

EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 7TH JUNE, 2018

PRESENT: Councillor D. Price [Chair]

Councillors:

L.R. Bowen, K.V. Broom, I.W. Davies, J.P. Jenkins, D. Jones, G.R. Jones, M.J.A. Lewis, S. Najmi, E.M.J.G. Schiavone, B. Thomas and D.T. Williams

Mrs V. Kenny – Roman Catholic Church Representative

Mrs M. Jones – Parent Governor [Dinefwr Area]

Mrs G. Cornock-Evans – Parent Governor [Carmarthen Area]

Mr J. Davies – Parent Governor [Llanelli Area]

The following Officers were in attendance:

Mr G. Morgans - Director of Education & Children's Services

Mr A. Morgan - Head of Education Services

Mr A. Rees - Head of Curriculum & Wellbeing

Mr S. Davies - Modernisation Services Manager

Ms E. Williams - ALN Manager (Process)

Ms R. Williams - ALN Manager (Provision)

Mrs M. Evans Thomas - Principal Democratic Services

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen : 10.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B.W. Jones and E.G. Thomas and from Mrs J. Voyle Williams (Church in Wales Representative).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
D. Jones	5 – ALN Transformation Programme Update (Additional Learning Needs)	Her sister and brother-in-law work in the Education Department.
G. Jones	5 – ALN Transformation Programme Update (Additional Learning Needs)	His wife works in the Education Department.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. ALN TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE (ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS)

[NOTE: Councillors D. Jones and G. Jones had earlier declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered a report and received a presentation providing an overview of progress and developments in relation to the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation Programme.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill was unanimously passed by Welsh Government on 12th December, 2017. The Act will be supported by regulations and a new ALN Code, both of which will be revised and then consulted upon during the Autumn 2018. They will then be placed before Welsh Government and published and it was anticipated that both would be in place by the end of 2019.

Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education stated that “The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill is at the heart of our programme to transform the education and support for children and young people with additional learning needs in Wales. To make sure stakeholders are fully involved in developing and delivering our reforms, we have consulted widely about how we should implement the new additional learning needs system.”

Three overarching aims of the Bill:-

- A unified legislative framework to support all children of compulsory school age or below with ALN, and young people with ALN in school or further education (rather than two separate systems of SEN up to age 16 and Learning Skills Plans for post 16-19, both of which are currently covered by separate legislation);
- An integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring which facilitates early, timely and effective interventions (including duties on Health Boards and Local Authorities to collaborate with each other through a statutory Individual Development Plan for each learner with ALN);
- A fair and transparent system for providing information and advice, and for resolving concerns and appeals (including requiring Local Authorities to make arrangements for avoiding and resolving disagreements, revising a system found by previous reviews to be ‘complex, bewildering and adversarial’).

As part of the wider ALN Transformation Programme the Welsh Government initiated a two year, pre-legislative grant to support collaborative projects across each of the four consortia. The purpose was to develop innovative practice in readiness for the roll-out of proposed legislative changes.

From a Carmarthenshire perspective, progress has been made on a collaborative approach to enhancing ALN provision across our schools. We have a solid foundation of skills and experience which supports the Transformation agenda well.

The following questions/observations were raised on the report:-

- Asked if those who are already statemented will transfer automatically to the new system and how they will be affected until the new system comes in in 2020, the Committee was advised that a statement is a legal document and as such it will remain so until it becomes an Individual Development Plan under the new system;
- Reference was made to the fact that schools will have to appoint trained officers to meet the new duties and officers were asked how that would be funded in view of the fact that many schools are already struggling. The Committee was advised that 6 SENCOs from mainstream schools and 2 officers from the Education Department were seconded to undertake the necessary training. They are now trained champions who are qualified to train others. There has also been a rolling programme of training. Training will be provided for anyone who needs it and the provision of training will be reviewed year on year. The Head of Education Services explained that all schools will be looked at on an individual basis and if a school is struggling with ALNCo provision then officers will look at buddying them up with another school. All schools already have a SENCO so it was all about giving the SENCO the resources they need to fulfil their new ALNCo responsibilities and duties;
- Reference was made to the fact that a lot of training has already been undertaken around ALNCo and that this knowledge and experience is lost if that person leaves and it was suggested that perhaps a younger member of staff could shadow the ALNCo. The Head of Education Services advised the Committee that discussions are ongoing at the moment in this regard and it was hoped to roll it out as a successful model;
- Concern was expressed over the time it takes to get support and that this may be exacerbated during the transition period and officers were asked if there are any Family Liaison Officers who could help in this regard. The Committee was advised that there are two Family Liaison Officers, one cover pre-school and primary and the other covering secondary and transition into further education;
- Concern was expressed over how schools will fund the additional 20% and the Committee was advised that it is not an additional 20% as the children are already there and the same support will be delivered in schools. It was important to stress to schools that if their ALNCo is responsible for everything then they have not quite understood that it has to be a whole school approach. That is what the reform is all about;
- Concern was expressed over the strain our schools will be put under as the reform is a big challenge;
- Reference was made to the fact that some schools are already having difficulties in getting statements done and officers were asked how the new system will help in this regard. The Committee was advised that currently the statementing process is long and drawn out – around 6 month beginning to end and a big part of the reform is to reduce that. It is all about supporting schools and not having lots of interventions, but having an intervention at the right time. The process is now more instantaneous.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme for 2018/19, which had been prepared in accordance with the Council's Constitution which required Scrutiny Committees to develop and publish annual forward work programmes identifying issues and reports to be considered at meetings during the course of the municipal year.

Requests were made for reports on the following to be included in the FWP:-

- the additional £0.5m funding for schools;
- WESP language continuum and transfer from primary schools;
- TIC
- delegated schools funding formula (including ALN funding);
- the school admissions and appeals process;
- adult community learning.

It was felt that information reports such as budget monitoring and complaints and compliments did not necessarily need to be included in the FWP as these could be circulated to the Committee via e-mail and should there be any issues for concern these could be raised in accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

RESOLVED

- 6.1 that the Forward Work Programme for the Education & Children Scrutiny Committee for the 2018/19 municipal year, to include the above-mentioned items, be endorsed;
- 6.2 that in future Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring and Complaints and Compliments reports be circulated to members of the Committee via e-mail.

7. ACTIONS & REFERRALS UPDATE

The Committee received a report detailing the progress achieved in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 23RD APRIL, 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 23rd April, 2018 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE