



CABINET – 30TH JULY 2020

SUBJECT: LEARNING CATCH UP

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION & CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to equip all pupils in Years 10 and 11 with core text books and revision guides for English or Welsh, Maths and Science to enable learners to make sustained progress as well as mitigating against any potential impact on learning of future disruptions.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Over recent months, Caerphilly's pupils have been unable to physically access schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the movement restrictions associated with the national lockdown.
- 2.2 During this time, Schools and their learners have done an excellent job in migrating to a distance learning model almost overnight, but this transition has not been without its challenges.
- 2.3 While work is going on in the background to begin to provide all learners with IT equipment and to design and implement content to support a blended learning model over time, this was originally a multi-year programme and will need time to develop.
- 2.4 The intention to provide a physical set of textbooks and revision guides covering core subjects for all Key Stage 4 learners means that Caerphilly's pupils will be able to access content in the classroom, and from home, over an extended period.
- 2.5 Individual access to these key resources will improve opportunities for our learners to catch up and make progress more swiftly at a key time as well as mitigate any risks to attainment that would be associated with any further period of lockdown.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet:
- a) Agrees to the use of £302k of one-off funding from the Education and Corporate Services Retained Underspend Reserve to provide every year 10 and year 11

learner across Caerphilly with a suite of core text books and revision guides.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that Caerphilly's learners at a key stage in their education can regain any ground lost to the pandemic and are also equipped to continue their learning should physical access to schools be restricted at any point in the future.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 One of the Council's highest priorities is to improve outcomes for pupils by the end of KS4. The potential impact of our learners being unable to attend school physically throughout lockdown could have a limiting effect on future outcomes if the Council and School communities do not act quickly.
- 5.2 The Council is currently working with Welsh Government as part of the EdTech or Hwb programme to equip pupils from across our year groups with devices such as ChromeBooks, Laptops and i-Pads to enable them to learn in new ways both within the classroom and from home. While this is a very exciting initiative, it will take time to procure, equip and develop and, even with the equipment available, further time will be required to develop lesson content to operate on the new platform. Time is not a luxury that pupils at Key Stage 4 have at present and it is important that we intervene in other ways.
- 5.3 While schools are scheduled to return in September, the further impact of COVID-19 over coming months cannot be predicted with any certainty. Should schools be required to close again, either in response to a local or regional lockdown, the Council wishes to be in the strongest position possible to ensure our learners are not further disadvantaged.
- 5.4 To mitigate the potential of a further lockdown on learning and as a key component of a future blended learning strategy, the Council wishes to make available a set of current specification core text books and revision guides for English or Welsh, Maths and Science to every Year 10 and Year 11 learner.
- 5.5 As of September, there will be 2032 learners in Year 10 and 1997 learners in Year 11. This would mean a total of 4029 pupils would be provided with these much needed resources at a key time in their education.

In making these resources available a number of additional benefits would exist:

- All pupils will be able to access resources at the level they need and no learner is disadvantaged.
- Blended learning will be further supported and not always dependent on either IT or physical access to the classroom.
- Their provision will give a huge boost to morale in schools.
- Teacher workloads will be reduced at a key time as there would not be a need to reproduce resources that are in books.
- The intervention would not adversely impact schools on budgets at a critical time but would have a positive impact on outcomes

- 5.6 The cost of a full set of core text books and revision guides is £75 per learner which would mean a total expenditure of £302,175. Should Cabinet be minded to support this initiative, the funding would be made available to schools on a per pupil basis with schools then required to purchase and distribute the relevant text books to their learners.
- 5.7 While this will be a one-off investment for the Council, the textbooks and revision guides will themselves be reusable for future KS4 learners over coming years. Should schools wish to replace these resources beyond the initial investment, they would need to meet any costs themselves.
- 5.8 The Council has consulted with the Caerphilly Secondary Headteachers Association on this proposal. The CHSA very much welcomed the proposal and believe that the intervention will have a significant impact on every learner in Caerphilly at Key Stage 4.

5.9 Conclusion

With Caerphilly's learners unable to physically access schools over recent months, Schools and their learners have transitioned to a distance learning model that has supported the majority of pupils. While work is underway to equip all learners to be able to learn online over future years, this will take some time to be fully implemented. Through the provision of a physical set of text books and revision guides, our pupils can access learning resources both in the classroom and from home over an extended period. This in turn, will improve opportunities to catch up and make progress swiftly at a key time.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 None.

7. **LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

- 7.1 Well-being Objective1 as set out within the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 is defined as being to "Improve education opportunities for all".
- 7.2 Within this Objective, a number of outcomes are also stated that are relevant, such as:
2. Raise standards of attainment.
 3. Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment for both vocational and non-vocational qualifications to provide equality of opportunity.
- 7.3 The Council has also adopted a Shared Ambitions Strategy, describing its intent as "Working together to achieve the best outcomes for our young people" and setting out how the Council, the School Improvement Consortia and the Schools will support this intent.

8. **WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

- 8.1 This Learning Catch Up approach will assist the authority in its duties as a public

body under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to contribute to the well-being goals for Wales: -

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
- A globally responsible Wales

8.2 Delivery of the Learning Catch Up Approach aligns to the sustainable development principle as follows:

- **Long Term** – Making available these physical assets to every pupil allows a short term need to be met. The core text books and revision guides that will be made available as a result of the Council's intervention will, however, be reusable over many years and will sit alongside digital equipment and content in a blended learning approach that will be fit for the long term.
- **Prevention** – Investing in physical text books mitigates the risk to learning associated with any further restrictions on accessing classrooms physically that may emerge over coming months.
- **Integration** – The Council's Wellbeing Objective 1 is to improve education opportunities for all. Every learner at key stage 4 receiving access to a physical set of text books and revision guides would certainly meet this objective as well as contribute to the wellbeing goals of a more prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales and a more equal Wales.
- **Collaboration** – The intervention will be made across all of Caerphilly's Secondary Schools and the approach and associated learning will also be shared with other Local Authorities across the SEWC region.
- **Involvement** – The Caerphilly Secondary Heads Association have been directly involved in the development of this proposal.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified; therefore a full EIA has not been carried out.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Learning Catch Up Approach will require £302k of funding to be made available to schools on a per pupil basis. The Education Finance Team will apportion accordingly while other Education staff will work with schools to ensure the needs of learners are met by the resources being purchased.

10.2 It is proposed that the one-off cost of £302k should be funded from the Education & Corporate Services Retained Underspend Reserve.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below and consultation responses have all been supportive of the recommendations set out within this report.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13. The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003.

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