



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

Councillor Fiona Gordon
Convenor Schools Performance
Scrutiny Panel

Please ask for:
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BY EMAIL

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Our Ref / Ein Cyf: JR/CM
Your Ref / Eich Cyf:
Date / Dyddiad: 18th May 2016

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I dderbyn yr wybodaeth hon mewn fformat arall, cysylltwch â'r person uchod.**

Dear Councillor Gordon

Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel – 14 April 2016

I refer to your letter of 21 April 2016 containing your pre-decision Scrutiny report on the School Music Service Arrangements due for a decision at Cabinet on 21 April 2016

Councillor Paul Meara attended the Cabinet meeting but made a personal statement on the proposals for the Music Service. Councillor Meara did not refer to your letter.

As a Cabinet we value pre-decision scrutiny. Where meetings are open to the public it is right that the public should have the opportunity to hear the views of Scrutiny Panels. I therefore read out your letter and responded to your recommendations.

The local authority is committed to maintaining a music service which provides opportunities for our school children to learn to play musical instruments and develops an interest in music in all forms. It is a pity that only 6% of the responses addressed the issues raised in the consultation paper. I think we can learn from this and can become better at handling misleading social media campaigns. In future the Council needs to be more explicit about what will not be happening and stop scare stories much sooner.

Poor buyback from schools was one of the reasons for the review and the proposal to separate the two services. The number of schools in Swansea opting to make their own alternative arrangements for the provision of music tuition and music education has

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been growing as schools exercised their right to use their delegated budgets. Price was not the only issue. We are now able to respond to the requirements of schools, our customers, to make sure they get the service they want and at a time convenient to the school and the learners.

The present managers have been part of the review progress working with Nick Williams and the Sustainable Swansea team.

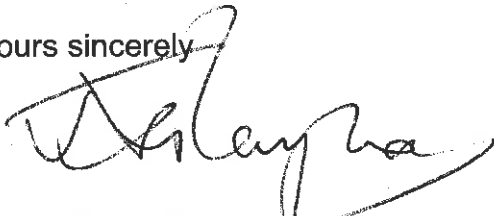
It is of concern that audit issues relating to the Music Service especially the relationship with the larger ensembles and the accounting arrangements for tours was not escalated once internal audit had identified matters which needed better accounting and clarity of the decision making process within the WGMS. The question of 'who is paying for what' and the problem in finding a clear answer was one of the main drivers in both authorities considering separate services. New line management arrangements will improve financial monitoring.

Considerable work had been undertaken in order to achieve efficiencies and to meet the needs of the schools. Buy back has increased which secures additional income. Meeting the needs of schools has to be met but opportunities to extend into areas suggested by the Panel will be looked at. A number of schools already use their PDG monies for free school meals pupils. How PDG is spent is for the Governing Body to decide using the terms and conditions established by the Welsh Government.

Responses to those who submitted views addressed comments arising from the consultation papers. Where a respondent raised issues not part of the consultation they were not addressed.

I will ask officers to act on your suggestion of increasing music provision with the Pupil Referral Unit, SEN provisions and Life Long Learning.

Yours sincerely



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