



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 24TH JULY 2012 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chairman
Councillor D.W.R. Preece - Vice Chairman

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, C. Durham, C. Gordon, M.P. James, G. Johnston, J. Pritchard,
J.E. Roberts, Mrs. M.E. Sargent

Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning - Councillor Mrs. R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Corporate Director - Education and Lifelong Learning), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director Our Schools Our Future), E. Pryce (Senior Adviser - Performance and ICT), K. Cole (Manager - Learning, Education and Inclusion), J. Southcombe (Financial Services Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

Mr. T. Crosse (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative),
Mr. A. Farina-Childs and Mrs. A. Goss (Parent Governor Representatives)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. M. Gray, D. Havard,
Mrs. G.D. Oliver, D. Rees and R. Saralis and Mrs. P. Ireland (NUT).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

2. MINUTES - 4TH APRIL AND 29TH MAY 2012

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 21st June 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 12, on page nos. 1 - 5).

3. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

4. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet report listed on the agenda had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor Mrs. R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, tabled her report which referred to the multiple awards won by Bargoed Hanbury Chapel, the launch of new secure cycle shelters at St. Cenydd, St. Martin's and Bedwas High, the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to formally launch the picnic village, the collaboration by Lewis School Pengam with singer songwriter/radio presenter Amy Wadge and the award of British Champion at the recent British School Boy Boxing Championships to Lewis School Pengam pupil, Kyran Jones.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. DIRECTORATE FORWARD CAPITAL PROGRAMME - 2012/13 - 2014/15

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on expenditure in 2012/13 and the provisional schemes for 2013/14 and 2014/15 (funding permitting).

The Assistant Director, Our Schools Our Future, made reference to the 3-year indicative capital programme (2012/13 – 2014/15) as outlined in appendix 1 of the report and to the detailed allocations as shown in appendices 2 - 4 for each of the 3 financial years and gave an overview on each of the schemes identified. The report and appendices referred to democratic/legislative changes, demountable classrooms, asset management, health and safety, school security, school boiler replacement programme, contribution to 21st Century schools, refurbishment of school kitchens, the relocation of community education to Risca library, Fochriw youth centre match funding, leisure and libraries potential match funding and Ystrad Mynach new sport facility. Members were pleased to note that in addition to the schemes outlined in appendix 2 for 2012/13 there are two other schemes in progress - Blackwood Youth Club and the top floor of the Ty Graddfa, Ystrad Mynach offices.

During the course of the debate reference was made to the demographic/legislative changes as they relate to pupil projections and it was confirmed that the budget allocation permits the equivalent of one additional primary classroom per annum. The allocation is based upon evidence of pupil projections exceeding capacity, combined with levels of out of catchment pupils. Historically, a scheme is considered for funding where the number of out of catchment pupils is less than 15%.

With regards to the query raised in relation to the sum of £200,000 allocated for an additional classroom at Hendre Junior from September 2013 it was explained that on receipt of Caerphilly Miners Section 106 monies, £100,000 would be released for use on other schemes.

Members noted the progress in 2012/13 and proposals for spend in 2012/15.

8. SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES UNDER THE COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (CIF) - SEPT 2010 TO JUNE 2012

Consideration was given to the report which advised of the judgements made by the Estyn Inspection Teams of Caerphilly schools for the academic years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. Members were advised that since September 2010 all schools in Wales have been inspected under a new Common Inspection Framework. The inspection is now carried out on 3 key questions, comprising 10 quality indicators and the outcome is based on a four-point scale (excellent, good, adequate, unsatisfactory) as opposed to the 7 key questions of the previous framework.

Members noted that judgements have been made for the 22 Caerphilly schools for which inspection reports are available. In total 77% of schools have been judged to be good overall, with a further 23% judged to be adequate. Prospects for improvement are better with 86% judged to have good prospects with only 14% of schools having adequate prospects. No school was found to be unsatisfactory in any aspect.

It was noted that if a school receives any judgement which is unsatisfactory or adequate there are 4 categories of follow up activity. If a school is found to be unsatisfactory then the follow up activity is led by Estyn. For adequate judgements the follow up activity will be led by either Estyn or Local Authority Officers. Of the 22 Caerphilly schools inspected to date 11 were deemed to require further follow up activity. The majority of these (7) required Local Authority follow up, the least serious category. Five of these schools have now been identified as no longer requiring monitoring. Of the 3 schools that required Estyn monitoring 2 were secondary schools and 1 was a primary school. The Local Authority will continue to support these schools.

Reference was made to the data provided in relation to overall judgment, prospects for improvement, outcomes and leadership management and as to how they would now be monitored. Members were advised that Officers, through the newly formed regional teams, would continue to work with schools with the assistance of the Monitoring, Challenge, Support and Intervention Programme where necessary.

Whilst referring to the data of the comparison with outcomes across Wales a query was raised with regards to the comparative rank position for the previous inspection cycle. It was noted that as schools are now judged on 3 key questions, comprising 10 quality indicators rather than 7 key questions detailed in the previous framework, direct comparison with previous inspection outcomes is not possible.

Members noted the content of the report.

9. THE CAERPHILLY SKILLS STRATEGY UPDATE - READING TEST RESULTS

Members were reminded that in order to assess progress in reading, in May 2011 all schools agreed to complete a standardised reading test (All Wales Reading Test). As a result a clear base line had been established. The results summary was detailed for Members information and the different banding levels were fully explained.

The Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion advised that since the introduction of the universal reading test both primary school teachers and classroom assistants have received further training to improve the teaching of reading which will assist in raising the standards of attainment and secure maximum impact and improvement. A presentation was then given on the analysed information and reference was made to the number of categories including the functional reading age, reading age 6 months or more below chronological age bands and the percentage of pupils in each band within both primary and secondary.

Members were pleased to note the 10% improvement which has been made at functional reading age and were advised that phase two of the strategy (2012-13) will focus on key stage 3, numeracy and further developing the links with families.

Members were advised that in order to further secure the success of this strategy, progress has had a sharp focus within the Monitoring, Challenge, Support and Intervention Programme. In order to continue with the shared commitment to raise standards in literacy Officers will seek to further embed the strategies already introduced, develop others where required and continue to monitor and evaluate the progress. From the results what is already evident is that head teachers and their staff are taking this challenge very seriously and are working to address the skills' deficit, acutely aware that learners need this additional support in order to be successful in realising their ambitions. It was concluded that the introduction of the standardised reading test has enabled progress to be measured and the statistics have shown that where interventions had taken place there was clear evidence of improvement, albeit that it is necessary to provide additional support in some schools on the evidence provided by teachers.

The Corporate Director - Education and Lifelong Learning referred to the ongoing commitment to improve pupil performance and work with schools to achieve this aim. She advised that the use of the school effectiveness framework remains the key driver for improvement and the skills strategy has been embraced and taken forward by all schools and will continue to be progressed in order that the appropriate skills required can continue to be addressed. A further report would be presented in the autumn.

Members noted the information contained within the report and thanked both the Corporate Director - Education and Lifelong Learning and Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion for responding to their queries raised during the course of the debate, particularly in relation to the evidence collated, the use of specialist teachers, targeting support, working with families, criteria for pupil deprivation grant and sharing good practice.

10. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

The following request for a report was received.

1. Councillor D.W.R. Preece sought clarification as to how the pupil funding formula is allocated. The Corporate Director - Education, Lifelong Learning advised that a report on the funding formula would be presented to a future meeting.

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports, none of which had been brought forward for review.

1. Financial Plan Education and Leisure 2012/13 - agenda item 6(3);
2. Education and Leisure Grants 2012/13 - agenda item 6 (4);
3. Caerphilly Standing Advisory Council For Religious Education Minutes - 21st June 2012 - agenda item 8(1);

4. Summary of Members Attendance - Quarter 1 - 18th May - 30th June 2012 - agenda item 8(2).

The meeting closed at 6.10pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2012, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN