

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 23 May 2023 at 3.30 pm

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

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

Councillor R Birch (Vale of Glamorgan Council) (Chair)
Councillor R Lewis
Councillor J-P Blundell (Bridgend CBC)
Councillor M Jones (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough)
Councillor S Merry (Cardiff Council)

Officers in attendance

Mr E Cooper - Lead Chief Executive, (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council)
Ms S Davies - Service Director, Finance Services (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council)
Mr L Harvey, Lead Director of Education, (Bridgend County Borough Council)

Others in attendance:-

Ms L Blatchford Deputy - Deputy Managing, Director Central South Consortium
Ms N Gould - Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC
Ms C Brind - Area Lead for Curriculum Reform, CSC

Apologies for Absence

Ms C Seery

1 Declaration of Interest

In Accordance with the Councils Code, there were no declarations of interest made, pertaining to the agenda.

2 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 28th March 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

3 Calendar of Meetings for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the proposed dates for the Calendar of Meetings of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year.

4 SUPPORT FOR GOVERNORS

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC, provided Members with a presentation on the proposed new support plan for governors in the region, and in particular noted the GAP programme, which was a new programme, which had just been launched, ready to start in September. She then took Members through the presentation, which she advised built on the previous report around regional recommendations on support for governors, which had been developed as part of the package for governors.

A Member raised concern that there was not enough financial training for governors to be able to adequately question a school budget.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC explained that what had been built on was the core mandatory modules, although she recognised it worked differently in each local authority. There wasn't financial management as such, but what had been weaved through a number of modules, were the roles and responsibilities of governors, which did include where they were involved in financial management, school improvement planning, etc.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC advised that the individual financial management, and the expectations of the finance teams, were different across each local authority, but there was something that could be taken onboard in terms of the generic ability to be able to question and interrogate budgets, and this was maybe something that could be picked up with the other Directors at the next Management Board meeting.

The Member asked if it was possible to do a comparison of training that Education authorities provided for their governors, to see examples of best practice, that could be shared.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC explained that they worked with different local authorities on this and worked quite differently in every local authority, but they did try and ensure they didn't duplicate, and they did bespoke sessions, for individual local authority's or governor associations, so what had been talked about today, was the suite of professional learning that they were responsible for.

The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support (Bridgend) was happy to support the suggestion and take this to the next Director's meeting. He felt that all local authorities, were in different positions, with some having dedicated governor support teams, and some not, so the position was that they relied heavily on CSC for a lot of the professional development training, but he agreed in terms of scrutiny of finances and certainly from a Welsh Government (WG) perspective, the scrutiny and making best use of grant funding in particular e.g., PDG, the more governing bodies could be armed with those skills, the better.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the proposed new process for support to Governors at CSC, having considered the benefits to Governors; and approved the plan for inclusion in operational planning for 2023/24.

5 SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM FOR WALES

The Area Lead for Curriculum Reform, CSC began by introducing herself, before taking Members through the presentation on Curriculum for Wales, and how

Schools were being supported. This included equity and excellence, what was meant by curriculum, implementation, how CSC supported schools, including Improvement Partners (IP's), the Central South Wales Challenge (CSWC), professional learning (PL), bespoke support, the CfW website and Communications.

A Member asked how long the roll-out was going to take?

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC advised that primary, special and a number of Secondary schools, from Year 7, would be rolled-out from September, so there was the continuation of that now until Year 11, had rolled-out. This year, it would become mandatory for Year's 7 & 8 to roll-out from this September, and would become a year on year, roll-out. As part of one of the elements of CfW there was a mandatory duty that schools kept their curriculum, under review, so in essence CfW was never done, because if you are in the ethos of CfW, you are ensuring your curriculum, teaching, and assessment, always meets the needs of learners e.g., some years small tweaks, some years whole scale change.

A Member asked, in terms of the careers advice, whether schools were signposted to things, going on within the local areas, as well as what the consortium provided, as there maybe different opportunities, depending on location.

The Area Lead for Curriculum Reform, CSC advised she led on careers work related experiences within her role and met regularly with The Cardiff Commitment and also with those in RCT as well and had looked at developing links with the other areas as well. She confirmed that information was shared across the system, and she was regularly in contact with Careers Wales, and all information that was gathered, through conversations with local authorities and Careers Wales, was communicated through newsletters and school bulletins.

A Member asked how much encouragement there was, because each school was developing its own curriculum, in response to the needs of pupils, and was there room in the system, for sharing good practice.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC noted that the Area Lead for Curriculum Reform, CSC, had provided some examples of this, with some schools very willing to share emerging practice, and some school more reticent to do that because of the stage of development, they were in. There were a wealth of practitioners and school leaders, in schools, either supporting the writing and delivery of the programme, actually leading some programmes, videos or live sharing of some of their practice, but it looked slightly different in every school. There was plenty of sharing going on, but more needed in the system.

The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support (Bridgend) then provided Members with some examples, acknowledging there was a very healthy system, across the region.

A Member asked how much encouragement was given to try and foster a closer relationship between the primary and secondary phases, with regards to the new curriculum, to ensure a seamless transition for pupils from primary to secondary.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC explained

that clusters were really essential in CfW, and some were very neat and other clusters, for example faith schools, may take from 24 different primary schools, so it was different for each cluster. There was an expectation nationally and from Directors, that cluster collaborations were important, and CSC tried to provide as much bespoke support inset days, for example, across clusters. At the highest level of WG legislation, there was a duty on schools to publish the plan of how they develop that shared understanding and progression, within the school, within their cluster and then beyond their cluster.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC continued that it was inconsistent, and she could not say that every cluster was working well, at the moment, but there was certainly that awareness, encouragement, and collaboration funding that was provided, to enable cluster working, so it was certainly encouraged at all levels.

The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support (Bridgend) noted that Cardiff did a particularly good job of liaising with employers, because it was about the transition at the top end from schools out, as well. The other end was looking at non-maintained settings, working very closely with childcare providers to make the transition from early years into primary settings, effective, then from primary schools to secondary schools around the transition planning, and then moving into the post-16 environment. There was lots of activities going on, and there were inconsistencies, but all the clusters valued it, and were working towards that goal.

The Chair felt it would be interesting to receive an update, in a year or possibly the year after that, as things were changing and developing, all the time.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the support for curriculum reform in CSC, having considered the benefits to all stakeholders.

6 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC advised Members that she would be presenting the Internal Audit report and began by taking Members through the background information at section 3, before advising that the Internal Audit report for the general ledger, had concluded that there was substantial assurance with regards to the work of the CSC, before providing Members with a definition of 'substantial assurance'. The Deputy Managing Director, CSC then highlighted a few items from the report itself, including on page 24 of the report, a number of strengths identified and areas for improvement, of which there were none identified in the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members had reviewed the regional Internal Audit Report, issued during 2022/23 and determined there were no matters of governance or an internal control nature that required further action or attention.

7 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2022/23 (INCORPORATING THE 2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT) AND 2022/23 YEAR END POSITION

The Service Director, Finance Services presented Members with the Draft, unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 that incorporated the outturn for the previous financial year and also the Annual Governance Statement. She continued that the Statement of Accounts were at appendix 1 and required

certification by the host Section 151 officer following presentation at this joint committee. She advised that Accounts and Audit regulations required accounts to be certified by 31st May following financial year end and she was pleased to inform Members this challenging timescale would be met, before noting paragraphs 3.2 to 3.5 of the report, in respect of Audit Wales and the timing of the audit of the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts.

The Service Director, Finance Services continued that it was recommended that the Joint Committee approve the Annual Governance Statement, which started on page 42 on Appendix 1, in the Statement of Accounts, with the document prepared in accordance with 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016' and had been subject to review and challenge by the Consortium's Senior Management Team. She then drew Members attention to Section 6 of the Annual Governance Statement, which concluded that the overall assessment of the arrangements within the consortium remained effective, providing assurance to Members, before advising of the 4 proposals for improvement, outlined in Section 7 and advising Joint Committee would be updated with progress on these recommendations. She then advised that Appendix A of the AGS, from page 67, provided updates on the 21/22 recommendations, 2 of which were now completed and 2 continuing to be in progress and were picked up in the recommendations at section 7.

The Service Director, Finance Services advised that the unaudited Financial outturn position for 2022/23, was an underspend of £409k and has been transferred to the Service Remodelling earmarked reserve as approved at the meeting of 13th Dec 2022. This resulted in General Fund balances remaining at £174k and the Service remodelling earmarked reserve being £609k. She then provided further detail on the reasons for the underspend of £409k, which were detailed from p5 of the accounts at Appendix 1.

A Member noted that the Supplies and Transport costs were small, but asked whether those budget items would recur, year on year, or whether they would come to an end, as a result of changing working practices.

The Service Director, Finance Services advised that in respect of the transport budget, this had increased for 2023/24, with the base reset back to 'business as usual' with more face-to-face meetings taking place.

The Member asked for clarification around the underspend on employment.

The Service Director, Finance Services advised that the underspend had arisen because of temporary vacancies and from maximisation of the grant.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC explained that as well as maximisation of the grant, there had been a number of vacancies that arisen, and the recruitment process was a lot longer than the 30-day notice period.

The Managing Director, CSC acknowledged that recruitment was becoming more of a challenge, particularly as headteacher pay had increased ahead of Soulbury conditions. The Managing Director, CSC also acknowledged consideration was needed to be given to enhancing attractiveness of the opportunities employment in CSC offers. An advert had gone out to replace some IP's, with 13 applications for those posts, and 7 shortlisted, with 3 appointments to be made. The challenge was around recruiting staff to support the Welsh Medium School sector in particular, and the Managing Director CSC

advised that she felt further recruitment challenges may be ahead and may not be able to fill all vacancies.

The Chief Executive Officer (Merthyr) asked how stretched the organisation was at the moment, in terms of capacity.

The Managing Director, CSC explained that they were fortunate last year, in that they had over recruited into the IP team, but then had staff on long term sick, but had no capacity to backfill in terms of sickness. She continued that they were looking to work differently but didn't necessarily have the capacity to do that.

A Member asked for clarity around where people were coming from.

The Managing Director CSC confirmed that some of them were headteachers, but would probably only stay for 2 years, as they were close to retiring. She noted they had also attracted more people from England, looking to come into the Welsh system, so the application round had a different feel to it.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the Statement of Accounts, Outturns for 22/23, the service remodelling Earmarked reserve, and approve the Annual Governance Statement.

8 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC advised Members that she would be taking Members through the report, which was in regard to the updated terms of reference for the governance structure of CSC. The Deputy Managing Director, CSC then took Members through the background information at section 3, before explaining that the Terms of Reference (TOR) were outlined in section 4, advising of only minor changes, since the report to Members in September 2020, with these changes predominantly to do with increased Membership of groups to ensure groups were quorate and to have the opportunity to have all local authorities represented e.g., governor stakeholder group.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC advised that the TOR for these particular governance groups, did not align, currently, with the legal agreement, but as the Minister had announced a review of middle tier organisations, it was felt appropriate to wait for the outcome of this, before reverting back to reviewing the legal agreement.

It was **RESOLVED**, following review, to accept the terms of reference for the various governance groups within CSC.

9 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM RISK REGISTER

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC began by advising that in line with the request from Members, at the meeting held on 28 March 2023, the CSC risk register would become a standing item on the agenda and reviewed and discussed at all meetings. The Deputy Managing Director, CSC then took Members through the background information at section 3, noting that the risk register presented to Members today, only had some slight changes, with regards to the extending of dates to the new financial year, but if there were any areas that Members wished to have as a specific agenda item at a subsequent meeting, please advise.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC then took Members through the 12 items on the risk register.

The Chair felt there were several items that needed to be monitored on a regular basis, particularly items 1 and 5.

A Member, in reference to succession planning for headteachers, asked how much take up there was for deputy headteachers to go on the NPQH courses.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC, advised there were approximately 60 on the current Aspiring Headteacher course, who would look to be part of the NPQH assessment in February, but there was not absolute clarity on where it goes from there, other than there would be a pilot and some interim measures, potentially.

The Member also asked, what the success rate was of passing the course, and how many just had the NPQH and did nothing with it and how many actually utilised it.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC acknowledged that they had been doing some work around this recently, looking at people in the system who had attended and gained NPQH, in the last 5 years and looking at how many of those had taken up headship, and although it was a lower number than anticipated, there were substantially more acting headteachers at the moment. She advised that historically, they usually had an 80% – 85% pass rate, although she didn't have the exact figures, but could provide the accreditation rate figures, assessment centre figures, and a flavour of some of the work being done.

The Member asked if the number going through the system e.g., 60, was in line with other years.

The Assistant Director for Curriculum and Professional Learning, CSC acknowledged she was satisfied, but would have to look at this years, as Aspire had been put on hold.

The Corporate Director for Education and Family Support (Bridgend) agreed this was an important question, because what was being seen was a number of deputy headteachers that weren't progressing to headteacher, acknowledging that it was a significant responsibility being a headteacher, above a deputy headteacher, with a small pay difference, so it was an important one for the group to look at and monitor.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC reminded Members that she had presented a sub report on leadership support and development, at the last meeting, and this provided a detailed breakdown of the comparisons year on year, as well as the number of candidates, advising Members from that report, that at the assessment centre in February 22, 55 candidates were assessed and following moderation, 44 were successful in meeting the standards. She noted that in 2021/22, 56 candidates were assessed, with 45 meeting the standards; in 2020-21, 27 candidates were assessed, with 21 meeting the standards, and year before it was 43 assessed with 37 meeting the standards.

The Managing Director, CSC acknowledged that they were seeing more candidates taking on NPQH and not completing it. Some analysis had been

done of where those candidates were, noting that of the 44 that met the standards in 2022, 7 had a substantive headship, so there was a real challenge with people not taking on substantive headships. She also noted there were 40 acting headteachers across the region, but it was not known if all of those had NPQH. One unintended consequence was that some people going through that process had realised that headship, wasn't for them. She noted that one of the proposals in the new NPQH programme was that people wouldn't keep their NPQH status forever, so if they didn't get a headship, they would have to top it up or let their status lapse. She also felt it was important to work with some of the candidates who were interested, as to why they weren't getting those jobs or being successful at interview, and what was missing from the programme.

It was **RESOLVED**, following consideration, to approve the corporate risk register for CSC, which aligned to the updated Risk Management Policy.

10 Urgent Business

None

This meeting closed at 5.14 pm

**Cllr R Birch
Chair**