

Minutes



Performance Scrutiny Committee - Partnerships

Date: 4 October 2017

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors M Rahman (Chair), J Clarke, D Davies, R Hayat, T Suller and K Whitehead

In Attendance: Sarah Morgan (Deputy Chief Education Officer), Rhys Cornwall (Head of People and Business Change), Mark Bleazard (Information Development Manager), Jo Evans (Digital Information Project Officer) and Anne Jenkins (Democratic Services Support Officer)

Hayley Davies-Edwards, Principal Challenge Advisor, Educational Achievement Service (EAS);
Matt Lewis, Chief Officer, Shared Resource Service (SRS).

Apologies: Councillors S Marshall

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 July 2017**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July were considered.

Members had raised concern about the growing popularity of the smoking of shisha as referred to in the minutes of the previous meeting and considered it an important topic for the Committee to follow up.

The Chair advised that the Health and Wellbeing Lead from Public Health Wales would be attending the meeting on 10 January 2018 as agreed in the Work Programme and could be asked to provide an update at that meeting or at the November meeting, if possible.

Agreed:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2017 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 **Briefing - Educational Achievement Service (EAS)**

The Committee welcomed Hayley Davies-Edwards, Principal Challenge Advisor (EAS) and Sarah Morgan, Deputy Chief Education Officer (Newport City Council).

The Consortium was now 12 years old and included Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Newport.

The presentation included:

- What is the consortium?
- What does the consortium do?
- How the consortium operates and is funded?
- How is the consortium governed and held to account?
- What was the impact date? (upward trend but not fast enough)
- Priorities for development
- Who are the key people in the EAS?
- Our core values

A business plan was developed once a year and the Cabinet was part of the consultation. Regional youth forums were held to liaise with children and other stakeholders to make a contribution on how the schools were run.

Newport were above the Welsh Average in their A*-C grades for 2016.

All schools were categorised using the colour code: green, yellow, amber and red across Wales. The level of resources that went into schools was determined by their scores. This however did not mean that a green school could not buy in additional support to maintain their status.

It was noted that Newport had the best inspection in Wales. There were four consortia in Wales and the regional average drop was 3.6%.

There was a progress in leadership, 18 months ago Estyn made recommendations regarding richer data, evaluation of Newport Schools and a risk register. The report would be issued in the next month. EAS felt there were always ways to improve standards. Committee members were welcome to visit and observe the way that the EAS worked to serve the schools within Newport.

The following was discussed:

The Committee asked how did the EAS ensure best value for money? The Deputy Chief Education Officer advised that the annual paper traced back the number of hours and money invested per school and the quality of service, including pupil standards. Key Stage 3 comparisons were still under the Welsh Average and discussion would take place on how to improve this. Over the past four years there was an 8.2% improvement. The Local Authority did not have the luxury to benchmark, there were however individual schools in a position to benchmark specific areas such as science.

The Committee referred to lack of green schools at secondary level and what could be done to drive those standards? Green schools were maintained by sharing best practice and whilst less funding was available, the quality of Key Stage 3 Curriculum was improving. Parental support was also key to revitalising schools and driving standards forward.

The Committee noted that within the summary of the findings from the Progress in Leadership, Newport received an overall grade of 'Good'. Clarification on the grading system was provided. It was noted that the scores ranked from unsatisfactory, adequate, good, to excellent.

Lengthy discussion ensued regarding how to identify risks more effectively, for example, it was difficult to find Welsh speaking Challenge Advisors in Wales. This was a real risk in the Anglicised part of Wales, as well as failing to employ a Head Teacher for vulnerable schools. Holding on to Challenge Advisors was therefore difficult as they were often head-hunted.

Figures on pupil attainment would be provided and presented to Performance Scrutiny Committee: People in January 2018.

The Chair thanked the Principal Challenge Advisor and Deputy Chief Education Officer for the presentation. There was a business plan on the EAS website. Each school had a plan bespoke to their needs. A link to the EAS Value for Money Report 2016-17 would also be circulated to Members for their information.

Resolutions and Actions:

The Committee accepted the Educational Achievement Service Briefing.

4 Briefing - Shared Resource Services (SRS)

The Committee welcomed the following officers invited to attend for this item:

- Rhys Cornwall, Head of People & Business Change;
- Mark Bleazard, Information Development Manager;
- Jo Evans, Digital Information Project Officer;
- Matt Lewis, Chief Officer, Shared Resource Service (SRS).

The Committee had requested a briefing on the Shared Resource Service (SRS) to enable Members to have an understanding of the partnerships prior to any Scrutiny being undertaken.

The SRS discussed their Digital Strategy for Newport 2015 to 2020, which was to reduce / consolidate IT Systems within the Council, save costs, simplify support and improve their information sharing capability.

There were currently 223 staff working for SRS, with a possibility of Caerphilly Borough Council and Coleg Gwent joining the workforce taking the figure up to 340 staff. In addition, they were looking to explore further collaboration opportunities with other public sector bodies to ensure resilience and further develop business continuity across the council. This would open up a host of opportunities including services such as shared access to Outlook calendars between organisations.

There were development opportunities for staff within the SRS including an Apprenticeship Scheme recently put in place. Staff were encouraged to progress to a higher level and more positively there was a low turnover of staff. Although some IT staff had been dubious at the beginning, the overall outcome had been very positive, with more job security and job satisfaction.

In the past year the SRS were able to provide access to public WIFI for 2 Million people, with access on public transport being by far the most popular service that they offered. Figures showed that in the first three weeks, 5,000 accessed WIFI on the buses.

Discussion ensued regarding the investment objectives, totalling eleven and their progress to date.

A performance session would be held at the end of the month where the partner authorities within the SRS would meet and discuss their requirements on a collaborative basis and how to improve on service provision.

There would be a move to a service point helpdesk system which was the first of its kind. The SRS were looking at tenders and hoped to go live on 1 April 2018.

A Gwent-wide full fibre network for public sector buildings was also being considered by Welsh Government and the SRS was in a position to express an interest to Welsh Government and received a positive response. If the SRS were successful they were looking to provide 1G of full fibre into 10G in a series of public buildings, including schools.

The SRS were also able to make cost savings when purchasing software/equipment collaboratively. As part of this, a virus ransomware protection would allow shared access to Outlook calendars between organisations.

The Committee was invited to ask questions:

The Committee asked were there any job losses as a result of the transfer of services? Only one post was deleted, which was already vacant.

The Committee referred to the investment objectives and savings made by Newport City Council which was a priority. Whilst the Council had to make a decision on whether to invest or save, 10% savings in budget just happened to be a part of the decision for IT to go to the SRS. The capital cost of IT was reduced and in addition the transfer of IT Staff increased their salary and our savings.

The Committee queried whether devices and services for Councillors would improve? The SRS was an organisation that worked with their customers to address problems and how best to solve them. This included Councillors reporting faults via the web and using the easiest technology such as intuitive software.

Digital Champions were also a new initiative with the council and were trained to provide help and advice to Staff and Councillors.

Resolutions and Actions:

The Committee accepted the Shared Resource Service Briefing.

5 Forward Work Programme Update

The Chair advised the Committee that the Senior Overview & Scrutiny Officer was unable to attend the meeting.

It was proposed that where possible a maximum of two items per Agenda would be the best way forward to allow an appropriate level of attention on each of the matters discussed. The Committee Members agreed with this proposal.

A Shared Resource Service Update report was scheduled for the next meeting on 8 November in the Work Programme, but it was considered that there would not be any progress to report in that short time, so it was proposed that the SRS update be rescheduled in the Work Programme for April 2018. The Committee were invited to consider holding their April meeting at the Board Room in Blaenavon.

With reference to the SIP – Quarter 2 Performance Update, the Committee also requested that the Health and Wellbeing Theme Lead, of Public Health Wales provide an update in January 2018 on the smoking of Shisha and how it could be regulated.

It was requested by the Committee that the Minutes for the Public Services Board Meeting held on 12 September 2017 be distributed for information.

The Committee also requested that Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales be invited to the Meeting in November to provide an update on progress within Newport on the Act and how we were meeting the requirements of the Act.

Resolutions and Actions:

The Committee agreed:

1. To reschedule the Shared Resource Service Update from 8 November 2017 to 25 April 2018 and to consider the invitation to hold that meeting on site at the SRS Boardroom in Blaenavon.
2. To invite Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to the meeting on 8 November 2017 to provide an update on progress within Newport on the Act and how we are meeting the requirements of the Act.
3. To request the Health and Wellbeing Theme Lead to provide an update on the use of Shisha within Newport and how it could be regulated, to the meeting on 10 January 2018.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm.