

SUBJECT: FIANL DRAFT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 11th JANUARY 2017

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To seek member approval for the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 for Monmouthshire County Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 Cabinet to receive the Draft Monmouthshire WESP 2017-2020 Plan and agree to the proposals and plans contained within Monmouthshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Welsh Government's vision is to see one million Welsh speakers across Wales by 2050 and in order to achieve this the following actions will need to happen:

- more children in Welsh-medium education;
- better planning in relation to how people learn the language;
- more easy-to-access opportunities for people to use the language;
- a stronger infrastructure and a revolution to improve digital provision in Welsh; and
- a sea change in the way we speak about it.

Education is one of the key drivers to realise this vision through ensuring that children have the opportunity to develop their Welsh skills at an early age to create new speakers of the future.

3.2 The WESP is the key strategic document for local authorities to publish its plans for the expansion of Welsh-medium education over the next three years.

3.3 The WESP continues to focus on the five outcomes in the previous Welsh-medium Education Strategy 2010 which are:

- more seven-year-old children being taught through the medium of Welsh as a percentage of the Year 2 cohort;
- more learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary school to secondary school;
- more learners studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh;
- more learners aged 16-19 studying Welsh and subjects through the medium of Welsh; and
- more learners with improved skills in Welsh

3.4 In addition, all Local Authorities are required to address standards of attainment in Welsh and Welsh Second Language, Welsh-medium provision for learning with additional learning needs (ALN) and workforce planning and continuous professional development.

3.5 The final WESP plan has been submitted to Welsh Government by 20th December 2016 for approval or amendment with full implementation from 1st April 2017.

4. REASONS:

4.1 The Local Authority is required to comply with guidance issued by Welsh Ministers under section 87 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to submit a WESP for approval by Welsh Government and following consultation its contents.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 At the current time it is difficult to accurately predict the final financial consequences of this strategy. There are a number of different parameters that need to be set before we can accurately understand the final costs. When this strategy has been approved by Welsh Government, we will be able to determine what potential capital consequences there are. In turn these will be played into any broader considerations of Band B resource investments in Monmouthshire County Council.

6. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

6.1 The well-being of future generation assessment is attached. No significant implications were identified.

7. CONSULTEES:

Members of the Children and Young People's Select Committee (3rd November 2016). Below is an extract from the minutes of the relevant meeting setting out the debate and discussion that took place.

Member scrutiny:

The WESP is a three year plan. It is aspirational but the Authority needs to try and encourage as many parents as possible to at least consider the values that one would might achieve from a Welsh Medium Education above an English only education.

In response to a Select Committee Member's question regarding parents' concerns in respect of the need and cost involved in providing Welsh Medium Education, it was noted that as an Authority, we have to accept that if we are not promoting the benefits of Welsh Medium Education, then it would be a reasonable assumption that parents might not value Welsh Medium Education in the same way as other counties in Wales. However, once that happens, the real demand for Welsh Medium Education increases at quite a rapid rate. More parents are now electing for Welsh Medium Education due to the benefits of being bi-lingual.

As an Authority, we have to comply with the statutory requirements that exist with regard to the provision of Welsh Medium Education and this is what we, as an Authority want to provide.

For a future Select Committee meeting, it might be prudent to receive a report on the learning of languages generally, as there might be a need to re-think our priorities in terms of our ability to sustain ourselves in a post Brexit world.

Section 2 of the WESP regarding Transport – A Select Committee Member expressed concern that this section of the report was not strong enough and that the terminology on 2.2 should be stronger regarding post 16 transport access. It was noted that the current policy does not provide transport for post 16 learners. However, as part of the consultation, it is right to consider whether the policy is appropriate and this will form part of the consultation process. Also, the vocational courses that young people need to access through the medium of Welsh are as important.

In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that the Home to School Transport Policy is a complex issue in Monmouthshire. Officers are looking to see how it will work in the future as a part of a broader piece of work around the challenges of home to school transport.

A Select Committee member expressed his concern and the concerns of a number of residents that the Authority might be putting too much funding into the provision of Welsh Medium Education and might be better spent elsewhere in the education sector. It was noted that this matter could be raised via the consultation process.

The cost of providing the WESP will be available at the final draft stage of the document.

Funding per pupil details for 2016/17:

Welsh Medium - £2252

English Medium - £2203

In response to a Select Committee Member's question, it was noted that there is some capacity at Ysgol Y Fenni and Ysgol Y Ffin. The Authority was unsure at present with regard to the rise in possible demand that might occur now that there is a Welsh Medium Secondary School in Newport. As this school is now established and pupils from Monmouthshire are attending, capacity in our Welsh Medium schools might change. Demand will be carefully monitored.

Alongside the Children and Young People's Select Committee the following bodies were consulted:

- neighbouring local authorities
- head teacher of each school
- governing body of each school
- further education sector in its area
- in relation to any foundation or voluntary school in its area – the person who appoints the foundation governors
- if the school has a religious character, the appropriate religious body
- Welsh Language Commissioner
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- school councils
- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
- Local Welsh Medium Forum
- Urdd
- Menter Iaith
- Other such organisations providing services to children and young people as the local authority

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Welsh in Education Strategic Plans

- Estyn Thematic Report Local Authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans September 2016
- Consultation on a Welsh Government draft strategy: A million Welsh speakers by 2050
- Monmouthshire Welsh Language Strategy 2017 -2022
- Welsh-medium Education Strategy: next steps

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