



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 5TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 5.30PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor C. Andrews – Vice Chair (Presiding)

Councillors:

A. Collis, S. Cook, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, D. Hardacre, M. James, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds and R. Whiting.

P. Marsden – Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education, Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Evans (Healthy Schools Practitioner), P. O'Neil (Senior Youth Service Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor), Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association) and Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor).

E. Pryce (Education Achievement Service) and R. Simms (Education Achievement Service).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. J. Bevan, D. Havard, B. Mrs G. Oliver and Mrs T. Parry and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mrs J. Havard (NEU) and Mrs P. Ireland (NEU).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared personal interests in the following items:

Councillor C. Andrews in Item 8 (Regional Schools Causing Concern Protocol and Risk Register) as the Vice Chair of Governors at Heolddu Comprehensive.

Councillor R. Saralis in Item 8 (Regional Schools Causing Concern Protocol and Risk Register) as a Local Authority Governor at Islwyn High School.

Councillor A. Farina-Childs in Item 8 (Regional Schools Causing Concern Protocol and Risk Register) as Chair of Governors at Blackwood Comprehensive School.

As these were personal and not prejudicial interests, Members were not required to leave the meeting, and could take part in the debate and vote.

3. MINUTES – 24TH SEPTEMBER 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 24th September 2019 (minute nos. 1- 10) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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 November 2019 to May 2020.

The Committee were asked to note that since the publishing of the report, it has been requested that a report on School Balances be added to the Forward Work Programme for 13th January 2020 and a Wales Audit Office Flying Start Report be added to the Forward Work Programme on 24th February 2020.

Members discussed the Forward Work Programme and noted in respect of an update on Shared Ambitions and Key Stage 4 and 5 Performance, it was suggested that these items be taken as one report on 13th January 2020.

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.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. YOUTH SERVICE PILOT PROJECT DELIVERY – DEMONSTRATION OF PREFERRED YOUTH WORK MODEL

The report provided Members with an update on the Youth Service's delivery of a pilot model of youth work methodology, which began in November 2018, and sought the views of Members with regard to the findings of this delivery to date.

It was noted that in 2018, the Youth Service, as part of its ongoing review process, had provided a preferred model of universal youth work delivery based on the adoption of a three cluster model structure, including revisions to its portfolio of youth clubs and profile of its part time youth worker employment.

The Youth Service subsequently began the delivery of a limited (in terms of time and area covered) pilot project in order to exemplify the advantages to young people that a more wholesale adoption of a revised youth work model would result in.

Starting in November 2018, the pilot project continues at present – based on positive results to date, its originally proposed period of delivery, until September 2019, has been extended until Christmas 2019 and a further extension (to gather further evidence) may be sought for up until March 31st for the same purpose. The additional cost of extending until March 31st is estimated at £15,000.

The pilot project is based in Crosskeys Youth Centre, the 'hub' youth facility in the Caerphilly East area.

It was noted that the project's aim and activities are consistent with the professional direction contained within the new national Youth Strategy for Wales for young people to.....'have access to opportunities that enhance informal learning and support engagement with social, non-formal and more structured learning experiences....through these, they will build healthy relationships, avoid isolation and loneliness, develop social and emotional capabilities, autonomy, self control, confidence and resilience'.

The Scrutiny Committee invited the Officer to provide additional information and it was noted that some of the successful outcomes of the pilot project include the attendance of young people from areas not previously reached; increased pupil engagement at Risca Comprehensive; opportunities for Accreditation have been put in place and the ability to reach young people with emerging needs have been engaged that would otherwise not have received support.

The Scrutiny Committee were presented with a video case study, which included interviews with young people involved in the pilot project, expressing their views and the impact the project has had on them. The Scrutiny Committee were pleased to note the positive comments expressed within the video.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the detailed report and video presentation and discussion ensued.

A Member sought clarification on the targeted age range of the scheme as well as the whole service. Officers explained that the Youth Service, including the Pilot project is aimed at young people aged between 11 and 25. Further information was also sought on the work undertaken across the service with vulnerable post 16. Officers explained that there are specialists working within the service with the aim to target these individuals and provide the necessary support, and in addition, there is a Post 16 team in place to support young people leaving the care environment and provide assistance with further education, housing, employment and general living support.

In noting the successful outcomes at 5.8 of the report, a Committee Member sought further information around the list of agencies at 5.8.6. Officers explained that this list outlines a number of the agencies in the Youth Service and Local to Crosskeys in which have developed enhanced relationships with the service and it was noted that that was not a complete list across the whole service, only specific to this particular pilot project. Members were also keen to note that the pilot has afforded the opportunity to develop better working relationships with schools, enhancing the support provision for young people not just in the pilot scheme, but across the borough.

A Member requested additional information in relation to the statistics and comparative data across the borough. Officers agreed to include this and further comparative data in future reports.

Discussions took place around the additional staffing undertaken to support the project. Officers explained that 2 additional staff members were employed for the purpose of the pilot and in addition, staff with specific skills were utilised from other schemes in order to appropriately staff the pilot scheme and apply a more holistic approach.

The Scrutiny Committee were pleased to note the developments as a result of the project and queried whether there are plans to roll the scheme out across the borough. Officers explained that the scheme is still under development and review, and further works are to be undertaken until the end of the pilot to determine its effectiveness and whether it would be worthwhile to roll out the scheme. This would also be subject to further decisions by Members and funding streams.

Discussions took place around Safeguarding and the use of Welsh language within this and other youth projects. It was noted that as a result of the changing nature of youth work, many staff members have undertaken additional training in Mental Health Awareness and Safeguarding and Caerphilly are leading the way in relation to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The Committee also noted that extensive work has been undertaken to provide Welsh Language support within all youth settings, however, this has proved difficult, even with support from external agencies. Members were assured that work continues both within the Youth Service and with partner agencies to provide a bilingual service.

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 Education Scrutiny Committee note the report.

7. PERIOD DIGNITY UPDATE

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress against the period dignity action plan.

The report provided the Committee with the way the period dignity working party used the £13,206 Welsh Government 2018/19 revenue grant to provide free period products to young women across the borough. Priorities identified in the Service Improvement Plan are also referenced in the report. The final section made reference to recent Healthy Schools National Quality Award accreditations.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that in July 2018 the title of the working party – ‘Period Poverty’ was replaced by ‘Period Dignity’ to reduce the stigma of poverty and it was noted that all secondary age pupils were invited to design a Caerphilly period dignity logo and the winning entry was made into a sticker and attached to every distributed red box.

The Committee noted that Community Regeneration sourced a Legacy grant and employed a professional film maker from Cardiff to create two short period dignity information films using pupils from Lewis Girls School and St Cenydd Comprehensive. The bi-lingual films were premiered on 20th June at Ty Penallta. The interim Chief Executive and Leader of the Council attended. At the event, Cllr Philippa Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement) made a commitment to spend the 2019/20 grant on environmentally friendly, sustainable and reusable products – the first Local Authority in Wales and the UK to do this.

The Cabinet Member provided the Committee with information around the work undertaken to provide environmentally friendly and reusable products. It was noted that work with an environmental campaigner has been undertaken to support year 9 pupils to better understand reusable products such as moon cups and the impact of plastics in current products.

It was noted that neighbouring Local Authorities and the BBC have used the Caerphilly model to demonstrate best practice; and the EAS included the Healthy Schools period work in their recently created Relationship and Sexuality Education Toolkit for schools.

The period dignity working party utilised the Welsh Government revenue grant by 31st March 2019 and provided settings with a total of 134 boxes of sanitary products. The full £13,206 was spent on products. In addition, the group developed a Caerphilly period dignity loo and two short information films to address issues of poverty and dignity.

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

In noting 5.1.4 of the report and the prudent use of resources which ensured that EOTAS provisions, youth centres, community centres and libraries were provided with products, it was queried whether additional establishments such as YMCA's could also receive products. Officers explained that there are specific terms and conditions of the grant, which has limited the establishments in which products can be made available, however strong links have been developed with schools, colleges, libraries and community centres and additional establishments will be considered should there be scope in the future.

Members discussed the grant allocation and raised concerns that the current grant allocation would not be sufficient to maintain the service going forward, and queried whether match funding could be considered in order to make the service sustainable. Officers explained that there has been a significant increase in the funding secured for 2020/21 of circa £150,000, however, should Members wish to look at additional funding options, this could be considered, subject to budget availability.

A Member queried whether the original Notice of Motion had resulted in this becoming a Policy. After much discussion, it was agreed that the wording of the original Notice of Motion be reviewed.

Finally, the Scrutiny Committee requested that the videos be made available to the Committee. Officers explained that these are now available again online, since the launch of the scheme.

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 Education Scrutiny Committee note contents of the report.

8. REGIONAL SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERNS PROTOCOL AND RISK REGISTER

Councillor C. Andrews declared a personal interest in this item as the Vice Chair of Governors at Heolddu Comprehensive. Councillor R. Saralis declared a personal interest in this item as a Local Authority Governor at Islwyn High School. Councillor A. Farina-Childs declared a personal interest in this item as Chair of Governors at Blackwood Comprehensive School. As these were personal and not prejudicial interests, Members were not required to leave the meeting, and could take part in the debate and vote.

The report provided information to Members on the revised South East Wales Consortia (SEWC) Regional Schools Causing Concern Protocol and supporting Risk Register Process and provided an update on Caerphilly Schools currently on the Risk Register since January 2019.

The SEWC Schools Causing Concern Protocol and additional Schools Causing Concern – Operation Appendix for meetings (Appendix 1 of the report) form a part of and are aligned with the National model for School Improvement. The report provided both a summary of these processes for meetings in schools and the supporting Schools Causing Concern risk register. It also provided further information on the Caerphilly schools included on the register.

The Committee welcomed E. Pryce and B. Simms, EAS to the meeting and invited them to make any additional comments on the report.

The Committee were provided with a detailed summary of the report and the Caerphilly Schools on the Risk Register as of 3rd October 2019, along with a summary on progress, including whether there are any schools currently with a live LA Warning Notice, National Categorisation over 3 years or any Estyn Inspection follow-up status.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the schools that have been removed from the Risk Register and that the next meeting of the Schools Causing Concern – Risk Register group is to be held on 12th December 2019, in which progress will be reviewed against agreed LA and EAS actions to support the schools and agree future required actions. In addition, it was noted that schools will be added and removed from the risk register as appropriate.

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

A Member raised a number of concerns for some schools which have been placed on the Risk Register and remained so for a long period of time and the level of interventions provided to support these schools. In addition, concerns were raised around attainment for pupils attending the schools placed on the register. Officers reassured Members that attainment has improved in the last academic year and results are in the higher quarter for the region. In addition, it was noted that there are a number of reasons for which a school can be placed on the Risk Register, including Estyn Inspection outcomes and where secondary schools have merged. It was however explained that a great deal of work is undertaken with these schools and support is provided through the Local Authority, Challenge Advisors and best practice sharing.

In noting 5.5 of the Officers report and the use of quantitative and qualitative evidence around school performance, concerns were raised around the changes to performance reporting and how schools causing concern can be identified without the use of numerical information. Officers explained that performance data will be collected as before, however this information will no longer be used to inform parent reports etc., but will be used by the schools, Local Authority and Governors to monitor school performance. Officers added that qualitative and numerical targets will be set as part of the School Development Plan, which will be made available to parents, and will provide additional performance information. The main aim of the change in data reporting is to provide a more clear focus on the progress of the pupils within the schools.

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 Education Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 7:25pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2020 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR