

Draft Minutes

Performance Scrutiny Committee- People

Date: 29 November 2022

Time: 10am

Venue: Hybrid Meeting- Committee Room 1

Present: Councillors W. Routley (Chair), M Al-Nuaimi, T. Watkins, C. Townsend, M. Pimm, D. Jenkins, A. Screen, B. Davies, J. Cleverly and P. Drewett.

Sarah Morgan (Head of Education), Councillor Deborah Davies-Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years, Caroline Ryan-Phillips (Head of Prevention and Inclusion), Councillor Deborah Harvey Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing.

Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Advisor), Pamela Tasker (Governance Support Officer), Anne Jenkins (Governance Team Leader), Leanne Rowlands (Democratic and Electoral Manager)

1. Apologies

Councillor Paul Bright

2. Declaration of Interests

None

3. Minutes of the previous meeting: held 26 July 2022.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 26 July 2022 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

A committee member commented on the previous minutes of the last meeting and stated that they were recorded under the title of 'committee' rather than 'committee member' and asked what the agreed format was.

- The Chair confirmed that individual members were not identified and there was no issue with this.
- The Scrutiny Officer highlighted that the format only specified that members not be named, which the minutes did not do.
- The committee member stated that they did not understand this format as Cabinet Members and Officers were named so why were Members not named.

- The Scrutiny Officer informed committee that Officers and Cabinet Members were referred to in minutes by their titles and confirmed that this format was not a sudden change for Scrutiny Committees and had been in place for some time.
- The Committee was informed that a challenge could be made with the Head of Law and Standards on this matter rather than discussing it in the Committee.

4. Service Area Plans 22-24

Education Services

Invitees:

Sarah Morgan - Head of Education

Cllr Deborah Davies - Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years

The Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years introduced the report.

Questions:

The Committee asked for an update on Millbrook Primary School.

- The Head of Education confirmed that they would contact the committee member outside of the meeting on this issue as it was not part of the Service Plan being discussed today.

The Committee commented on Reference 1 on page 31 where it stated the action outcome was for the LA having a cohesive inclusion vision developed with key stakeholders with the anticipated completion date of 2024 and asked for expansion on this point.

- The Head of Education stated that working collaboratively with Head Teachers and practitioners increased success for schools. It was important that they understood the operational procedures of school life. An example of this was a Head Teacher strategy group for ICT which looked at critical issues. It was hoped this could be replicated around inclusion.
- There were key successes that needed to be shared such as ensuring staff were trained on trauma informed schools to support children. The Thrive programme ensured children were appropriately nurtured which worked well.
- What worked well in nurtured children and universal provision was acknowledged and how this could be brought forward. It was noted that when children returned to school after the pandemic, they experienced difficulties settling into school for a range of reasons and this was paired with complex challenges happening in people's lives.
- The Head of Education explained that the background work and the key objectives were in draft which would be presented to the Cabinet Member for comment.

- After Christmas, a group was to be established for Head teachers to participate. Some good examples of schools that had no formal learning bases have their own nurture areas with small group activities, so pupils thrived.

The Committee asked how we were recruiting teachers.

- The Head of Education confirmed that there was a significant issue in sourcing Teaching assistants as it was a competitive market where salaries were competitive. There was a specific shortage in recruiting teachers in key subject areas such as English Medium teachers who were fluent in Welsh and Science and Maths teachers. Welsh medium was also a significant challenge.

The Committee asked about the outstanding repairs for several schools and as some pupils were being transported to other locations did this affect the quality of education for those pupils.

- The Head of Education stated that there were contingency plans written into the business continuity plan as a whole so in the event that pupils needed to go to Plan B then this was secure. When pupils needed to move buildings, those alternative buildings were of an excellent standard. However, this caused complexities as professional learning needed to be looked at and how schools were operated. Collaborative working was key to try to overcome challenges.

The Committee asked were many teachers leaving the profession.

- The Head of Education confirmed that this was happening in all types of professions due to the pandemic in all parts of the UK. This did not affect Newport too much, but teachers have been hard to find in specialist subjects.

The Committee asked were we having discussions with Welsh Government regarding the shortage of specialist teachers and how to resolve this.

- The Head of Education stated that there were bursaries in place to support and encourage specialist teachers, but this took time. This was linked to Universities being commissioned to be able to take on these teachers which had a high threshold. The Minister for Education and Welsh Language has launched a strategy to consider the shortage in the Welsh medium education workforce.

Prevention and Inclusion Service

Invitees:

Caroline Ryan-Phillips - Head of Prevention and Inclusion

Councillor Deborah Harvey - Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing introduced the report.

Questions:

The Committee asked whether there would be more youth clubs and where they would be situated and was there a plan to recruit more Youth Workers.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion confirmed that there was a plan to grow the Youth Service and there was work being done on a recruitment drive to get people into the profession. There was a lot of people doing the degree in Youth and Community Work and those people were being taken on as students.

The committee stated that it was laudable for Welsh Government to remove means testing but looking at the financial situation, were we able to get risks out of the red.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion confirmed that there were no red risks recorded, only amber and that most financial contributions came from Welsh Government and there was very little expectation that the funding would be removed but if it were, this would be a nationwide issue. There was a high expectation that the funding would continue.

The Committee asked whether this was too optimistic due to the expected cuts although nothing was finalised.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion confirmed they were aware of the challenges, but the details of the budget could not be discussed at present, but it could be discussed with the Committee Member as part of a wider discussion outside of the meeting.
- The Cabinet Member confirmed that the service was not in the red category.

The Committee asked about congregations in certain areas and was there any strategy for engagement with those groups.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion confirmed that there were lots of activities in place to engage communities and that Newport ran a lot of programmes such as 'Levelling the Playing Field' targeted at non-White Welsh communities from the black and ethnic minority to engage them in sport and football activities.
- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion highlighted that the issue was engagement, and it was important to widen the youth provision and if there was antisocial behaviour then workers will try to engage which was difficult.

The Committee asked was there any facilities for communities to socialise in.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion stated that provision was vital, but engagement was key to build trust in relationships so they will engage with the service.

The Committee commented that it was good to speak to groups to find out their interests.

- The Head of Prevention and Inclusion confirmed that in Maindee which was a diverse area there were groups being run where anyone could come in and it was lovely to see lots of events happening.

The Committee concluded that the report provided a good insight into the provision and wished the service all the best for the future.

5. Conclusions of Committee Reports

Education Services:

The committee welcomed the report but there were no specific comments and recommendations noted.

Prevention and Inclusion Services:

The Committee welcomed the report.

The Committee asked for a follow up on plans and projects in 2023, how community projects were coordinated with specific groups and how this work was promoted in the wider community.

The Committee asked whether there would be any new Community Centres planned.

The Committee asked for an update on the Youth Academy, what qualifications they gained and how long they were present on the academy for.

The Committee questioned the red risks mentioned previously as the Cabinet Member had stated that there were no red risks, but they did appear red to the Committee member.

- The Scrutiny Officer stated that there were two different shades of amber but not red but would get clarification on this.

6. Scrutiny Adviser Reports

The Scrutiny Advisor presented the Action Sheet and the Forward Work Programme.

The Scrutiny Advisor stated that there were some actions on the Action plan on page 59 that were still outstanding. These have been chased with the Strategic Director and the Scrutiny Advisor confirmed that they would update the committee on a time scale for these actions.

7. Date of the Next Meeting

6th December 2022 at 10am