

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 14 March 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors D Wilcox (Chair), P Cockeram, G Giles, D Harvey, R Jeavons, D Mayer, J Mudd, R Truman and M Whitcutt.

In Attendance: W Godfrey (Chief Executive), B Owen (Strategic Director – Place), J Harris (Strategic Director – People), G Price (Head of Law and Regulation), S Morgan (Chief Education Officer), E Mulligan (Democracy and Communication Manager).

E Pryce and H Davies-Edwards (Education Achievement Service).

1 Local Full Fibre Networks

The Leader started the meeting by welcoming the decision taken by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to approve the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal bid for £6million of funding from the Local Full Fibre Wave 2 Challenge Fund, to realise the digital connectivity ambitions of both the public and business sectors within the region.

The programme would make a major contribution to the digital aspirations of the city and the wider region, and delivery of Newport's Digital Strategy for 2015-2020. It was anticipated that the programme would not only help the city realise its digital ambitions, but also provide a catalyst to stimulate commercial investment, supporting both citizens and businesses within the area. It was hoped that the offer of an integrated, singular and long term approach for the region would future-proof public and business connectivity needs, giving confidence for the public sector, investors and creating growth.

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Resources both thanked the council officers who led the successful bid on behalf of the Cardiff Capital Regions City Deal.

2 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared:

- Councillor Jeavons and Councillor Harvey as NCC nominee and reserve nominee on the EAS Company Board
- Councillor Mayer as the NCC nominee on the EAS Scrutiny Panel and the EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2018 were confirmed as a true record.

4 Education Achievement Service Business Plan

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills presented the report containing the Education Achievement Service Business Plan for 2018-2021, prepared in consultation with the 5 local authorities within the consortia. The plan outlined the programme of work that was required to continue to accelerate outcomes for children and young people across all schools in the region. The plan focused on the urgent need to raise aspiration and accelerate improvement in pupil outcomes, improve the quality of teaching and leadership and build a self-improving system within and across schools and settings.

The 2018 plan was built on the previous EAS Business Plan and a robust self-evaluation system which was used to set out priorities for action. Although this was a regional plan, it included a bespoke element to address Newport's needs and individual schools within our City.

The focus for improvement for 2018-2019 would continue to secure improvements in the following areas:

- To continue to raise aspiration, improve pupil outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups of learners (FSM, Gender, EAL, MA and LAC) and reduce the variance within and across schools, settings and LAs.
- To accelerate improvement in schools and settings where progress is too slow by ensuring a more consistent approach is applied to schools causing concern and the use of Local Authority statutory powers to accelerate progress in identified schools.
- To continue to improve the quality of leadership, teaching and learning, particularly within the secondary phase.
- Supporting schools to ensure the effective development of pupil skills at all phases.
- Supporting the national approach and further development of the regional professional learning opportunities to ensure the success, equity and well-being of every learner.
- Preparing schools to meet the curriculum and assessment demands in line with new accountability arrangements.
- Supporting the development of a 'world-class curriculum' that will help raise standards for all in Wales.
- To embed the regional approach to developing a self-improving system.

The Cabinet Member reported that she was confident that there were appropriate monitoring systems in place to ensure the EAS Business Plan remained on track. The Cabinet Member would receive reports around progress towards the success criteria set out in the Business Plan at various points in the year. These would be received through JEG and Cabinet Member briefings. Elected Members from the Company Board would also receive this information. Additional reporting around EAS Value for Money reporting would be reported to the relevant scrutiny committee in June 2018.

The Leader was pleased to note the comments from the scrutiny committee from its consideration of the plan on 12 March 2018, which stated that it had no specific concerns to raise about the content of the planned activity and targets, and was satisfied that the appropriate processes were in place to monitor progress.

In commenting upon the report, Cabinet Members noted the importance of education provision and the national need for more funding in this area. Members were pleased to note the good outcomes for looked after children in the plan.

Decision:

To receive the report for information and submit the comments above on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process.

To note the main strengths and areas for development within Newport, as detailed in the local authority annex; and how local authority services are aligned to meet the ambitious targets within the Business Plan, therefore ensuring all pupils meet their full potential.

5 National Categorisation of Schools

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills presented the report, setting out the process of how schools were categorised in Wales, and the outcomes of categorisation for Newport schools.

The Cabinet Member noted the change to the categorisation system this year, removing the data-driven judgement that places schools into a 'standards group', previous known as 'Step 1'. From now on, discussion around the school's self-evaluation would be the central feature of the model going forward. A school's capacity to improve in relation to leadership, teaching and learning would be captured in Step 2 and 3 of the categorisation process.

Focussing upon Newport Schools, the Cabinet Member reported that Newport had a strong track record of success in the number of green schools within the local authority. In 2016-17 Newport had the highest percentage of green primary schools in Wales (52%). In 2017-18 this figure had improved to 57% which is 12% above the regional average. The percentage of green and yellow primary schools (combined) within the City was 93%. This was 5% higher than the regional average of 88%.

It was reported that Newport was the only local authority in the region to have two green secondary schools (St Joseph's RC Comprehensive and Bassaleg Comprehensive School). The percentage of green and yellow secondary schools within Newport was 55%. This compared to the regional average of 41%.

The Cabinet Member noted that there were currently 5 red schools within the City. These schools required the highest level of support which should enable them to progress at satisfactory rate. A detailed support plan was in place for each of these schools. The progress of each red school was monitored regularly by the EAS, Chief Education Officer and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

At the time of the National Categorisation results being published, there were five amber schools in Newport. This had since reduced to four with the rapid improvements realised in Maes Ebbw Special School (which was now categorised as yellow).

In discussing the report, Cabinet Members were pleased to note the positive results for Newport. Members commented upon the impact of negative media coverage around red and amber categorisations for schools, in particular the impact on the school community.

The Principal Challenge Adviser clarified that the colour assigned related to the number of days of support allocated to that school, and indicated a school needing support in a more formal and structured way. It was noted that in allocating judgements, the EAS and local authority officers were keenly aware of the impact red and amber judgements could have on a school community in terms of potential negative perceptions. The Chief Education Officer also highlighted that schools could be re-categorised during the year, and with the appropriate support, categorisations would often change and improve quickly.

Decision:

To note the report.

6 **Wales Audit Office Action Plan Update**

The Leader presented the latest quarterly update on progress made against the WAO recommendations from their corporate assessment review. The Leader reported that progress continued to be good, with another action concluded in this quarter; this left just 4 actions outstanding from the 35 originally identified. More actions were expected to be closed in the next quarter.

Because the majority of the actions have now been completed, the report proposed that the remaining actions could now be monitored through the normal channels of service area plans and scrutiny, rather than a separate report to full Cabinet.

Cabinet Members would of course continue to be involved in progressing these actions individually by working closely with their Heads of Service, and accounting for performance at scrutiny.

The Leader also noted that, as these actions were closed in this action plan, progress would still be monitored within the appropriate service area to support continued improvement.

The Leader noted issues raised regarding attendance by Cabinet Members at Scrutiny, which would be discussed further with colleagues outside the meeting.

In discussing the report, Cabinet Members noted the continued good progress despite the ongoing and significant funding challenges.

The Leader also noted the excellent work from Streetscene staff and other colleagues during the recent adverse weather. The Cabinet offered their thanks to all involved in managing the continued provision of service in such difficult conditions.

Decision:

To note the progress made towards meeting the recommendations and proposals for improvement.

To recommend that the outstanding actions be monitored in scrutiny.

7 **Work Programme**

The Leader presented the Cabinet Work Programme.

Decision:

To agree the proposed programme.