

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 10 April 2024

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors J Mudd (Chair), D Davies, D Batrouni, J Clarke, Y Forsey, D Harvey, J Hughes, L Lacey and S Marshall

1 Apologies for Absence

B Owen (Chief Executive).

2 Declarations of Interest

None received.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes from 6 March 2024 were accepted as a true record.

4 Capped Nine - Key Stage 4 (KS4) School Outcomes

The Leader presented the Capped Nine Key Stage 4 School Outcomes report which provided members with final outcome data for secondary schools within Newport for 2022-2023 (Summer 2023).

This was the first time that the Welsh Government have produced Key Stage 4 All Wales Core Data Sets (AWCDS) at individual school level since 2019. Each of the last 4 years used different methods for determining grades, therefore none were directly comparable.

Whilst this final set of data became available in late December, both Local Authority (LA) and Education Achievement Service (EAS) colleagues used provisional data from the start of Autumn Term 2023, to prioritise support at individual school level.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Davies welcomed the publication of the Key AWCDS. The publication was important as it appropriately identified to the LA and the EAS where support might be necessary. The important questions, however, were those that schools needed to ask themselves as to whether these outcomes were expected – did pupils achieve the outcomes they worked for and were they reducing the gap between those receiving free school meals (FSM) and those who were not. Forensic analysis, which considered individual performance and how each student was best supported to achieve these outcomes, was an integral component in effectively utilising this data. Each school was unique in relation to the number of children on FSM, those on individual development plans and the number of children that lived in deprivation, hence the comparative information for schools in regard to their family was important as it provided context. It was important to understand how others were reducing the gap in performance and

whether their students were achieving anticipated outcomes. It provided a benchmark on measures that schools could use to better understand their outcomes. Therefore, comparing performance from schools in Newport only, should be approached with caution, each school had its own context and challenges. The LA and EAS understood this and more importantly, they had confidence that schools understood their own data and were analytically using this to improve student outcomes.

Decision:

Cabinet considered and noted the contents of the report.

5 **Strategic Equalities Plan**

The Leader presented the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 -2028.

Under the Equality Act (2010), local authorities in Wales were required to develop and publish Strategic Equality Plans (SEPs) that set out the objectives they wanted to achieve over a four-year period.

This plan set out the Council's strategic vision, priorities for the next four years and contained Equality Objectives that supported us to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Council's Equality Objectives were developed in partnership with key internal and external stakeholders and were subject to extensive community engagement. The involvement of grassroots communities ensured that whilst our Plan delivers a strategic vision for equality in Newport, it also ensured tangible outcomes for communities.

The Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028 was reviewed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 8 March and their comments were included in the report considered by Cabinet.

The last four years presented significant challenges to staff and communities across Newport, including unprecedented difficulties caused by the global pandemic, international conflict, and the cost-of-living crisis. These events also disproportionately impacted specific groups and further highlighted the inequalities that existed within communities.

As a Council, we must learn from the emerging challenges and continue to strive to deliver equitable public services for all residents.

The Strategic Equality Plan presents an opportunity to build on the Council's achievements as an employer and service provider, look to the future, and identify priorities to advance equality for everyone who lives or works in Newport.

The Equality Objectives within this Strategic Equality Plan build on the work delivered in previous plans and identified clear outcomes and actions taken to deliver equitable public services.

Our Equality Objectives strike a good balance between internally focused objectives based on self-reflection, such as the commitment to improving representation at all levels of the organisation and externally focused objectives aimed at improving equality in key areas of society, improving community cohesion across the city.

The Leader referred to the recent unanimous council motion to adopt care experienced as a protected characteristic and was proud to say this was embedded within the delivery of the plan.

The strategy represented a positive step forward for Newport City Council and supports the vision of a more equal Newport, where everyone is treated fairly, and the needs of residents from all backgrounds are considered.

The Leader thanked Councillor Batrouni, the Cabinet Member for Organisational Transformation, for his contributions to the development of this plan and the Council's Strategic Equality Group.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Batrouni thanked the Leader and added that it would not have been possible without the Leader steering the Council during the tough global events faced by residents. Councillor Batrouni also thanked everyone who had been involved in the plan, including staff, community partners and residents. The outcome of the plan over the four years had shown inequality in society but is also showed what more could be done to improve the lives of those who faced injustice. The Council had listened carefully, and improved the plan. Stronger focus had been placed on digital inclusion within customer services and strengthening services to prevent residents from falling into poverty. Councillor Batrouni also thanked his Cabinet colleague, Councillor D Davies for the great work being done in schools around poverty and embedding a social model to deliver support for those experiencing barriers for their disability. Councillor Batrouni was confident that the plan over the next four years would build on the work developed in previous plans and looked forward to a more equal and just society in Newport.
- Councillor Lacey gave examples of work that the Strategic Equalities Group had undertaken. Councillor Lacey sat on the Committee as LGBTQ+ Champion and recently, Newport City Council had signed up to become a Fast Track city on 20 November 2023 and was the second city in Wales to do so. This was a global initiative, with the aim of ending HIV transmission and AIDS-related deaths by 2030. Councillor Lacey wanted to say a special thank you to Janice Dent, Policy and Partnership Manager, Donald Mutale, Senior Equalities Officer and Joseph Chambers, Welsh Language Officer, who all sat on the Strategic Equalities Group, for the work that they did on Fast Track, which went above and beyond what was required within their job roles.
- Councillor Marshall referred to the Notice of Motion to Council earlier this year regarding adopting care experienced as a protected characteristics and the work behind it. Members of all political persuasions supported the motion. Councillor Marshall was pleased to see this work come to fruition to improve the lives of those young people and ensure that they had a voice.
- The Leader echoed thanks and contributions of her Cabinet Member colleagues and added that it would be remiss not to acknowledge the contribution that Councillor Hourahine had made to the care experience policy development.

Decision:

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that the attached Strategic Equality Plan be adopted by the Council.

6 NCC External Pressures - Cost of Living

The final report provided an update on the challenges facing our residents and our Council, including the cost-of-living crisis and pressures on housing and homelessness services across Newport.

As always, collaboration and partnership working were key to supporting our citizens. This report provided information on how this way of working enables greater access for our residents to support, advice, and guidance.

The report also provided examples of activities and support offered during this period, including distribution of essential food, cleaning and hygiene products, and food shopping vouchers.

Officers from across the Council had worked closely together and with partners to coordinate support for children and young people over the Easter break and an update on this would be provided in next month's report.

The report also noted the support provided to school pupils with the provision of breakfast clubs in forty of the forty five primary schools, with almost 300,000 breakfasts provided since September 2023.

Pressures on housing and homelessness services in the city continued to be a concern, and this report provided an update on the strategy to tackle these challenges including through joining the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme Wales to secure more properties in the private rented sector.

The Leader encouraged anybody in need to attend the 'Think Wise – Live Wise' drop in events which provided cost of living related information and guidance on topics such as budgeting, managing utility bills and rent advice.

The Leader of the Council and Chair of One Newport, continued to advocate for partnership working as being vital in supporting our residents and businesses and thanked everyone involved.

Decision:

Cabinet considered the contents of the report on the Council's activity to respond to the external factors on Newport's communities, businesses, and council services.

7 One Newport Summary Document (for information/awareness)

The Leader drew attention to the One Newport summary document which was included in the agenda for awareness.

The document provided an update on the work of the One Newport Partnership.

8 Work Programme

The Leader drew attention to the work programme and requested acceptance of the updated programme.

Cabinet meeting on 15 May would take place at 10am and not 4pm.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the Cabinet Work Programme.