

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	9 th November 2017
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Service Area	Learning
Committee Date	4 th December 2017

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP) 2017-2020

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the status of the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 for MTCBC.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 The content of this report be discussed and noted.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 Each local authority in Wales has a statutory duty to prepare, and submit, a WESP for Welsh Ministers' consideration. Plans must demonstrate clear actions and steps to maximise opportunities for Welsh-medium education. They must also set challenging targets for developing Welsh-medium education in their areas.

3.2 The Plan provides strategic direction for the planning and delivery of Welsh-medium and Welsh language education across the LA as well as a vision statement. The Plan is underpinned and informed by Welsh Government's (WG) current Welsh-medium Education Strategy and policy. The Plan has been written in line with WG priorities as set out in the following documents;

- Rewriting the Future -

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/rewriting-the-future-schools/?lang=en>;

- Successful Futures - <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculum-for-wales-curriculum-for-life/why-we-are-changing/successful-futures/?lang=en>;
- Future Generations – <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>;

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 The WESP was produced in line, and launched for consultation, within WG timescales. It was submitted for approval on December 20th 2016. WG was to notify LAs of the Minister's decision by January 31st 2017. Instead, on March 14th 2017, the Minister for the Welsh Language, Alun Davies, announced the appointment of Aled Roberts to carry out a rapid review of Local Authorities' Welsh in Education Strategic Plans WESPs). <http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/welshineducation/?lang=en>
- 4.2 Aled Roberts' report was published at the end of April, following on from which there was close communication between him, the Inclusion Manager and other WG colleagues to address comments made with regards to the Plan. These were around the following areas;
- Setting more ambitious targets in order to increase the numbers in Welsh-medium education and to improve pre-school provision.
 - The lack of plans to expand the provision under Band B of the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme.
 - Reasons for varied transfer rates from playgroups to Welsh-medium education.
 - Information needed regarding how provision for latecomers will be offered.
 - Clarity in terms of data on the numbers of young people following Welsh medium courses.
 - Targets to be set for Welsh First Language and Second Language.
 - Objectives to be set for conducting a Welsh medium Additional Learning Needs audit.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 An interim response was sent to WG in May, followed by meetings with colleagues from WG, with a final response being sent on September 28th 2017. All of the above areas have been addressed. However, WG is requesting more information with regards to the inclusion of Welsh-medium projects in Band B 21st Century Schools projects as well as the detail around the possibility of establishing a Welsh-medium nursery on an English-medium site. A further response has now been sent.
- 5.2 As part of its duty the LA carried out a parental survey to gauge the demand for Welsh-medium provision. This was targeted to the parents of children who were two years and under. The paper based parental survey was provided with FREEPOST addressed envelopes, and the wider population was publicised and promoted by LA colleagues and on social media. Although the response rate was very low, where small pockets of responses preferring Welsh medium provision were identified, the LA confirmed that these pupils could be accommodated under the current level of provision available.

There are currently 82 users of pre-school places in Welsh language provision and there is capacity to accommodate more children should the need arise.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

6.1 The Cabinet Secretary for Education has made an announcement on the funding of the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme Band B, but no decision has been made as yet with regards to approving the WESPs. WG has stated that the capital element is key to the development of the Welsh-medium provision. There is an expectation that all WESPs state their intention in detail in increasing Welsh-medium provision through the 21st Century Schools and Education Programme. Further discussion with WG on the WESP is planned for November 24th.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

7.1 Financial implications will need to be considered in line with the WG's decision for the Band B and Band C proposals, and future demand for, and capacity to grow, Welsh-medium provision.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

8.1 The WESP contributes substantially to the capacity to achieve the Best Start to Life Wellbeing Objectives, "Children get the best start to life" and "Children and young people are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals" and the Environment Wellbeing Objectives, "Communities protect, develop and promote our heritage and cultural assets".

SUE WALKER
(CHIEF OFFICER (LEARNING))

COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		