



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 2ND JULY 2019 AT 5.30PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor T. Parry - Chair
Councillor C. Andrews – Vice Chair

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, A. Collis, S. Cook, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, D.T. Hardacre, D. Havard, B. Miles, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds and R. Whiting.

P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement).

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education, Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), A. West (21st Century Schools, Admissions and Exclusions Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: M. Barry (Parent Governor), Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor), Mrs P.J. Ireland and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. James and Mrs G. Oliver and R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 2ND APRIL 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 21st May 2019 (minute nos. 1- 8) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

In discussing Matters Arising, a Member sought clarification from Officers around figures and Performance in relation to a report discussed at a previous meeting, expressing concerns for public perception and reputational damage. Whilst the Member was assured that the figures would not have an impact on the reputation of the Authority, it was also agreed that discussions take place outside of the meeting and a follow up email would be provided to the Committee and Member on any queries raised.

4. 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.

5. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the draft Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from May 2019 to May 2020.

The Committee were asked to note that since the publishing of the report, it has been agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair that the report on 21st Century Schools be moved as an information item and provided in November. The Committee discussed this proposal and agreed for the report to be moved and provided as an information item.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report and the changes proposed by the Officer be approved.

RESOLVED that subject to the aforementioned changes, the Forward Work Programme appended to the report be approved.

6. CABINET REPORTS

None of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS D

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS – CONSULTATION RESPONSE REPORT

The report provided Members with details on the outcome of the formal consultation process for the federation of Gilfach Fargoed Primary School and Park Primary School; Fleur de Lys Primary School and Pengam Primary School; Bedwas Junior School and Rhydri Primary School, Cwmfelinfach Primary School and Ynysddu Primary School; and sought Members views on the responses prior to a decision being made by Cabinet on whether to move to formal federation for four groups of schools from September 2019.

The Committee were informed that the Governing Bodies of the schools have already been working on a collaborative basis for a number of years and requested that the Authority support them in the process to move to formal federation.

Cabinet, at its meeting on 11th July 2018, agreed to the request to proceed to formal consultation in partnership with the Governing Body of each school and the formal

consultation period for each school ran between 22nd October 2018 and 10th December 2018. On 6th November 2018, Scrutiny members were consulted on the proposal to formally federate the 4 groups of schools and were unanimously in support.

The Committee were asked to note a summary of the responses, which were detailed in the main body of the report, which have been discussed in detail with each Governing Body who have all unanimously confirmed their agreement to proceed with the proposal to federate.

The Scrutiny Committee were asked to note that, should themselves and Cabinet support and approve the proposal on 10th July 2019, the new instrument of Governance for each federated Governing Body will be drafted and the separate Governing Bodies will be dissolved and the new Governing Bodies will be established in readiness for the start of the new school year.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers and Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued.

Members considered the feedback in response to the consultation exercise and it was noted that there were only a small number of responses received. Officers explained that the Governing Bodies were very keen to formalise the current arrangements in which they had been working in collaboration successfully for a number of years, it is assumed that this has been one of the reasons for the lower response rate from parents etc. In addition, the Committee were asked to note that the Estyn responses are written in their normal format in relation to a consultation of this nature.

Discussions took place around Gilfach Fargoed and Park Primary Schools, and Members sought further assurances from Officers around the collaboration, with particular concerns for Estyn's response, as detailed at page 44 within the report. Officers explained that a full consultation process was undertaken between October and December 2018, however Estyn's response to this federation differed slightly in comparison to the other three groups of schools. Members were assured that the collaboration is working well; however, this is the newest collaboration, which has not been embedded as long. Rapid improvements however have been made and the schools are going from strength to strength.

Members were keen to support the recommendation and formalisation of the federation of schools, with particular emphasis on the positive impact of collaborative working at Bedwas and Rhydri and Park Primary School and Gilfach Fargoed Primary School, which has ultimately raised standards at schools which were previously struggling and not performing well.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers:

- i) Consider and comment on the consultation responses in relation to the Federation proposals;
- ii) Support a recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to formally federate the groups of schools identified in 1.1 above.

8. FORMULA FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR YSGOL GYFUN CWM RHYMNI (SPLIT SITE)

The report outlined the formula funding arrangements for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymini, linked directly to the current split site arrangements of the School (7 mile distance between the 2 sites).

It was noted that since September 2017 all age groups from year 7 through to year 11 have been taught on both sites. Academic year 2017-18 was the first academic year that this arrangement had been in place. There are 2 distinct catchment areas, with associated feeder schools for the Gelli Haf (Blackwood) and Y Gwyndy (Caerphilly) sites.

The report reviews the current funding position for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and considers this in relation to the position with regards to schools currently collaborating or those proposing a more formal federation with a shared Headteacher in the Borough.

Members noted that Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni is the only Welsh medium secondary school within the Borough. In May 2018 the School Strategy Board agreed that there should be a consultation with regards to the current split site funding arrangement for the school.

The report follows a report to the School Budget Forum (held on 27th September 2018) and subsequent circulation to all Headteachers (as appended to the report). The report was circulated on 30th November 2018 with a request for any feedback by 11th January 2019.

The report sought the views of Members with regards to the split site funding arrangements for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, in context of the size of the two sites.

The Committee thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

Members expressed their confusion with the format of the report, outlining that the recommendations were unclear. It was noted that the corresponding information is outlined at 10.1 of the report, within the Financial Implications, however Members requested that further report recommendations be more clear.

A Member sought further information on the 2 schools and whether it would be formalised that the sites would be identified as 2 separate schools, with the possibility of a 6th form option being included in the future. Officers explained that there will be further dialogue further down the line, at present the report considers the current funding position and pressures on the sites due to capacity and distance between sites. In addition, it was noted that due to economies of scale, it is more cost effective to share where possible.

Discussions took place around capacity across the sites and it was noted that there is an 855 capacity in Gwindy and 900 in Cwm Rhymni, which is increasingly experiencing pressure to meet requirements from feeder primary schools. Further information on actual student numbers on role to be provided to Members via email.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report:

- i) The split funding arrangements for Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni be updated having considered the issues presented within the body of the report;
- ii) The Scrutiny Committee support the update to the split site funding arrangements, equating to circa £114k, funded from within the individual school budget (ISB) in 2020/21, which would however have a small impact across all schools due to "pressure" to fund, or funded as a growth item, subject to the Authority's budget proposals and priorities in 2020/21;
- iii) The Scrutiny Committee support retrospective funding for the current and previous financial years (circa £100k), subject to confirmation in the further report to Cabinet that the deficit is as a direct result of financial pressures arising from the split site arrangement and not for other reasons, and that the

Local Management of Schools (LMS) contingency balances are used to fund the one-off cost.

- iv) A further report be presented to Cabinet for a decision on the funding methodology and sources of funding.

9. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME

The report provided Members with an update on the 21st Century Schools and Education Band B programme, which runs between 2019 and 2026 and was agreed by Cabinet on 25th April 2018.

The report outlined that Council agreed on 21st February 2019 to allocate £5.475 million to the 21st Century Schools and Education programme match funding. The priority schemes identified for Phase 1 of the programme are an expansion of provision at Trinity Fields School and relocation and expansion of Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon on the former Cwmcarn High site.

The intervention rates for the programme have changed, as outlined in the body of the report. This has resulted in a reduction in the Council's contribution to the overall programme from £39.15 to £26.8 million.

Initial specification of the expansion proposed for Trinity Fields has led to a recommendation to increase the allocation for this project from £5 million to £10 million. This money would be transferred from the refurbishment programme and is in line with WG's expectation for projects to be innovative and to be seen as a "once in a lifetime opportunity". In order to achieve this and "future proof" the school the increase in investment to £10 million is essential.

Both projects outlined in 2.3 of the report are in early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal .g. financial, business case, consultation process etc.

The Council's current projected match funding contribution to deliver both schemes is currently estimated at £5.1 million. If the increase for Trinity Fields is agreed this would reduce the Council's overall contribution from £26.8 million to £26.3 million.

A Board has been established to undertake a review of Sixth Form/ Single Sex/ Surplus places provision.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

It was noted that there is no reference within the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme to provide an update of the Sixth Form/Single Sex/Surplus places Review Board. Officers agreed that this will be included within the forward work programme, with approval from the Chair, Vice Chair and Committee in due course.

Discussions took place around the Business Plan and process and it was noted that there will need to be extensive design work undertaken prior to a business case being produced, which is undertaken by Building Consultancy and other departments within the Council, and external specialists where required. The Business Case will then be subject to consideration and approval by Welsh Government. It is anticipated that an update report can be provided through the Committee process towards the end of the year.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report the report be noted and Scrutiny Support the recommendation to increase the contribution for Trinity Fields School from £5 million to £10 million before its consideration by Cabinet.

10. SPECIALIST RESOURCE BASE (SRB) FUNIDNG REVIEW

The report provided Members with an update on the 21st Century Schools and Education Band B programme, which runs between 2019 and 2026 and included the outcome of the consultations undertaken with Head Teachers on the proposals along with identified implications and timeline for implementation. The report will thereafter go to Cabinet for a decision.

It was noted that the majority of pupils have their needs met in mainstream education; however, there are a range of provisions for children with differing complex needs across the Local Authority (LA), as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

Existing staffing levels in Special Resource Bases (SRBs) are such that the majority of classes have required a level of additional resourcing in order to meet the increasing complex needs of the children places in the LA. The needs of the children in SRBs have become more complex over time and therefore a robust analysis of those needs has been undertaken in order to identify a model that will ensure equity across the provisions or for provisions of similar designations.

Recommendations for a model of staffing and resourcing were contained in the report along with any associated implications.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

Member discussed the report and sought clarifications around the table at 5.15 of the report with reference to Additional Staffing. Officers explained that the review has been undertaken in order to ascertain the differences in support levels across Schools, to ensure they are fair and fit for purpose, in particular with the hours in Teaching Assistant support provision. The review identified areas in which additional support provision was in place, where it was not required and as a result, funding has been altered to reflect this.

The review was discussed at length and Members were keen to support the review, ensuring support provision is in the right places for pupils across the borough.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report the Scrutiny Committee support the proposed staffing model, resourcing and timeline for implementation for the Council's SRBs.

The meeting closed at 18:59pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2019 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR