

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Agenda – 21st March 2018

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017/2018

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21ST MARCH 2018

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER
FOR EDUCATION AND
LIFELONG LEARNING

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1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress made in advancing the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members note and scrutinise the content of the report.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To challenge any arising matters or issues with the relevant Cabinet Member and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On the 22nd January, 2018, the [Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a report regarding the engagement of the Executive at future Scrutiny Committees going forward.
- 4.2 At the meeting Members agreed to receive Cabinet Members at future Scrutiny meetings on a quarterly basis to present relevant information relating to their portfolio areas, alongside the relevant Director.
- 4.3 Such an approach will provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to further challenge the Executive, as the Cabinet Members can provide details (both verbal and written) relating to the potential challenges facing the services, as well as the opportunities and policy changes currently being considered. This approach would allow each Cabinet Member the opportunity to update Scrutiny Members on the delivery of their respective areas of the Corporate Plan, reference Key Performance

Indicators and important details of policies being considered for future decisions, which are referenced for future business, or those which have been developed since the last publicised Work Programme.

5.0 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 5.1 The portfolio holds responsibility for a number of Performance Indicators (24), categorised under the theme of educational attainment and related to the remit of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2 Out of the total, 13 of the Indicators can currently be reported against, whilst 6 PIs are reported without a target, and the remaining 5 Indicators are reported against at the year end. It is intended that these will be reported against in future reports when complete and comparative data becomes available.
- 5.3 As a general overview of the Indicators comprising this report, the table below shows that 3 Indicators are not performing to target, 5 are performing to target, and the remaining 5 are performing within 5% of their respective target.

Table 1

PI Ref	PI Title	Actual	Actual2	Annual Target	Actual3	Target for pivot	Performance for Pivot	Result
LEDU409a	No. of fixed term exclusions per 1,000 pupils in Primary schools	8.8	13.5	12.91	14.2	1	1	Performance not on target
LEDU507	% difference in the attendance of FSM / non FSM pupils in secondary schools	4.6	4.5	<4.5	4.9	1	1	Performance not on target
LEDU502	% difference between pupils eligible for FSM and non-FSM who were assessed at the end of the Key Stage 2 (Year 6, typically aged 11) who achieved the Core Subject Indicator (CSI)***	-20.5	-12.6	-12	-14.9	1	1	Performance not on target
LEDU410c	Average No. of days lost through fixed term exclusions (All Schools)	2.4	2.1	2.19	2.1	1	1	Performance on target
LEDU409b	No. of fixed term exclusions per 1,000 pupils in Secondary schools	89.4	72	98.43	95.7	1	1	Performance on target
LEDU506	% difference in the attendance of FSM / non FSM pupils in primary schools	2.2	2.6	<2.6	2.3	1	1	Performance on target

LEDU501	% difference between pupils eligible for FSM and non-FSM who were assessed at the end of the Foundation phase (Year 2, typically aged 7) who achieved the Foundation phase indicator***	-19.5	-14.4	-14	-11.8	1	1	Performance on target
PAM005 (formerly EDU004)	% of pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 3, (Year 9, typically aged 14) achieving the Core Subject Indicator (CSI)3	81.6	84	86	87.4	1	1	Performance on target
PAM008 (formerly EDU016b)	% of pupil attendance in secondary schools (excludes special schools)	93.72	93.9	94.3	93.6	1	1	Performance within 5% of the target
PAM007 (formerly EDU016a)	% of pupil attendance in primary schools (excludes special schools)	94.76	94.6	95.3	94.7	1	1	Performance within 5% of the target
PAM003 (formerly EDU235)	% pupils assessed at the end of Foundation phase (Year 2, typically aged 7) achieving the Foundation phase indicator	86.3	87.2	87.9	86.9	1	1	Performance within 5% of the target

PAM004 (formerly EDU003)	% of pupils assessed at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6, typically aged 11) achieving level 4 or above in the Core Subject indicator (CSI)2	85.8	88.5	90.9	90	1	1	Performance within 5% of the target
LEDU242	% pupils eligible for FSM assessed at the end of KS3 (Year 9, typically aged 14) achieving the Core Subject indicator***	65.2	67.8	71.5	70.6	1	1	Performance within 5% of the target

6.0 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS UPDATE

- 6.1 The Council is continuing to progress the £160m Band A phase of the Welsh Government supported 21st Century Schools initiative, with work ongoing to deliver enhanced educational facilities in the Rhondda, Tonyrefail and Cwmaman. Under the programme, schools in the Rhondda and Tonyrefail are set to benefit from £85m of investment, with state-of-the-art facilities being delivered in Tonyrefail, Porth, Cymmer, Tonypandy, Ferndale and Treorchy; whilst primary school aged children in Cwmaman will soon make use of a new £7.2m facility.
- 6.2 21st Century School developments are continuing to progress well across the County Borough, with work ongoing on a number of projects:
- 6.2.1 Cwmaman - Building works and construction of the external play areas are progressing well in the delivery of the new £7.2m community primary school.
- 6.2.2 Cymmer - £1.9m is being invested to the Primary School's junior section to make improvements to the late Victorian-era building, the 1960s building and MUGA. A new roof is currently being installed on the junior block, with internal remodelling works to follow.
- 6.2.3 Porth - Porth Community School will amalgamate four local schools to become one 3-16 school on the existing site. The primary element will be a new-build, whilst the secondary building will be renovated and refurbished. The new blocks are currently being enjoyed by pupils and staff since the handover in 2017, whilst work is progressing well on the new-build and external aspects.
- 6.2.4 Tonypandy - Ysgol Nantgwyn will comprise of a new-build primary element and remodelling of the existing school to include new science, art, ICT and technology rooms, two MUGAs, a 3G sports pitch and improved site entry and exit points. Two phases of refurbishment works to the 3-16 school are on course for completion by February 2018, whilst some classrooms will be handed to the school at the end of January. Additional works to redecorate classrooms in the existing school, not previously included in the project, will start soon.
- 6.2.5 Tonyrefail Community School - £44m of investment will bring the current Comprehensive school and Tonyrefail Primary on to one site as a 3-19 school. Good progress has been made on the remodelling of the Grade-II listed Victorian building, and positive movement has also been seen in the construction of the new build elements.
- 6.2.6 YGG Tonyrefail - A tender document is set to be issued in the coming weeks and a contractor will be appointed in due course, with work expected to start in the summer holiday period of 2018.
- 6.2.7 Treorchy - New sixth form facilities were handed over in September 2017 and are being enjoyed by pupils. The main admin block is being refurbished externally and will be complete in February. Works to the new science block are progressing with the second phase of the refurbishment to commence later in the year.

- 6.2.8 Ferndale - A £500,000 investment has been allocated to improve the current facilities, including new science and Design Technology facilities and toilets. A tender document is set to be issued in the coming weeks and a contractor will be appointed in due course, with work expected to start in the summer holiday period of 2018.
- 6.3 The Council is continuing to engage with local communities on the progression of the schemes, with an engagement session scheduled for Ysgol Cwm Rhondda on Wednesday 14th March and a further session in Cymmer Primary School on Thursday 15th March.
- 6.4 The Council recently confirmed that a further tranche of £160m had been agreed with the Welsh Government to deliver the Band B phase of the scheme between 2019 and 2026. This will take the Council's total investment package to £320m, and will represent the most significant investment in education by any Welsh Local Authority. Further details for the allocations of funding to priorities will be considered in due course.
- 6.5 Further work continues to be delivered under the Council's Capital Programme, and Cabinet will shortly be considering detailed plans for the allocation of funding for the 2018/19 financial year. The Council has also agreed to increase the schools education budget by £2m for 2018/19, which is double the original commitment of £1m a year (to run over the course of the Council term), as part of the wider emphasis on creating state-of-the-art learning environments as catalysts for improved educational performance.

7.0 ATTAINMENT

- 7.1 In general, schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf continue to demonstrate solid progress across all Stage levels of assessment. This trend should be noted, especially in consideration of the levels of deprivation present in Rhondda Cynon Taf compared with many other Local Authorities. Members will be aware that Rhondda Cynon Taf has the fourth highest level of pupils eligible for free school meals, behind Blaenau Gwent, Neath Port Talbot and Cardiff. Whilst this should not be utilised as an excuse for instances of poor performance, there is a tangible cause and effect relationship between the two. The Council has worked hard to weaken this link over recent years, particularly through initiatives such as the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) and the Welsh Government's Free Childcare Initiative, which when combined with the Council's own Early Years provision, is the most generous offer nationally.
- 7.2 Since 2012, school improvement services in RCT have been delivered by the Central South Consortium, which also encompasses the Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Councils. The CSC covers almost 400 schools and 30% of the total number of children in Wales, whilst it also remains the region with the highest proportion of children living in poverty. The CSC has contributed to an incremental improvement in attainment levels over the last five years, whilst also providing support to schools via the Hub Schools initiative and the various

“Headship” programmes that are designed to boost the leadership structures within individual schools. The cost to the Council for 2016/17 was £1,149,772.

- 7.3 At the Foundation Phase, results have fluctuated slightly in 2017, and whilst this was by less than 1%, it has nevertheless had an effect on the Council’s comparative ranking on a national level (-2 from 11th to 13th). In, on the basis of Foundation Phase Indicator %, RCT has shown considerable year on year improvement in the preceding period (20th in 2012 to 11th in 2016.)
- 7.4 Similarly, excellent progress continues to be made at the Key Stage 2 level, with pupils performing above the Welsh average in all Indicators for the first time. Particular progress was made in the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in mathematics, where RCT jumped from 12th to 8th nationally. It is hoped that the positive performance shown in 2017 bodes well for the progression of the cohort as they transition into Key Stage 3.
- 7.5 A positive trend can also be seen in the Indicators for Key Stage 3, with year on year improvements demonstrated in all categories (with the exception of the % of pupils achieving level 5 or above in Welsh First Language in 2016). Again, these results show encouraging signs in that the rate of improvement in RCT outstripped the Welsh average in all five core areas.
- 7.6 Substantial changes have been made to the Key Stage 4 performance measures and the related assessment procedures in Wales, with the establishment of three separate regulators for GCSE qualifications in Wales, Northern Ireland and England. The indicative data shows a significant decrease in performance in RCT when compared prima facie with legacy data from 2016, although it must be noted that the new examinations and assessment criteria render previous year comparisons less meaningful on the basis that they are designed to test different skills and aptitudes. Council Officers will continue to liaise with headteachers and the Central South Consortium to provide schools identified as causing particular concern to ensure an effective transition to the new model of assessment is achieved.
- 7.7 Despite a host of significant changes made to post-16 education over recent years, RCT has demonstrated a consistently stable performance by being within a percentage point for each Indicator over the last three years. A period of stability is now needed in order for performance to flourish.

8.0 ATTENDANCE & EXCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The Council is committed to achieving high levels of attendance across all year groups of primary and secondary schools, and have set a series of ambitious targets for the 2017/18 year.
- 8.2 For the comparative data for 2017/18, it is clear that social deprivation once again plays an important role, with an increased gap in the percentage difference between the attendance of children who are eligible for FSM and those who are not in secondary schools. This measure had previously shown an improvement through a 0.6% reduction between 2013/14 and 2015/16 - which was also 0.2% better than the Welsh average, but the data available for this financial year demonstrates a 0.4%

increase. The Council is continuing to both challenge and provide support to our schools in order to identify areas where the refocusing of resources would be beneficial to reversing this trend. Similar data on a national level is not yet available for comparison. By contrast, the e-FSM/non-FSM difference in primary schools has shown an improvement over the last three years, and now stands at 2.3% - under the 2.6% target for the current year.

- 8.3 The overall percentage attendance in both primary and secondary schools are both within 5% of their respective targets. The data in Table 1 demonstrates that attendance levels have generally not met the challenging targets for the year, and a slight decline in secondary school attendance has been evidenced, with only five schools maintaining or improving performance from the previous year. The Council is committed to ensuring that attendance remains a priority across the County's schools system, and the Attendance and Wellbeing service will continue to hold challenge and support meetings with schools identified as causing the greatest concern. Secondary well-being data days have also been reintroduced to allow schools to share good practice and areas for development.
- 8.4 There has been a significant increase in the number of exclusions in RCT schools over the course of the last three years, and the Council is continuing to work with schools to support and challenge the issue by looking at processes to enhance collaborative planning at a whole school, strategic level, that includes a comprehensive review of managed moves. In spite of this, RCT has demonstrated considerable progress in this area when compared to other Welsh Authorities over the period of 2011/12 to 2015/16; for example, in relation to the number of permanent exclusions reported, RCT was ranked 22nd in 2014/15 and then 4th in 2015/16. Significant improvements are also noted when comparing rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils with RCT's ranking dramatically improving from 19th in 2014/15 to 1st (alongside 9 other LA's) in 2015/16. This highlights that significant improvements were evident.

In line with the general trend of increasing instances of exclusions, the Indicator has demonstrated a sharp rise over the reported periods, and it is vital that this trend is addressed and reversed appropriately. As per Table 1 however, the average number of days lost through fixed term exclusions, and the number of fixed term exclusions per 1,000 pupils in secondary schools remain above their respective performance targets.

9.0 LIBRARIES

- 9.1 A report will shortly be brought before the Cabinet outlining proposals to remodel the Council's mobile library service, in order to ensure that the standard and quality of the service is comparable to that offered by fixed-location libraries, whilst also being accessible to communities across the County Borough.
- 9.2 Should they be approved by Cabinet, the proposals, which will be subject to an eight week consultation, will see a reconfiguration of the service to ensure that residents are always within 2 miles of accessing a library service. These changes will also see the Council invest in two new, purpose built vehicles that will have onboard Wi-Fi and

provide other Council services. The changes would also see the current arrangement of 393 short stops per fortnight altered to 48 longer stops every three weeks.

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Education remains a priority for the Council, as evidenced by the planned investment over 2018/19 and beyond, supplementing the significant levels of funding ploughed into improving learning facilities across the County Borough. The early identification of in-house efficiencies has contributed to a £2m uplift in the schools education budget, double the amount previously committed to.
- 10.2 This investment is paying dividends in the positive trends seen across educational attainment results, where schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf are displaying solid signs of improvement. The Welsh Government's changes to the Key Stage 4 stage examinations have demonstrated a decrease in performance for 2017, and performance must be monitored closely to ensure that this is merely transitional and reflects the way in which performance is assessed.
- 10.3 The Council is continuing the work to close the attendance gap between FSM/non-FSM pupils; and whilst overall attendances are within 5% of the ambitious targets set for 2017, the Authority continues to provide support to schools to achieve positive outcomes. Similarly, it is vital that exclusion rates are monitored closely following the positive progress made in this area over recent years.