

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 25 October 2022 at 3.00 pm

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

Councillor R. Birch (Vale of Glamorgan) (Chair)
Councillor R. Lewis (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council)
Councillor Jon-Paul Blundell (Bridgend County Borough Council)
Councillor M. Jones (Merthyr Tydfil Council)

Council Officers in attendance: -

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 Mike Jones - Audit Lead (Audit Wales)

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Sarah Merry, Cardiff Council and Ellis Cooper, Chief Executive Officer, Merthyr Tydfil CBC.

17 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

18 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 7th June 2022 as an accurate reflection of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee.

19 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2022

The Service Director, Finance Services, advised that financial reports of CSC were prepared very competently and robustly by the finance team in CSC, and were then reviewed by the S151 Officer, of the host authority, and in presenting these reports to Members, with the Service Director, Finance Services representing the S151 Officer. Members were advised, that in terms of the regulatory background, the Accounts & Audit regulations required accounts to be certified by 31st May after year end, and audited Statements of Account, published by 31st July after year end. It was acknowledged that due to local

government elections in 2022, it was not possible to arrange a Joint Committee to certify the draft accounts by 31st May. In addition to this, due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19, Welsh Government (WG) outlined their expectations for the certification and audit of Statements of Account, extending the timescales and requiring certification by 31st August 2022, with these accounts certified on 14th June 2022, and timescale for publication of audited accounts extended to 30th November 2022.

The Service Director, Finance Services, explained that she was not planning to go through the Statement of Accounts at Appendix 1 in any great detail, as these were presented in draft form at the June Joint committee, but advised that since that point, an audit had taken place and advised Members, that only a very few minor presentational adjustments were required as a result, which evidenced the draft accounts were of very good quality. There had been no change to the outturn position as a result of the audit and general reserves remained as per the draft accounts, at £174k. The consortium's accounts were also positively presented at the host authority's Governance and Audit Committee on 7th September 2022, and this provided Joint Committee with an additional layer of assurance over the robustness of the documents presented today.

In concluding, the Service Director, Finance Services, acknowledged it was standard practice for Audit Wales to request a Letter of Representation from audited bodies, which was presented at Appendix 2, and detailed the joint Committee's responsibilities and controls that were in place to ensure that the financial statements are not materially misstated, in particular in relation to fraud and related party transactions.

Following consideration by Members it was **RESOLVED** to:

- Approve the audited Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 as set out at Appendix 1, together with the Letter of Representation at Appendix 2;

Note the final outturn position for the year and the level of General Reserves held.

20 REPORT OF AUDIT WALES - AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Audit Wales Lead presented the report and summarised the main findings from the audit of the 2021-2022 accounts. Members were drawn to page 4 of the report, and in particular the level of 'materiality' applied within the report, which had been set at £1.998 million for this year's audit, noting that there were some areas of the accounts, that had a much lower 'materiality' set. Members were informed that there were no misstatements identified in the accounts and the Audit Wales Lead praised the finance team. Members acknowledged one error, in that the wrong audit opinion had been quoted in the financial statements and should be updated from the current ISA 260.

Following consideration by Members it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the Audit of Accounts Report, by Audit Wales.

21 BUDGET REPORT 2022-2023

The Service Director, Finance Services advised that the report set out the projected financial position of the consortium for the current financial year. The budget of £3.6 million was agreed by Joint Committee on 22nd Dec 2021,

with the current position showing a total estimated underspend for the year of £10,482. Members were advised that Employee budgets were currently underspending by £36k resulting from temporary vacancies associated with the timing of recruitment, offset by additional Improvement Partner capacity. Premises shows a net underspend of £32k where there were savings on the Valleys Innovation Centre accommodation, again offset by external premises hire. Members were advised that transport was showing an overspend resulting from increased face to face meetings, as things returned to normal, after Covid-19 and supplies and services were projected to overspend as a result of investment in ICT equipment, and also translation, advertising and promotional materials.

The Service Director, Finance Services continued that Members would be aware of the uncertainty of pay awards for 2022/23 with APT&C staff offered a flat rate of £1925, teachers 5% in addition to uncertainty regarding the Soulbury, terms and conditions, so clearly a key factor for outturns. The additional costs of these pay awards had not been factored into the outturns with an additional potential cost of around £58k. Members were advised that this pressure, at this level, could be met from some temporary underspends, and looking at maximising grant funding opportunities and reducing non-essential in year expenditure. Members would also be aware from their local authorities that work was currently ongoing on medium term financial plans. The medium term financial plan for the consortium was now planned to be presented in December, and this would need to factor in the implications of the 22/23 pay award, alongside any workforce and other cost pressures. Members were advised that section 4 detailed the significant grants that were received by the region, with £87 million being delegated to Local Authorities and their schools.

Following consideration by Members it was **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the current outturn position for 2022/23;
- Note the estimated additional cost implications of the current 2022/23 pay award offers and support the proposed approach to funding the additional costs in 2022/23;

Note the current grant position for 2022/23.

22 CSC ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN REPORT

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC began by advising Members that the purpose of the report was to consider and ratify the annual business plan progress report for 2021-22, which in future years would come in the summer term. Members were advised that the annual report was based on the previous financial year and provided an update with the progress and impact that had been achieved for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, with the business plan approved by joint committee in March 2021, and five overarching priorities outlined, within the plan for that year, as detailed in paragraph 1.1, of the business plan.

The Self-Evaluation Review Process, was presented, at Section 2 of the business plan and Members were advised there was a termly cycle of business planning and impact reviews, with the senior leadership team taking part as drive teams, on each of those five areas. That information was then rolled up into a termly report as in previous years, and then the annual report was presented.

Section 3, provided Members with the overarching summary of progress, and Table 1, showed the different areas of the priorities, aligned to the business plan and the level of progress made. There had been very good or strong progress made in over three quarters of the elements, satisfactory progress made in almost a quarter of the remaining elements, with the elements where progress was not deemed to be satisfactory enough, often covid related, and had been identified and picked up in the current financial year.

Section 4 then provided Members with any risks identified at an operational level, reported through these interim reports and into the annual report. Members were advised, there were no areas of risk that couldn't be managed at a local level but the Deputy Managing Director, CSC would be presenting the revised risk register to the December meeting of the Committee, after consultation with the Management Board, at their meeting in November. Section 5 of the report then provided Members with an analysis of the impact that had been made against the different priorities within the business plan, and the Deputy Managing Director, CSC then provided Members with a few key points, from Section 5.1, to develop a high-quality education procession, which she hoped would reassure Members that the professional learning provided was having an impact on the delegates, schools and settings within CSC.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC explained that the Appendices, A – F, at the end of Business Plan, included narrative against each of the actions within the business plan, for Members to cross reference, and see the detail over the progress that had been made as well as the impact. Members acknowledged that the report had also been presented to all governance groups, including the CSC management board, as well as going to governor stakeholder groups and regional stakeholder groups.

Following consideration by Members it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Business Plan Report for 2021 – 2022 of Central South Consortium.

23 CSC ANNUAL MONITORING AND REPORTING CYCLE, 22-23

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC advised that this report provided Members with a proposal to change the reporting cycle for the work undertaken within CSC. Following a review of reporting processes within CSC, Professor Caroline Daly, of UCL had worked with members of the executive leadership team, management board, headteacher and governor stakeholder governance groups and CSC staff, to consider how this reporting could be improved. Members were advised that following a series of workshops and discussions, a revised reporting cycle, had been developed, for consideration, which addressed some of the issues highlighted including the need to develop a shared understanding of the purpose of evaluation, the shared language, when discussing evaluation and impact, to develop a framework for evaluation and to revise monitoring and reporting frameworks, with the revised framework for evaluation attached as Appendix A.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC then took Members through the revised monitoring framework, outlined in Appendix B, noting that the implications of this would be to produce two annual reports including an Annual Academic Year Scrutiny Report presented to Members of the Joint Committee in December each year, and once approved by Members, would be presented to the LA Scrutiny Committees in the Spring Term. Each LA Scrutiny Committee would receive a regional overview as well as an individual overview on the work in their

local authority. In addition, an Annual Financial Year Report would be presented to Members of the Joint Committee in June each year. The proposed annual reports would replace the previous annual Effectiveness and Efficiency Report as well as the termly business plan progress reports. In addition, these reports would provide progress on the CSC Business Plan with specific LA priorities included within the LA Scrutiny Reports.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC concluded that the changes would ensure that stakeholders received an update in a timely manner and it would allow improvement of the processes for gathering that intelligence, whether that be through improvement partners from schools directly, or through surveys etc. It was felt that these proposals were sustainable, and working with governance groups, ensured the needs of all our stakeholders were met with ongoing review after each cycle, taking onboard feedback to improve for the future. Members were asked to consider whether there were any areas of the work of CSC Members would like to see included within the annual reports.

Following discussion, it was agreed that that further information on the turnover of staff, within education, by sector and possibly even by subject, should be provided.

The Deputy Managing Director, CSC noted that this was an item that was addressed in the Risk Register and would be presented to Members in the December meeting.

Following consideration by Members it was **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed monitoring cycle.

24 MEMBERS' (CSC) INFORMATION

The Managing Director, CSC advised that the Committee had before them, a copy of the booklet of Information for Elected Members, outlined in Appendix 1, which provided information about the work of CSC including some information about Education in Wales, a link to the Improvement priorities and the way those were delivered, through the central South Wales challenge, a small piece of information about how CSC was funded, and how that funding was then allocated, with the vast majority of that devolved out to schools within the local authorities, and then finally information how that work was evaluated.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the booklet should be emailed out to all Elected Members in the 5 Local Authorities, within the South-Central Consortium.

Following consideration by Members it was **RESOLVED** approve the content of Central South Consortium's (CSC's) Information for Elected Members' Booklet.

25 MEMBERS' CSC ENGAGEMENT SESSION DATES, 22-23

The Managing Director, CSC advised that this item was about the Induction Programme that had been running and thanked those Members who had attended the second induction session, last week. Members were advised that this was quite an informative session, looking at the role of Scrutiny within the WG guidance and the role of Improvement Partners and how that guidance was being used to pull together all of the support going into schools. The Managing Director, CSC advised Members that dates were not yet confirmed, for the

Spring and Summer Terms, but Officers would work with Democratic Services to come up with proposed dates, so these could be put in the diary. The Managing Director, CSC acknowledged that there were a number of scrutiny members who came to the previous session and the same format would carry on, with something that was regional and then breaking out into local authority subgroups, to look at what that meant for each local authority. Members were reminded that the sessions were recorded, and sent out to Members, and all Members of the Scrutiny Committees, and stated that it would be useful for colleagues who weren't able to attend the session to access that material, and to engage with it, advising that if there were things, which would be particularly useful to have done at local level with Scrutiny Committees, CSC were more than happy to do that as well.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the following would be considered for the Spring and Summer Terms:

Spring - looking at the story of a school over a year and the support that goes into it (possibly outside of the 5 local authorities that make up CSC)

Summer – Learning and Improvement Journey.

Following consideration by Members it was **RESOLVED** to note that the dates for the proposed workshops, were yet to be confirmed and acknowledge the areas of focus for the proposed workshops in the Spring and Summer Terms.

26 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

This meeting closed at 3.49 pm

**Cllr R Birch
Chair**