; and
(ii) that any comments proposed by the Welsh Government were included as amendments to the RSE

7. Ceredigion Youth Council Meeting Minutes (03.02.23)

It was AGREED to note the minutes as presented.

8. Update from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Workstreams

It was AGREED to note the work of the workstreams as presented.

9.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.

10.To consider the draft Forward Work Programme

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

- (i) that the report on the post 16 education in the County and the Mid Wales Business plan and memorandum of understanding would be presented at the June meeting; and
- (ii) that Estyn reports on recent inspections would be presented at the July meeting

The Cabinet Member wished to note that Year 2 and 3 would now be receiving free school meals following Easter. He also wished to congratulate all involved in the recent School concert held at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre.