

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE.

Minutes of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 7 June 2022 at 2.00 pm.

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

Councillor R. Lewis (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council)
Councillor Jon-Paul Blundell (Bridgend County Borough Council)
Councillor S. Merry (Cardiff Council)
Councillor R. Birch (Vale of Glamorgan)

Council Officers in attendance: -

Mr E Cooper Lead Chief Executive, (Merthyr Tydfil Taf 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 C Seery, Managing Director Central South Consortium
Ms L Blatchford Deputy, Managing Director Central South Consortium
Mr Carwyn Rees, Audit Lead (Audit Wales)

1 Welcome & Apologies

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome Councillors and Officers to the meeting.
Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillor Michelle Jones (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council).

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

3 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th March 2022 as an accurate reflection of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee.

4 TO ELECT A CHAIR

Members **RESOLVED** to elect County Borough Councillor R Birch as Chair of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee for the 2022/2023 Municipal Year.

5 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

Members **RESOLVED** to appoint County Borough Councillor R Lewis as Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2022/2023.

6 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2022-2023 MUNICIPAL YEAR

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the proposed dates for the Calendar of Meetings of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee for the 2022/2023 Municipal Year.

7 AUDIT PLAN 2021/2022

The Audit Wales Lead provided Members with a brief overview of the 2021/2022 Audit Plan. It was advised that Audit Wales main responsibility towards the Audit Plan 2021/22 was to Audit the Financial Statements and provide an opinion on their "truth and fairness".

The Audit Wales Lead continued by informing Members of the two main risks which have been identified for this year and these are consistent with other audited bodies. These include a potential weakness in the process of identifying and recording related party transactions at Joint Committee and the potential risk of management override of controls.

The Audit Wales Lead directed Members to paragraph 21 of the report which set out Audit timescales for Audit of Financial Statement Reports and Opinion of Financial Statements. Members were advised of delays in completion of the reports for July and as a result these will be brought to Joint Committee for approval in September 2022.

Members were directed to Paragraph 15 and 16 of the report which highlighted an increase in the Audit fees this year by 3.8%, which was due to a need of continual investment in audit quality and in response to increasing cost pressures.

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Committee **RESOLVED** to note the Audit Plan for 2021/22.

8 2021-2022 YEAR END POSITION / ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Service Director, Finance Services presented a report to Members which provided an overview of the Central South Consortium draft statement of Accounts for 2021/22 which incorporated the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement along with the draft outturn position for the year.

Members were advised that at the Joint Committee meeting held on the 17th March 2022, an update was provided in respect of the approved earmarked reserves and at that point, it was anticipated that a request to maintain the earmarked reserve of £200k will remain to support on-going service remodelling and medium-term planning as highlighted within the year-end position within the report.

The Service Director, Finance Services noted to Members that Appendix 1 of the report assumes approval of this earmarked reserve.

It was noted that Accounts and Audit Regulations require The Statement of Accounts to be certified by 31st May after the financial year end and publication of audited accounts by 31st July. However, in recognition of challenging timescales, Welsh Government have outlined their expectation for 2021/22 Statement of Accounts requiring certification by 31st August and publication of final audited accounts by 30th November.

The Service Director, Finance Services advised Members that The Statement of Accounts at Appendix 1 will be subject to external audit as outlined by the Audit Lead Officer from Audit Wales. Once audited, the accounts will be re-presented to the Joint Committee for approval in September 2022.

The Service Director, Finance Services directed Members to table 1 of the report which highlighted the draft 2021/22 outturn position for the Consortium. Members were advised that the Consortium has an underspend of £27k, thus increasing the General Fund balance from £147k to £174k.

To provide further detail, the Service Director, Finance Services advised Members that the net underspend was related to variances such as employee costs which have seen an underspend of £41k due to temporary staff vacancies. Supplies and Services have seen an overspend of £10k due to one-off costs for ICT hardware for new starters, equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings and office equipment purchases in line with the reconfiguration of the office space. However, Support Services have seen an overspend of £7k due to the need for additional services commissioned from the host Authority to meet business need. In addition, there has been an overachievement of £5k relating to unbudgeted income for interest receivable.

The Service Director, Finance Services informed Members that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which is incorporated into the Statement of Accounts at Appendix 1 on pages 42-70 was drafted in line with the requirements of the CIPFA document called "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government".

The Annual Governance Statement sets out the framework for governance and internal control for the Joint Committee to carry out its functions and reviews its effectiveness. It outlines the main components of the framework, including the arrangements for Internal Audit and how the Consortium has complied with the various elements of the framework.

The Service Director, Finance Services directed Members to section 6 of the AGS and advised that following an evidence-based review, the conclusions are that the governance arrangements in Central South Consortium remain effective. However, the Service Director, Finance Services recognised the need for improvements in some areas which have been set out in section 7 (pg.66) of the AGS.

Members were advised that progress of the required improvements will be reported to Joint Committee during the course of the Municipal year.

To conclude the Service Director, Finance Services informed Members that the previous Annual Governance Statement progress report was presented to Joint

Committee in December 2021; at that point, of the 10 proposals of improvement, 5 were complete, and 5 were in progress. It was confirmed that an update is provided within the Statement of Accounts whereby 8 recommendations are now complete, with 2 continuing to be progressed as highlighted within Appendix A on page 68 of the Statement of Accounts.

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

- To approve the earmarked reserve request set out at 3.2
- Note the draft Statement of Accounts for the Central South Consortium for the year-ending 31st March 2022 (Appendix 1) and the draft outturn position for the year (section 4- Table 1)
- To approve the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement

9 CSC GRANT AWARD REPORT 2022-2023 (RCSIG)

The Deputy Managing Director CSC presented the report to Members which provided an update on the grants to be received by the Consortium in 2022/23 from the Welsh Government (WG); for which notifications have been received and the methods of allocation of each. Members were informed that Central South Consortium receives 3 separate grants from WG which include the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG), Pupil Development Grant (PDG) and the Siarter Iaith.

The report aimed to present the details of the award of funding in relation to the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG) 2022/23.

To provide Members with background information, the Deputy Managing Director CSC advised that once an award of funding is received into the Consortium, the governance process is taken to the CSC Management Board which encompasses 5 Local Authority Directors as well as Members of the Senior Management Team of Central South Consortium. The awards of funding will then be presented along with the proposals for apportionment which are then brought to Joint Committee for approval.

The Deputy Managing Director informed Members of Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils responsibilities as host authority in accepting the terms and conditions of the grants and putting in place arrangements to distribute funding as determined by Members of the Joint Committee, within the Consortium.

Members were advised the appointment of each grant will vary depending on the nature, intended recipients, purposes and the associated terms and conditions as highlighted in the full award of funding letter for the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant 2022-2023 received from the WG within the report.

The Deputy Managing Director CSC informed Members that the total award of funding for the RCSIG was £48,652,545 which covers the period from the 1st April 2022 to the 31st March 2023. The purpose of the funding will be targeted towards supporting the delivery of WG aspirations and priorities for schools and education. The terms and conditions of the RCSIG are highlighted within the award of funding letter, which outlines WG's overarching national priorities.

The Deputy Managing Director CSC noted to Members that the RCSIG will support the delivery of Curriculum for Wales and its associated objectives. It was advised that as part of the grant, there is requirements to focus on the 4 enabling objectives as outlined in section 5.1 of the report

The Deputy Managing Director directed Members to table 1 of the report which detailed a breakdown of the appointment of the RCSIG funding in line with the approved CSC 2022/2023 Business Plan. Members were advised that some of the funding is held centrally to fund teams, specific business plan activities and projects. The Deputy Managing Director CSC continued by informing Members of the current 84.9% of delegated funding towards LAs and schools as part of Central South Consortiums Strategy work with Central South Wales Challenge Models.

A Member inquired on the Local Authority Match Funding Contribution and what formula is used to calculate the figure.

The Deputy Managing Director advised that it's a common formula used each year based on IBA and still an expectation within the RCSIG recommendations.

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

- To approve the distribution of the grants as detailed in section 5 of the report.

10 CSC GRANT AWARD REPORT 2022-2023 (SIARTER LAITH)

The Deputy Managing Director CSC presented the report to Members which provided an update on the grants to be received by the Consortium in 2022/23 from the Welsh Government (WG); for which notifications have been received and the methods of allocation of each.

The report aimed to present the details of the award of funding in relation to the Siarter laith 2022/23.

The Deputy Managing Director CSC informed Members that a total grant of £77,800 was received for 2022/23. The funding is targeted towards supporting the priority areas of increasing pupils informal use of the Welsh language by delivering the Siarter laith and its associated programmes.

Members were advised that the funding is retained by the Consortium in order to directly fund a member of staff to ensure that the programmes are delivered effectively.

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

- To approve the distribution of the grant as detailed in section 5 of this report.

11 CSC BUSINESS PLAN, 2022-2025

The Managing Director CSC presented the report which was aimed at providing Members with an opportunity to review and scrutinise the final CSC Business Plan 2022-25.

The Managing Director advised Members of Central South Consortiums responsibility in producing a Business Plan yearly; the draft business plan was previously reported to Joint Committee on 22 December 2021 for consideration. At that point, it was agreed that the Business Plan would move to cover from 2022 to 2025.

The Managing Director advised Members that the Business Plan consists of 5 priority areas; these include

- Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment
- Leadership
- Equity & Wellbeing
- School Improvement; and
- Effectiveness and Efficiency of Central South Consortium

The Managing Director informed Members that the purpose of the 2022-23 business plan will be targeted towards guiding CSC work for the next three years and has been developed in conjunction with LAs to ensure that appropriate LA priorities are embedded within the plan.

Members were advised of Central South Consortiums three overarching roles which are woven within the Business Plan 2022-25, these include; providing a regional school improvement service to all schools on behalf of Local Authorities, Providing appropriate Professional Learning opportunity for stakeholders at all levels to support local, regional and national priorities and lastly, working with Welsh Government (WG) and partners to develop, share and implement national policy.

The Managing Director CSC informed Members of the extensive evaluations undertaken within CSC work which in turn shapes the business planning processes. Members were informed of a range of evaluative reports produced throughout the year which will be shared with Joint Committee.

The Managing Director CSC informed Member that the 2022-25 Business plan will guide the work of CSC as the organisation recovers from the Covid-19 Pandemic. Members were advised that the development of the Business Plan 2022-25 prior to publication has been impacted by contributions from a range of Stakeholders as highlighted in section 3.5 of the report.

The Managing Director CSC directed Members to pages 216-254 of the pack which shows the Final Draft Business Plan 2022-25. It lays out in details the actions which CSC will undertake over the coming years.

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

- To approve the content of the Business Plan 2022-25 and instruct Officers to move forward with publication.

12 CSC WORKSHOP (MEMBERS) REPORT

The Managing Director informed Members of a proposed workshop scheduled for the 30th June 2022 for new Members of the Joint Committee. The Workshop will be held virtually with the intent of giving new Members the opportunity to learn more about Central South Consortium and meet the CSC Team.

The Managing Director advised Members that the invite will be forwarded to Scrutiny Members from each Local Authorities in order to ensure everyone has a better understanding of the work CSC does in supporting all 5 Local Authorities.

The Chair raised concern surrounding the potential repetitiveness of the training session as Scrutiny Members within the Local Authorities have been offered similar sessions.

The Managing Director advised communication with Directors and the Democratic Services teams of the 5 Local Authorities will be undertaken to ensure the content of the training material is not repeated.

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

- To note the date of the proposed workshop

13 EXCLUSION TO THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider passing the under-mentioned resolution:

“That press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

14 2021-2022 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST SUMMARY REPORT

The Joint Education Service Committee considered the Freedom of information requests and Subject Access Requests received and responded to by the Central South Consortium during 2021/22.

After consideration of the information presented by the Deputy Managing Director CSC, it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the content of the report.

This meeting closed at 2.53 pm

**CLLR R. BIRCH
CHAIR.**