

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, 19 March 2024 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 J-P Blundell (Bridgend CBC) Councillor S Merry (Cardiff Council)
Councillor G Thomas (Merthyr Tydfil)

Officers in attendance

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

Ms C Seery, Managing Director, CSC
Ms K Lewis, Principal Improvement Partner - Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment, CSC
Ms A Price, Business Manager, CSC
Mr J Welch, Lead for Wellbeing and Vulnerable Groups, CSC
Mr A Williams, Assistant Director for Partnerships and Improvement, CSC
Mrs T Watson, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor R Lewis Ms L Blatchford

35 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

36 MINUTES 12.12.23

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 12th December 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

The Service Director - Finance Services provided an update in relation to the above minutes on the CSC Medium Term Financial Update (Indicative 3-Yr Budget, 24/25 - 26/27) and Budget Setting 2024/25 item, and confirmed that the lead Section 151 Officer had notified constituent local authorities of the approved revenue budget for 2024/25 (to enable incorporation into the respective budget setting arrangements for each Council) and confirmed that each constituent local authority had responded to the lead Section 151 Officer in RCT to agree those contributions.

37 2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE AND 2024/25 GRANT UPDATE

The Service Director, Finance Services presented the report to Members providing an updated position for the current financial year, a summary of the 2023/24 grant allocation and a note of the forthcoming Local Authority Education Grant (LAEG).

Members were informed, that the core budget of the consortium was set in December 2022, based upon a 3% reduction in Local Authority (LA) contributions, with a small proportion of the Service Remodelling Earmarked Reserve, providing one-off transitional funding supporting the setting of a balanced budget, the value being £33k. For the current financial year, the outturn currently showed an underspend of £177k, with no amounts required to be drawn down from the Earmarked Reserve.

Members were reminded that at the December 2023 Joint Committee, approval was given to allocate any current year underspends to the Service Remodelling Earmarked Reserve to support the challenging financial outlook going forward. Members were then referred to paragraph 3.2 of the report, with the Service Director – Finance Services detailing the key variances within the projected outturn position.

The Service Director – Finance Services then continued to outline section 4, which provided details of the Grants for 2023/24, at paragraph 4.1.

Members were also referred to section 5, paragraphs 5.1 to 5.3, of the report, which provided Members with an overview of changes to grant funding from 2024/25, in line with Welsh Governments (WG) aim of streamlining and simplifying funding and the expectation of local authorities to continue to support and fund any current regional consortia or partnership arrangements in areas of the LAEG to ensure consistency of support whilst the second phase of the Review of School Improvement: Roles and Responsibilities of Education Partners in Wales takes place.

The Service Director – Finance Services then referred to paragraph 5.4 confirming that the 2024/25 budget was approved based upon maintaining current grant levels to ensure the on-going delivery of agreed school improvement priorities.

A Member referred to paragraph 5.4 and noted, for the record, that Cardiff was still seeking clarification of the terms and conditions associated with the amounts being requested in respect of the LAEG funding.

The Service Director – Finance Services confirmed there was ongoing dialogue between the Consortium and all constituent local authorities to ensure terms and conditions are met. These discussions are continuing, and if necessary, would report back to the next Joint Committee meeting.

Following consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the current projected outturn position for 2023/24 (paragraph 3.2) and the allocation of any year-end underspend, after taking account of specific financial risks, to the existing Service Remodeling Earmarked Reserve to support the setting and delivery of balanced budgets over the medium-term (as approved by the Joint Committee on 12th December 2023).

- Note the current grant funding position for 2023/24.
- Note the Local Authority Education Grant (LAEG) position from April 2024.

38 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM GRANTS REPORT

The Business Manager CSC presented the report to Members providing an update on the grants to be received by the Consortium in 2023/24, for which notifications had been received, and the methods of allocation of each.

Members were informed that variations were received from WG on 1st February 2024 for an additional £175,950 which would take the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant for the financial year 2023/24 to £48,445,364, with the main aim of the additional funding to further support the NPQH Assessment Centre, of £165k, which covered the cost of the Assessors and the Assessment Centre itself. In addition, funding of £10,950 for National Support for Curriculum Reform, with the Business Manager, CSC, referring to the full report at Annex A for the detail.

Following consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Approve the distribution of grants as detailed in section 4 of the report (and Annex A).

39 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE ACROSS THE REGION

The Managing Director CSC began by explaining that the presentation was being provided because Members had raised questions and concerns about attendance across the region. She acknowledged that attendance and direct support for attendance sat with LA's but as a region some work was done around the LAs, so this would be a presentation on that cross-regional work but wouldn't include all of the work happening within LA Education Welfare Teams and extra support that maybe taking place within LA's.

The Lead for Wellbeing and Vulnerable Groups CSC then took Members through a PowerPoint Presentation which talked about the cross-regional work of CSC in terms of Attendance, following which the Assistant Director for Partnerships and Improvement CSC provided Members with details on Improvement Partner (IP) work with schools.

The Chaired thanked the Officers for their presentation and acknowledged it was something Members needed to be up to date with.

A Member acknowledged it was good to hear the work going on but would like to hear more examples of what would be considered good practice from other LA's.

The Lead for Wellbeing and Vulnerable Groups CSC explained that this wasn't LA level but highlighted the extent schools were going to e.g., feeding in at parents evening, reducing the cost of the school year e.g., trips, uniforms, sustainable recycling etc. He acknowledged that one of the more affluent secondary schools was now including family engagement and intervention, in Years 3 & 4 in their 2 highest deprived feeder primaries. He also noted there

was a lot of good work going on around poverty, which wasn't necessarily hitting outcomes or attendance yet, because a lot of work would take a while to have outcomes improved but building a cluster approach and building relationships with those families, would take a while.

The Assistant Director for Partnerships and Improvement CSC concluded that himself and the Lead for Wellbeing and Vulnerable Groups CSC had provided an overview of what was being done as a consortium around supporting attendance, although noted attendance very much sat with LA Attendance Officers however it was such an important part of learners' experience at schools, which was why they got involved. The Lead for Wellbeing and Vulnerable Groups CSC and himself, were more than happy to come back to another Joint Committee to share some practical examples of what schools were actually doing, that were starting to have those early signs of impact and suggested pulling together another session with presentations from school Leaders, where they were starting to have an impact.

Following consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the support for improving attendance in schools across CSC; and
- Consider the benefits to all stakeholders;
- Request that the Assistant Director for Partnerships and Improvement CSC and the Lead for Wellbeing and Vulnerable Groups CSC bring back specific examples of what is being done to a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

40 CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM SUPPORT FOR HIGH QUALITY TEACHING

The Managing Director CSC began by explaining that the presentation was being provided as teaching and learning was probably the most important thing that schools did, and this was an opportunity to talk about what was done to support teaching and learning.

The Principal Improvement Partner - Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment, CSC then took Members through a PowerPoint Presentation which shared some of the work that was happening around teaching and learning.

A Member asked how much Teacher Training courses covered this, so that Teachers were properly prepared for the quite different world that Teachers now operated in.

The Principal Improvement Partner - Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment, CSC explained that this built on what was already in Initial Teacher Education but acknowledged they had a relatively short time with their trainees, so within a year's PGCE, it was 9 or 10 months at best with a lot to fit in. She continued that there was an amazing professional learning programme, the Aspire Teaching Programme, for newly qualified teachers and those in the early years of teaching, that built on that and kept on building. There was a lot being done to prepare for Curriculum for Wales (CfW) with a number of area leads and associate advisors working very closely with Universities, particularly with Cardiff Met, so the collaboration was really helping.

A Member sought clarification around the qualitative/quantitative data in terms of investment in a teacher e.g., are we getting paid back in terms of what is expected from the development and how this was evidenced and analysed.

The Principal Improvement Partner - Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment, CSC felt that there was really sound and robust systems in place for CSC, so that any school that had attended a project or programme, or any schools that had bespoke support, the IP was notified immediately of those conversations before any support plan was generated e.g., is this definitely what the schools needs, what other context do we need. The IP then has a copy of that support plan, so they can see what support is happening and that support is then evaluated. Any time a school has contact with CSC it is recorded in the School Improvement Partnership Log (SIPL), so anybody working with that school is aware, and the IP's when visiting the schools can ask how it went. The Principal Improvement Partner - Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment, CSC concluded that she did feel that it was a real strength in CSC, because it ensured the loops were closed.

The Chair thanked the Principal Improvement Partner - Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment, CSC and said that she found the presentation really interesting, and it was gratifying to see that people were being offered such comprehensive support. The Chair continued that it would be useful to know at another meeting, how many people CSC were reaching with the programme and how well schools were engaging with it.

Following consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to

- Note the support for high quality teaching in CSC; and
- Consider the benefits to all stakeholders;
- Request that the Principal Improvement Partner - Curriculum Cohesion and Assessment, CSC bring back some school sharing practice on the impact of coming to the CSC Professional Learning, to a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

41 CSC RISK REGISTER

The Managing Director CSC reminded Members this was a standing item on the agenda but noted that there had been no changes to the Risk Register since the previous Joint Committee meeting, as it was currently in the process of being updated for the new financial year and new financial model. The Managing Director CSC confirmed that at the next meeting there would be a more in-depth update.

There were no questions from Members.

Following consideration, Members **RESOLVED** to

- Consider and approve the corporate risk register for Central South Consortium, which aligns to the updated Risk Management Policy.

42 URGENT BUSINESS

None

This meeting closed at 4.51 pm

**Cllr R Birch
Chair.**