

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE.

Minutes of the virtual Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee meeting held on Thursday, 17 March 2022 at 11.30 am.

County Borough Councillors - Central South Consortium Joint Education Service. Members in attendance: -

Councillor J Rosser (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council)
Councillor C Smith (Bridgend County Borough Council)
Councillor L Burnett (Vale of Glamorgan)

Council Officers in attendance: -

Ms S Davies – Service Director, Finance Services (Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC)
Mr L. Harvey Lead Director of Education (Bridgend Council)

Others in attendance: -

Ms L Blatchford, Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium
Mr A Williams, Assistant Director Central South Consortium
Ms C Seery, Managing Director Central South Consortium
Ms S Prosser, Primary School Improvement Partner

43 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Members to the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee.

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors L Mytton (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council), S Merry (Cardiff Council) and Mr E Cooper (Lead Chief Executive (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council).

44 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Councils code of conduct, there were no declarations of interest made parenting to the agenda.

45 MATTERS ARISING

The rescheduled meeting on the 22nd December included a 2022/23 budget setting recommendation for Members to “Consider and approve the budget for 2022/23 in order for the Member Local Authorities to approve as appropriate and confirm approval back to Joint Committee”. Since then, each Local Authority Section 151 Officer has confirmed approval of the budget and contributions for 2022/23.

46 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 22nd December 2021 as an accurate reflection of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee meeting.

47 PEER PARTNERSHIPS

The Primary School Improvement Partner presented a presentation to Members which provided a brief overview of the Peer Partnership and collaboration within the region.

The Primary School Improvement Partner acknowledged the extremely challenging time experienced by schools during the lockdown periods and advised Members of the significance of support and guidance to schools through Peer Partnership. Members were advised of the importance of Peer Partnership as it aligns with the regions vision to empower schools to improve outcomes for all learners. Its shifting school improvements from a model that is dependent on central support to one that is led by schools, for schools.

The Primary School Improvement Partner advised Members of the challenges faced during the launch of the Peer Partnership programme; the team were sensitive to school's positions due to the numerous pressures from the Pandemic. As a result, softer launches were undertaken to certain school's which were ready to work within the programme; these include, cluster sharing new curriculums in Aberdare by a group of 16 schools who have committed to a shared inset day in May. Advisors will be attending the meeting to facilitate and support areas of learning needs. It was confirmed that 3 cross Local Authority schools (Vale of Glamorgan, RCT, & Cardiff) began Peer Partnership in January. Members were advised of the School Leadership Improvement Partnership (SLIP) which is a well-established network of 12 schools from a wide range of socio-economic and culturally diverse communities within Cardiff. The SLIP have been invited to present to a Peer Partnership group in order to highlight how the group works, and the benefits of Peer Partnership. The Primary School Improvement Partner confirmed 3 schools in Bridgend who will be looking to start Peer Partnership during the Spring.

The Primary School Improvement Partner advised Members of a produced guidance document in May 2021; The document provided a brief overview of what Peer Partnership is and what it's not; This has been used to create a protocol with larger networks and underpinned a collaboration at every level to ensure schools are protected.

To conclude the Primary School Improvement Partner noted to Members the objectives of the team; these included ensuring sensitivity is maintained towards schools due to the numerous changes and challenges faced towards operations and curriculums. Develop a culture of sharing workload, resources, and professional learning to aid in growth of the school. Refer to Welsh Governments (WG) National Resources for evaluation and improvement to support self-evaluation conversations, and lastly to empower schools to improve outcomes for all learners.

The Chair commended Peer Partnership as an excellent tool forward to empower schools as it can be utilised to improve teaching, learning and leadership. A query was raised surrounding the Curriculum for Wales and the support in place for schools which were less prepared.

The Primary School Improvement Partner advised Members of a useful curriculum designed website which has been implemented as a thinking tool that draws together the variety of professional learning, aligned with the curriculum roll out documentation which can be accessed quickly by schools. Curriculum advisors have been working with individual schools to help with reflection and setting targets.

The Assistant Director Central South Consortium (CSC) praised the School Improvement Partner for the excellent work being undertaken towards support and improvement for schools. He continued by commending Headteachers for developing the model as a mature and evolutionary approach which will target schools at all levels. As part of CSC, the model sits at the heart of the organisations approach in supporting schools' evolution and processes.

The Lead Director of Education echoed the praises towards the Primary School Improvement Partner and thanked her for the extensive experience she has provided within the team.

Following discussions, the Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee **RESOLVED:**

- To note presentation

48 2021/22 BUDGET MONITORING AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE

The Service Director, Finance Services presented a report to Members; the purpose of the report was to provide the Joint Committee with the projected outturn position for 2021/22, a summary of the 2021/22 grant funding, and to provide an overview of the work underway to refresh the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Members were directed to table 1 of the report which highlighted a small underspend of £2,325 for the year; it was confirmed that the position had been stable throughout this financial year with a small underspend of £1,331 reported in December 2021 and £766 in September 2021; thus, demonstrating a stability of outturns over the budgetary control within the Consortium.

To provide further detail, the Service Director, Finance Services highlighted key variances for the projected outturn position for 2021/22 as highlighted in table 1 of the report. As shown on the table, employees have had a £23,446 underspend projected to year-end, as a result of vacancies. There has been a small underspend on premises of £1,550 due to configuration work being undertaken at the Valleys innovation Centre. Transportation services have also had an underspend due to the ongoing impacts of Covid-19; however, Supplies and Services had a net overspend of £14,601 in total. The Service Director, Finance Services, advised Members that there are underspends on CPD which are offset by overspends mainly due to ICT hardware purchases of new starters equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings and office equipment purchases in line with the reconfiguration of the office space.

Members were directed to paragraph 3.3 and 3.4 of the report which referred to the earmarked reserves of the Consortium; the Service Director, Finances Services confirmed to Members the spend of £6k earmark towards the approved sensory project by Joint Committee. Members were informed of the £200k earmarked reserve which has been retained to support the remodelling of the

service over the Medium Term. It was confirmed that there are no costs to date, and it's anticipated that Joint Committee will be requested to consider carrying this forward into 2022/23 as part of the year-end report.

Members were directed to section 4 of the report which detailed a summary of the grant funded service for 2021/22 which demonstrated the significant resources for both RCSIG and PDG available to the region.

The Service Director, Finance Services reminded Members of the Joint Committee meeting held on the 15th July 2021 where Members agreed on a 3-year indicative budget based on Local Authority contributions increasing by 1.72% in 2022/23, 1.73% in 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively to manage pay inflation pressure and non-pay inflation pressures and the delivery of budget savings being managed by the Consortium.

The Service Director Finance Services advised Members of the Joint Committee to consider the following key parameters as highlighted in paragraph 5.5 of the report:

- (a) the need to protect frontline school improvement resources and target available funding to key priorities.
- (b) the continued delivery of efficiency savings (recognising that the ongoing delivery of savings at levels achieved in previous years will be extremely challenging).
- (c) the consortium to fully fund estimated non-pay (i.e. goods and services) inflation.
- (d) £200k earmarked reserve to support on-going service remodelling and medium-term planning retained for the purpose of smoothing the financial impact of future local government settlements on local authority contributions and maintain financial resilience.

Subject to the Joint Committees feedback, the Managing Director and lead Section 151 Officer will coordinate the process in consultation with the Chief Executives of Member Local Authorities and report an updated Medium-Term Financial Plan to the September 2022 Joint Committee.

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Service **RESOLVED:**

- To note the current projected outturn position for 2021/22
- To note the current grant funding position for 2021/22
- To agree the broad parameters for the Consortium to work within to refresh the Medium-Term Financial Plan and for an updated position to be reported to the September 2022 Joint Committee.

49 GRANTS AWARDS OF FUNDING 2021-2022

The Deputy Managing Director presented a report to Members which provided an update on the grants received by the Consortium in 2021/22.

A brief overview was provided based on the 2 awards of funding which were provided by the Welsh Government, these included the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) and a variation to the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG).

A total £37,581,970 has been provided towards the PDG for the financial year 2021/22; the funding has been allocated to support all eligible learners for free school meals, those who are singly registered in pupil referral units (PRUs), Looked After Children (LAC) and to aid in salary costs for PDG Strategic Advisors.

Members were advised of the PDG Consortia Led Funding as highlighted in section 5.2.2, which was approved on the 2nd July 2021 by CSC Management Board. The funding has since been distributed to Local Authorities (LA) in order to provide targeted support to local needs of children and young people.

In relation to the RCSIG, a total of £4,459,243 of grant funding was awarded for the financial year 2021/22. Members were directed to section 5.3.2 of the report which provided a breakdown of the delegated areas the additional funding will support.

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee **RESOLVED:**

- To approve the distribution grants as detailed in section 4 of the report.

50 REPORT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF CSC 2020-21

The Deputy Managing Director presented a report to the Joint Committee which provided an overview on the efficiency and effectiveness of work which has been undertaken by Central South Consortium 2020/21.

Members were advised that the work undertaken by CSC has been guided by the Research and Evaluation Board, this has aided in providing Members with an evaluation of how effective CSC has been in numerous areas of operations, it also provided an overview of performance, funding, and a detailed in-depth look at strands of activity. The strands of activity included support for Governors, digital learning, early career pathways, and leadership support and development.

The report provides background information on how these areas were identified and the process of business planning and self-evaluation.

Members were directed to table 1 of the report which provided an overview of the funding available to the Consortium and how it's used across the 5 Local Authorities. The funding provided is focused on the improvement of schools across the region. Members were directed to table 3 of the report which provided an overview on how the grant expenditure is allocated across the 5 Local Authorities grant funding streams.

The Deputy Managing Director informed Members that the grant funding streams play an integral part within CSC's delivery strategy of the Central South Wales Challenge (CSWC).

The Deputy Managing Director took Members through the main body of the report which discussed the strand activity and the work which has been undertaken by the team. As part of support to Governors, regional leaders of governance have utilised the self-evaluation tool kit in order to identify any areas for improvement. Positive support has been received from Lead Governor groups and Governors Steering Groups during the Pandemic as the transition to digital learning began. The Deputy Managing Director informed Members of CSC focus towards digital learning within schools and CSC.

In relation to early career pathways work, teams in CSC have been working on a national basis to ensure support is provided online and that there are numerous channels to access the information. The Deputy Managing Director informed Members of a big drive towards improving communication with NQT's and that there has been 250 NQTS who are working on the aspiring programme along with 100 working on them during twilights and Saturday mornings. In relation to leadership support and development to aspiring leaders, middle leaders and those entering MPQH programmes have still continued during the pandemic.

To conclude the Deputy Managing Director advised Members of the 1% reduction in the core funding; however, a slight increase of 843 pupils has meant that the per spend per pupil has gone down. The Deputy Managing Director advised Members that despite the reduction, the evidence within the report portrays CSC provision of professional learning and outcomes requested by the Joint Committee.

The Chair was pleased with the report and the good feedback received from governors.

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee **RESOLVED:**

- To note content of the report

51 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

The Deputy Managing Director presented the reports to Members which provided an overview of the Internal Audit reports issued by the Regional Internal Audit Service to the Central South Consortium during 2021/22.

In relation to the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG) and Pupil Development Grant (PDG), based on the Internal Audits undertaken no recommendations were made and there were substantial assurances in the system of governance and risk management.

The Deputy Managing Director continued by providing a brief overview of the general ledger report. Similarly, audits undertaken provided substantial assurances in the sound system of governance.

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Committee **RESOLVED:**

- To review the Internal Audit report issued during 2021/22 and to raise no matters of governance requiring further actions.

52 LEGAL AGREEMENT (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Managing Director provided Members with an update on the legal agreement; it was confirmed that CSC have begun examining the various sections of the legal agreement and have begun work with the legal team in order to review the elements of the legal agreement. The Deputy Managing Director advised Members that the first draft is currently in train and will be shared with Directors within the Management Board level and then brought to Joint Committee. Members were advised that the report will be completed within the summer period.

The Chair inquired on the potential date the report will be completed during the summer period.

The Deputy Managing Director advised that the draft will be developed over the upcoming two meetings, then handed to the 5 Local Authorities legal teams and completion of the draft should be presented to Joint Committee during the summer term subject to the legal teams.

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Service **RESOLVED:**

- To note verbal update

53 CENTRAL SOUTH BUSINESS PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

The Deputy Managing Director presented the report to Members; the termly report highlighted to Joint Committee the progress of the business plan 2021/22. As part of the business plan process, termly impact meetings are undertaken with staff and Directors in order to review CSC efficient evaluation of the business plan and related budgets. The evaluative narrative produced at the termly meetings complimented the self-evaluation and reviewing process.

The progress to date as highlighted within the report is dated to the end of December 2021. The Deputy Managing Director advised Members that the over the coming weeks the results of the impact meetings will be undertaken, and outcomes will be shared with Joint Committee in the Annual report during the Summer Term.

Members were directed to table 1 of the report which highlighted the summary of progress judgement by individual aspect areas. Table 2 of the report highlighted the cumulative progress judgement; strong progress of 28% was made with only 2% limited progress which was a result of the Pandemic; However, the Deputy Managing Director advised Members that the issues are in the progress of being resolved.

As part of the Risk Management Policy, any risks identified within the risk operational level are included within the report; the risks identified within the report are integrated as part of the business planning process as highlighted in table 3. Members were directed to section 5 of the report which provided an overview of the success measures as part of the business planning process. The Deputy Managing Director went through the 5 priority success measures, highlighting the main points.

The Chair was pleased with the report however raised a query surrounding the projected outcomes expected during the summer exam period across the region.

The Managing Director advised Members that schools have not been requested to submit targets and the data has not been collated. However, concerns have been present in relation to summer exams as some students have had bigger interruptions to their learning compared to others. The Managing Director advised Members of collaborations with Qualifications Wales discussing how they are going to ensure a degree of parity across all students.

The Managing Director CSC advised Members of the challenges which will be faced by students as some may be discouraged by the process. However, to reassure Members the Managing Director advised that extensive support is being provided and conversations are occurring within schools by School Improvement Partners in order to identify students requiring extra support.

To add, the Assistant Director reassured Members that individual support is provided to disadvantaged groups of students.

Following discussion, the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service **RESOLVED:**

- To note Business Plan progress update

54 CENTRAL SOUTH SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

The Managing Director presented the report to Members which provided Members with an overview of the context of the Central South Consortium as well as a summary of the findings from the self-evaluation activity undertaken within CSC. The report presented an evaluation of the progress as well as identified strengths and areas for further development.

Members were advised of the report's linkage to a previous Estyn inspection undertaken in February 2016 and was then followed up in September 2017. During the monitoring visit there was found to be strong progress in addressing the three out of four recommendations, with satisfactory progress being made against the recommendation 'Evaluate progress against regional consortium's operational plans more effectively'; based on the report, the Managing Director advised Members that this area has seen improvements and will continue to be a focus for CSC.

The Managing Director advised Members that the self-evaluation report was split into 3 areas which focused on the support for School Improvement, Professional Learning, and Leadership and Safeguarding of an organisation. The report has been generated based on Local Government service guidance and regional consortium inspection documentation as the CSC do not have a national framework to refer to as a result, they are some gaps.

The self-evaluation report will be utilised to analyse what CSC have done and identify the next key steps; workshops have been arranged with Directors and Chief Executives on the 1st April 2022 to analyse this further. Members were directed to section 5 of the report which highlighted the 3 areas in which CSC needs to progress, based on evaluation. The self-evaluation activity will continue across the organisation to ensure any areas of development identified because of evaluation activity, is incorporated into the planning cycles.

The Managing Director advised Members that the focus areas for 2022/23 will

be shared with the drive teams for inclusion within the operational plans, with associated activities to meet the priorities developed. The operational plans will identify the success criteria and milestones for each area of focus to ensure CSC can report on progress with agreed priorities. In addition, the priorities for Local Authorities as well as national priorities will be incorporated into the operational planning for CSC once success measures have been agreed. Members were directed to section 8 of the report which highlighted the questions which have been addressed by CSC throughout the self-evaluation process. The following areas within the report focus on CSC evaluation and improvements.

The Managing Director CSC advised Members that during 2022/23 this will be a great opportunity to ensure CSC can streamline reporting of the self-evaluation process due to the significant amount of reporting undertaken.

The Chair was pleased with the report and Members **RESOVLED** to agree the areas focused within the report are the right ones.

55 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2022/25

The Managing Director CSC presented the report to Members which provided an overview of CSC draft business plan for 2022/25. The three-year plan has been developed in conjunction with Local Authorities (LA) to ensure that appropriate LA priorities are embedded into the CSC work; the plan will be updated on an annual basis in line with LAs to provide direction moving forward.

Members were advised that the business plan has been formally agreed by the Directors of Education from each Local Authority, Joint Committee and Lead Chief Executives; it's been designed to meet the priorities of Local authorities and Welsh Government, against a backdrop of new curriculums, new accountability frameworks, new approaches to supporting children with additional learning needs and the implementations of schools as learning organisations.

CSC have ensured to undertake extensive evaluations of work and the outcomes of these evaluations shape the business planning process. The business plan will aid in guiding work of the CSC as they recover from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Managing Director informed Members that the report highlights the context for education within Wales and how CSC will address these moving forward. Members were advised of the importance of recognising the regional service that supports the 5 Local Authorities and developing a range of shared strategic priorities as a region. These priorities come from a range of different services such as LA, Welsh Government and Estyn reports which are feeding into the process. The Managing Director informed Members of the 5 priorities which have been redefined based on the future of CSC. The table within the report provided Members with a breakdown of the key themes that will sit underneath the priorities.

The Chair was pleased with the progress currently being undertaken within the business plan and was in support of the business plan working alongside LA priorities. The Chair queried when the final report will be available and the projected timescales for the priorities.

The Managing Director advised that the timescales would sit within the operational plans, as Welsh Government have provided a 3-year indicative budget, similar to LA's. The Managing Director advised that the report will be updated on an annual basis.

The Lead Director of Education (Bridgend Council) congratulated the CSC team for the work undertaken. He was pleased with the excellent engagement with LA's as they have felt involved within the process. He commended the team for setting up a clear set of challenges which LAs are facing, which has been built within the business plan over the next 3 years. The Lead Director of Education (Bridgend Council) reassured Members of the strong scrutiny from a director's level towards the business plan thus highlighting a positive direction.

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee
RESOLVED:

- To note Business Plan for 2022/25

56 TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING UNDER-MENTIONED RESOLUTION:

It was **RESOLVED:** "That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of the exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of the Schedule 12A of the Act".

57 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM RISK REGISTER

The Committee considered the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Risk Register. After consideration of the information presented by the Deputy Managing Director, it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the content of the report

This meeting closed at 1.10 pm

**CLLR J. ROSSER
CHAIR.**