



## **EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS  
PLAN 2023-2025**

**REPORT BY: DEBBIE HARTEVELD, MANAGING DIRECTOR, EAS.  
TO BE DELIVERED BY EDWARD PRYCE,  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – POLICY AND STRATEGY**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report contains the draft EAS Business Plan 2023-2025 (June 2023 – March 2025). The consultation period for this plan is from 13th March 2023 to 19th April 2023. This report asks for members to consider the draft EAS Business Plan as part of the regional consultation process.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2023-2025. The EAS delivers, through this agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Members are asked to receive the report and comment on the contents of the EAS Business Plan as part of the consultation process.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The EAS are required to submit their Business Plan to Welsh Government and the Scrutiny committee asked for feedback as part of the regional consultation process.

## **5. THE REPORT**

### **Background**

- 5.1 As a result of the uncertain financial situation and funding for the EAS, Joint Executive Group (JEG) members agreed that the next iteration of the EAS Business Plan should be delayed so start in June 2023. JEG members agreed an accompanying timeline that includes a full consultation period.
- 5.2 The current Business Plan spans three years, 2022-2025, this was agreed by the Joint Executive Group (JEG) and through each Local Authority (LA) Cabinet in the summer term 2022. This document contains the next iteration of this three-year plan and covers the period from June 2023 to April 2025.
- 5.3 This version of the EAS Business Plan is underpinned by the already agreed three-year Business Plan (Appendix B). It builds upon the progress and identifies priorities that have resulted from robust EAS self-evaluation processes. The plan will enable flexibility so that the specific needs within Caerphilly are contributed to.
- 5.4 This consultation version of the Business Plan 2023-2025 has been constructed using the best available financial information at the time of writing. This could be subject to change once the final funding profile from local authorities and Welsh Government are known.

### **Proposals**

- 5.5 Last year the EAS reviewed how we constructed and communicated our Business Plan. We decided it was timely to review and adapt our processes to make them more accessible to a wider audience. We used a new approach to help us articulate the changes and impact we want to make as the regional school improvement service for South East Wales and the connections and actions needed that will allow that change and impact to be successfully achieved.
- 5.6 This year we have further refined our success criteria so that we can better report on the impact of our work so that it aligns more explicitly to the EAS vision of developing all schools as learning organisations. We have made sure that our own evaluations, trends in school and LA needs and priorities, national policy and inspection findings are captured. These directly inform our priorities and success criteria.
- 5.7 We have also strengthened the plan by including a Partnership Annex that is specific to each LA's needs and priorities for the coming year. This section is also draft and further discussion is required with LA Officers to reach a final version.
- 5.8 This will also be significantly determined by the EAS final financial position for 2023-2024.
- 5.9 We have prioritised our high level and high-risk areas, and further details and activities are in our Detailed Delivery Plans. We have captured several important 'Assumptions: Processes that should be in place' for each Business Plan priority to ensure this activity is visible in the system and that expectations are clear.
- 5.10 We fully recognise the importance of collaboration and fostering effective partnerships with the local authority and schools to realise the full potential of our actions. The plan identifies the aspects that the EAS would request that the local authority undertake to support the delivery of this plan.

- 5.11 As we review our work in schools, we are looking for indicators to demonstrate:
- Changes/ Improvements at leadership and governance levels;
  - Improved teaching and learning;
  - School wide improvement in policy and practice;
  - Learner progress
  - Growing capacity in the system.
- 5.12 Our expectations are clear and are set out in the EAS Business Plan success criteria and in our vision and values.
- 5.13 The EAS uses three models to help us frame the Intent, Implementation and Impact of our work. This model allows us to use a common language to plan, implement and evaluate the impact of the work of the EAS in schools and settings across Caerphilly.

#### **EAS Business Plan: Success Criteria 2023-2025**

- 5.14 Welsh Government have set out 8 contributory factors to support schools to navigate the changing education landscape. These factors describe the key attributes that schools that are successfully realising the curriculum will possess.
- 5.15 These describe the factors that support reform and which, where absent, are likely to act as barriers to success. The factors cover learner progress and the curriculum itself, as well as wider processes and priorities. The factors are captured below and are interwoven into our priorities for 2023-2025.
- 5.16 As part of our work to develop a strong approach to evaluation, and in particular the evaluation of learning, the EAS has developed a guide to help identify the wide range of evidence available for review and analysis. This builds on the work to look at the intent, implementation and impact of our interventions. It will support both School Improvement Partners and schools to consider how best to respond to the WG guidance quoted above. In particular, how to build the enabling conditions around the Curriculum for Wales and define its impact through embedded and accurate reflection and self-evaluation. Our approach to evaluating learning will focus on progress, attainment, wellbeing, social capital and equity and fairness.
- 5.17 The final version of this iteration of the 3-year plan will be accompanied by a detailed delivery plan which incorporates timescales, resource implications, accountabilities and evaluation. In addition, the evaluation following the Quarter 4 review of progress from the current Business Plan will be added in the final version of the new plan.
- 5.18 Following the consultation period and certainty on the EAS funding position, this draft plan will be updated, and the final version will be presented to JEG for final agreement on May 24th 2023.

#### **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 5.19 The EAS is required to submit to the Business Plan to Welsh Government, this plan covers the period 2023-2025. The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan and the related LA Partnership Annex will be reported formally to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board. These reports, as in previous years, will be suitable for scrutiny activity at local authority and national level. In addition, the

progress made towards the implementation of key actions will be reported at each meeting of the Joint Executive Group and Company Board.

### **Caerphilly Local Authority Strategic Priorities**

5.20 The EAS Business Plan and the related LA/EAS Partnership Annex will contribute to the strategic priorities within the remit of roles and responsibilities. The full list of Caerphilly Local Authority Strategic Priorities are listed below:

- Continue to provide robust approaches to safeguarding of children and young people based on emerging needs and demands as an outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Equip leaders with the skills to have a significant impact on progress, attainment and provision and wellbeing.
- Ensure the effective implementation of Curriculum for Wales.
- Accelerate the progress of vulnerable learners. In particular:
  - Accelerate the progress of pupils who receive education outside a mainstream setting (EOTAS/EHE)
  - Reduce the number of young people post-16 without access to education, employment or training (NEETS).
  - Implementation of the ALN Act.
- Improve pupil attendance and reduce exclusions, with particular focus on vulnerable groups.
- Further improve provision and support for young people (post-16)
- Close the gap in attainment between those learners from low-income backgrounds and those who do not live in poverty.
- Improve digital skills for all learners.
- Reach the target of 26% of year 1 pupils in Welsh medium by 2031
- Support pupil wellbeing by improving attitudes to healthy food choices and active fitness
- Ensure the most vulnerable families including those in poverty, can access support to give their child the best start to their early years.
- Through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme ensure that the County Borough provides sufficient school places to meet demand as well as upgrading/replacing school accommodation, as appropriate, so that schools are fit for purpose in the 21st century.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1. In writing this plan a number of assumptions have been made. If these are not in place, then they become a risk to the content and successful delivery of the plan. The EAS risk register will be reviewed and refined, if required, following the agreement of the final EAS Business Plan and related resource:

- The funding from both LA contributions and Welsh Government grants is sufficient to enable the effective delivery of the Business Plan.
- Professional learning has a positive impact on practice and behaviour.
- We are one part of the much wider system.
- Schools / education settings positively engage with us.
- We have the expertise, capacity and resources to undertake our activity effectively.

- When the conditions in a school / education setting can secure improvement, readiness for support results in positive change.
- Our partners provide us with timely and appropriate information.
- We work with schools / education settings to ensure priorities for improvement are based on robust, accurate self-evaluation.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 This report is for information and consultation, however an EAS Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken (Appendix C). This must take a long term view as part of its impact on life chances, employment and quality of life. Causes within attainment are complex although one of the main ones is deprivation. The measure that is commonly used to measure deprivation is a pupil's eligibility to receive Free School Meals. One of the Council's Well-being Objectives is to 'Improve outcomes for all learners but we want to particularly focus on those vulnerable to underachievement'.
- 7.2 Ensuring high quality education is fundamental to securing the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of future generations. The Business Plan focuses support for all schools appropriately schools. The school curriculum includes focus on social, environmental and cultural well-being, and these aspects are support as part of the plan. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
- 7.3 The EAS have their own Equalities and Welsh Language plans in place. CCBC has therefore not undertaken any specific impact assessment on the EAS Business Plan. The EAS Welsh Language Policy (Updated September 2021) describes in full the ways in which the EAS complies with the Welsh Language Measure (2015), including accesses to all materials bilingually, actively promotes the use of the language and offers an ever a range of services and support through the medium of Welsh for those who require them.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 As noted in 5.4, this consultation version of the Business Plan 2023-2025 has been constructed using the best available financial information at the time of writing. This could be subject to change once the final funding profile from local authorities and Welsh Government are known.

### **EAS Funding Sources:**

- 8.2 The main funding sources to the EAS budget are:
- Annual core budget contributions from each of the 5 LAs – this funds approximately 50% of total costs.
  - Annual Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant and Education Improvement Grant – grants from WG fund approximately 50% of total costs.
- 8.3 The EAS Company Board have taken a series of steps to reduce operational costs and restructure EAS staff. One of the main factors in the EAS being able to achieve the

efficiencies required and increase the breath of support to schools over the past 8 years has been the increased use of the school-to-school model. The move to Headteachers undertaking the role of School Improvement Partners (SIPs) from EAS employed SIPs has realised efficiencies and brought additional benefits to the model. In addition, the use of schools to support others through our Learning Network Schools (LNS) model has enabled reductions in the core team.

- 8.4 There has been a continued reduction in the combined LA core contributions to the EAS since inception in 2012. The EAS has faced significant challenges in being able to set a balanced budget for 2023-2024. Whilst there are some discussions still being undertaken with LA partners regarding their contributions, the EAS is working on a circa 10% reduction totalling £302,132, this is set alongside cost pressures equalling a total reduction of circa £504k for the budget in 2023-2024. Productive discussions have taken place with Directors of Education and JEG members about how the delivery model will look for the forthcoming year.
- 8.5 The EAS Business Plan has been constructed with a view to protecting front line services to schools and settings for 2023-2024. Additionally, a phased approach will be taken over the next 2 years to explore potential additional cost savings to the delivery model. The current approach to set a balance budget for 2023-2024 does not present a long-term sustainable funding model for the EAS and represent a short-term solution.
- 8.6 The following proposals have been devised assuming a common percentage funding model from LAs can be reached. If LAs cannot agree on a common percentage reduction in core contributions, it will be essential to demonstrate how an equitable service is being delivered for those LAs who are contributing more / less into the model.
- 8.7 The table below shows the current known position of the LA core contribution funding for 2023-2024:

| <b>Local Authority Core Contribution</b> | <b>2022-23</b>    | <b>2023-24</b>    | <b>Contribution Cut</b> |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Percentage Cut</i>                    |                   | <i>-10%</i>       |                         |
| Blaenau Gwent                            | £350,046          | £315,041          | (TBC)                   |
| Caerphilly                               | £980,663          | £882,597          | £98,066                 |
| Monmouthshire                            | £403,815          | £363,434          | £40,382                 |
| Newport                                  | £783,291          | £704,962          | £78,329                 |
| Torfaen                                  | £503,498          | £453,148          | (TBC)                   |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>£3,021,313</b> | <b>£2,719,182</b> |                         |

- 8.8 The EAS remains committed to work closely with LA partners to respond appropriately in the context of a collectively challenging financial position and ensuring we remain flexible to meet the needs within each LA and in schools and settings.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The Business Plan is in the consultation process. The Consultees are noted below:

- EAS staff
- Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
- Regional Joint Executive Group
- EAS Company Board
- EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
- Headteachers from within the region
- Chairs of Governors from within the region
- EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, Children's Act 2004, Standards and Framework Act 1998

Author: Debbie Hartevelde, Managing Director, Education Achievement Service

Consultees: In addition to the groups listed above  
Christina Harray, Chief Executive  
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services  
Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services  
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities  
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Jo Rao, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee  
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer  
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation and Education Planning and Strategy  
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN  
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager  
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement  
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation)  
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer  
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Officer.

Appendices:

Appendix A Education Achievement Service: Annual iteration - Business Plan 2023-2025 (Consultation Version – Accessible)

Appendix B Education Achievement Service: Current Overarching 3-year Business Plan 2022-2025

Appendix C EAS Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment (FEIA)

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