

## **CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE.**

Minutes of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee Meeting held on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 10.00 am.

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

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

### **Council Officers in attendance:-**

Mr L. Harvey (Director of Education, Bridgend Council)  
Ms G. Davies (Director of Education & Inclusion Services, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council)  
Ms S Walker – (Chief Officer (Learning)/Chief Education Officer Merthyr Tydfil Council)  
Ms S Davies – Head of Finance: Education & Financial Reporting, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

### **Others in attendance:-**

Ms C Seery (Managing Director, Central South Consortium)  
Ms L. Blatchford (Deputy Managing Director, Central South Consortium)  
Mr W Murphy – Head of Western Learning Federation  
Mr D Jenkins – Head of Ty Coch/ Park Lane Special Schools

#### **41 Declaration of Interest**

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

#### **42 Minutes**

It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

#### **43 Matters Arising**

**Minute No 35** - It was confirmed that Members approved the budget proposed in the December paper and since then the host authority S151 officer has received confirmation from each of the local authorities to confirm agreement to the budget detailed in the December report.

#### 44 Special Schools' Network.

The Chair welcomed Members of the Special School Network Mr Wayne Murphy Head of the Western Learning Federation and Mr David Jenkins Head of Ty Coch and Park Lane special schools.

Members received a presentation which showed the procedures and process in place during the pandemic with the special school arena.

In the first instance Members received an overview of the strengths that have been developed as individual schools and as a network some of the strengths are as follows:

- Multi-Disciplinary Forum which was established early in the pandemic;
- Strong relationships with parents and stakeholder;
- Increased parent engagement ;
- Sector Peer support –working to interpret guidance and make the right decisions based on vulnerability of learners ;
- Support from Local Authority, amongst others.

Officers also presented Members of the Joint Committee with Challenges special schools have faced over the last 12 months, these included health conditions effected long term absences, burn out of staff with the Sector/ illness/ loss, financial pressures and the delayed trauma of the effects of the pandemic.

Finally Members were provided with the next steps for schools within the special school network which are highlighted below:

- Recovery curriculum based on trauma informed school approach;
- Listening to experiences, supporting physical and emotional health and wellbeing;
- Readyng pupils to learn in school;
- Re-establishing social routine, structures =, social interactions;
- Evaluating the past year – maintain the positive, learning from experience;
- Being ready for delayed trauma ;
- Flexibility

The Chair thanked both Headteacher for a very informative presentation and opened up the meeting for Members questions and observations.

Members of the Joint Committee echoed the Chairs praise for the presentation from the Special Schools network representatives and put forward many question to both Mr Murphy and Mr Jenkins.

Members asked if there had been lessons learnt especially in respect of remote support for learners who are unable to attend school going forward and what support can we as the consortium give to help this. In response Mr Murphy explained that there is a system in place now and we need to work together with health and other service to maximise the impact especially for special needs pupils. With regards to support we need to ensure that communication is there amongst schools and consortium and other organisations.

Other Members echoed the comments of Member and commended the staff for all their hard work and commitment during this time.

After further comments Members **RESOLVED** to note the work carried out through this time and wish them well going forward.

#### **45 JOINT REPORT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AND THE TREASURER – 2020/21 BUDGET MONITORING AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE**

The Head of Finance –Education and Financial Reporting presented the Committee with an update on the projected outturn position for 2020/21 and a summary of grant funding for 2020/21. Members were also provided with the work underway to refresh the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Head of Finance –Education and Financial Reporting informed Members that the recommendations to this report are detailed within section 2.

The Head of Finance –Education and Financial Reporting continued to provide Members with a summary of the current financial years projected outturn which is set out in table 1 on section 3 of the report. This results in a small underspend of £1.250, very similar to the £1,439 underspend reported in December. The Officer hoped this gives Members of the Joint Committee reassurance on the continued financial control at Central South Consortium and demonstrates that stable and robust financial management is in place.

The Officer continued and provided Members of the Joint Committee with some variances:

- £150K underspend on Employee costs relating to a part year Accelerated Progress Lead £51k vacancy, release of contingency budget £40K used to absorb additional cost pressure relating to increased daily rate of seconded Improvement Partners from £400 to £450 from September 2020, other temporary vacancies such as a PA role and also various savings such as some staff not being in the pension scheme.
- £181K overspends on supplies and services mainly relating to the Improvement Partners pilot project – costs of accreditation £57k, ICT costs £74K and also the facilitation of coaching and mentoring programme across schools £56K to support wellbeing of senior staff.

Members were reminded that at December's Joint Committee approval was given of a distribution of an uncommitted earmarked reserve balance of £322K. This has been redistributed to LAs. The Officer explained there is no change to the £200K earmarked reserve setting aside funding to re-model the service and as part of the year- end report, it is likely that the Joint Committee will be requested to carry this forward into the new financial year.

In respect of grants received by the consortium the officer explained section 4 of the report shows details of the amounts retained and those delegated to schools and local authorities.

Moving on to the Medium Term Financial Plan Members of the Joint Committee the Head of Finance –Education and Financial Reporting reminded Members that in January 2020 the Joint Committee agreed a 3 year plan to reduce LA contributions by 3% for 20/21 (the current financial year) 1% for the next year as approved in December 2020 and 1% for 22/23.

It was explained that since that time, the consortium has worked within those parameters and it's positive to note that:

- the financial position for 20/21 is in line with budget
- a balanced budget was set for 21/22 on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020

whilst delivering high quality school improvement activities throughout an unprecedented period.

To enable a Medium Term Financial Plan to be presented at the July JC, Members are asked whether they support the parameters outlined in paragraph 5.5.

(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 on-going delivery of savings at levels achieved in previous years will be extremely challenging).

(c) The Consortium to fully fund:

- Estimated employee costs and National Insurance Contribution levels; and
- Estimated non-pay costs (including goods and services inflation).

The Head of Finance –Education and Financial Reporting explained that subject to Joint Committee's 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 July 2021 Joint Committee and will subsequently serve to inform the 2022/23 budget setting process.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and thanked Members for their questions and observations

Following consideration of the report and recommendations, it was **RESOLVED**:

- To note the current projected outturn position for 2020/21
- Note the current grant funding position 2020/21
- To agree broad parameters to refresh the Medium Term Financial

Plan to enable a detailed position be reported to the Joint Committee in July.

#### **46 Audit Plan 2020/2021**

Mr M Jones Audit Wales presented the Central South Consortium with the 2021 Audit Plan. He explained that the document sets out the work that is planned to be undertaken as the statutory responsibilities as the external auditor and how he would fulfil his obligations under the Code of Practice.

Members consider the information in the report and **RESOLVED** to note its content

#### **47 Internal Audit Report 2020/2021**

The Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium provided Members of the Joint Committee with the Internal Audit Report issued by the Regional Internal Audit Shared Service (RIASS) to the Central South Consortium during 2020/21.

The Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium explained that Internal Audit plays an important role in providing independent assurance on the systems of internal control operating with the Central South Consortium.

The Deputy Managing Director continued and reminded Members that the Central South Consortium is also responsible for undertaking an assessment of its governance arrangements each year which includes the system of internal control, the findings from which are set out in an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The conclusions from the Internal Audit's work during 2020-21 will form part of the AGS for this period. The AGS will be reported at the Joint Committee Meeting in May 2021.

Members acknowledged that based on the work undertaken by the (RIASS) during the year, no recommendations for improvement were deemed necessary in respect of the Consortium's internal control arrangements.

After considering the report Members of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the Internal Audit report issued during 2020/21

#### **48 AGS Progress Report**

The Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium presented a progress update on the proposals for improvement made within 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement.

Members were reminded that the CSC'S Annual governance Statement (AGS) relating to 2019/20 financial year was reported and approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The document described the governance arrangements in place, challenged their effectiveness

and set out proposals for improvement.

Members were advised that the AGS made four proposals for improvement and note that the Consortium's Senior Management Team had accepted these and was committed to their implementation during 2020/21.

Members were also advised that an update on progress would be reported to Joint Committee during the year to enable elected Members to review and scrutinise the extent of progress being made.

Following consideration of the report, was **RESOLVED** to note the progress that had been made to date in implementing the proposals for improvement

#### **49 Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Central South Consortium (2019- 2020)**

Members were provided an overview in relation to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Central South Consortium 2019-20 by the Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium.

Members were presented with the four main areas of work were selected during 2019/20 for focused evaluation which were as follows:

- Vulnerable Learners Project
- Peer Engagement & Collaboration Models;
- Central Wales Challenge(Hub Focus)
- Annual Survey

When concluding her report the Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium explained that the Central South Consortium are committed to taking the following next steps as identified within strand evaluations within the report:

- Further embed the learning from the Vulnerable Learners' Project, and continue the strong partnership working with local authorities. Identify and disseminate research and practice to share with schools across the region;
- Further develop the strategy for Equity and Excellence as the basis for school improvement activity;
- Evaluate the pilot peer engagement / collaboration models to inform the next steps with the CSC Peer Engagement Process map. Align this work to the National Evaluation and Improvement Resource (NEIR) following 2019-20 piloting;
- Develop an e-learning strategy for PL, including increasing capacity to the CSC team to lead this;

- Establish more rigour in the hub and LP model to make it easier to monitor impact;
- Further consideration of CSWC evaluations processes and methods to ensure impact is captured; and
- Redesign the Annual Survey questions in line with the reform agenda and associated PL developments.

In addition, CSC have also identified the following areas for consideration in 2020-21

- Review the Challenge Adviser deployment model in light of the removal of formal categorisation;
- Professional Learning and accreditation for CSC school improvement colleagues;
- Review and propose changes to the way CSC support governors; and
- Support for Continuity of Learning

Finally, CSC propose to provide an annual effectiveness and efficiency report to Members of the Joint Committee in the Autumn Term each year. This report will form the basis of the reports to local authority annual scrutiny committees.

Strand evaluations for 2020-21 should continue for the following areas:

- Central South Wales Challenge Models;
- Peer Partnerships; and
- Support for Vulnerable Learners

Further strand evaluations should be considered for the following:

- Support for Governors
- Digital Learning
- Early Career Pathways
- Leadership Support and Development

Members of the Central South Joint Committee **RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **50 Central South Consortium Grants Report 2020/2021**

The Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium presented Members with an update on the grants to be received by the Consortium in 2020/21, for which notifications have been received, and the methods of allocation of each.

Members were informed of the method of apportionment and the 2020/21 grants it was explained that approval letters have been received detailing grant levels for Central South Consortium. The Directors have agreed to maintain the local authority dis-aggregation of the funding and to apply a common formula of the delegation of the local authority funding to schools.

Members put forward their questions and observations and **RESOLVED**:

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

## **51 Central South Consortium Business Plan 2020/21**

The Central South Consortium Joint Committee were presented with the Central South Consortium's Business Plan 2020/21 Progress Report.

It was explained that the Business Plan 2020/21 runs from April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Members were reminded that the Business Plan 2020-2021 was approved by Joint Committee on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

The Deputy Managing Director Central South Consortium highlighted the progress made against the five priorities outlined in the business plan which closely align with the Welsh Government national approach.

After consideration of the plan Members of the Central South Joint Committee **RESOLVED** to note the Business Plan 2020/21 Progress Report

## **52 Central South Consortium Business Plan 2021/22**

The Central South Joint Committee were presented with the final proposals for the Central South Business Plan 2021/22. Members were reminded that they received the draft business plan for consideration on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 where they approved the following five:

- Develop a high-quality education profession;
- Develop inspirational leaders to facilitate working collaboratively to raise standards;
- Develop strong and inclusive schools committed to wellbeing , equity and excellence;
- Develop a robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting self- improving systems.
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Central South Consortium.

The Deputy Managing Director advised Members that the drive teams have meet with a variety of stakeholders (including Directors) to develop the business plan and detailed operational plans that sit beneath the business plan.

The Officer highlighted that indicative grant funding from Welsh Government is yet to be confirmed for all priority areas, and once this is received the funding section of the business plan will be completed and shared with Members.

Members acknowledge the wider stakeholder consultation with all schools and other stakeholders took place in March 2021 and that priorities for all local authorities will be included within the plan once received.



Following consideration of the report Members **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report.

**53 CSC Governance Groups (Terms of Reference )**

The Managing Director Central South Consortium updated Members of the Joint Committee with the draft terms of reference for the previously approved governance structure for the Central South Consortium from April 2021.

Members were reminded that at its Committee held on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 Members approved Option 3 which preserves the current Joint Committee Structure and creates a Central South Management board with increased membership. This model also recognised the statutory functions of the LAs and retains the Director group as a key group within the governance structure. It also gives Headteachers the opportunity to be involved regularly to develop the strategic direction of the organisation, this model also recognises the key role of Headteachers in school improving systems.

Members considered the Terms and Conditions of the various governance groups with the Central South Consortium and **RESOLVED** to accept the progress made and agree the next steps.

**54 Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business to discuss however Members agreed to move the next meeting of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee from 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to a later date in May to enable Officers to present the final end of year accounts.

**This meeting closed at 11.35 am**

**CLLR C. SMITH  
CHAIR.**