



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY,
15TH FEBRUARY 2022 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

P. J. Bevan, A. Collis, W. David, A. Farina-Childs and J. E. Roberts.

Cabinet Members:

Councillor R. Whiting (Learning and Leisure).

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), P O'Neill (Senior Youth Service Manager), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), E. Pryce (Assistant Director: Policy and Strategy, Education Achievement Service), K. Bevan (Director, Education Achievement Service), J. Wood (Assistant Director: School Improvement, Education Achievement Service), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and M. Afzal (Committee Services Officer).

Also present:

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded and would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click here to view.](#)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs E. M. Aldworth, D. T. Hardacre, D. Havard, M. P. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, B. Miles, Mrs G. D. Oliver, J. Simmonds and Mrs J.

Stone, together with Mrs P. Ireland (NEU) and Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 10TH JANUARY 2022

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2022 be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10th January 2022 (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 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the period February 2022 to March 2022 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10th January 2022. Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme, alongside the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, prior to publication on the Council's website.

Clarification and further information were sought in relation to the Welsh Government Pupil Development Grant. It was agreed that the Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services would prepare a briefing note for distribution to the Scrutiny Committee.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be published on the Councils' website.

6. CABINET REPORTS

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

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2022-2025

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report which asked Members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2022-2025 as part of the regional consultation process, before submission of the final EAS Business Plan to Cabinet for approval. Members were informed that the EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis.

The EAS Assistant Director for Policy and Strategy delivered a short presentation to provide the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the EAS Business Plan 2022-2025. Members were informed that the Business Plan had been completed in consultation with all five local authorities and been informed by extensive consultation and engagement activity. The presentation summarised what the EAS is aiming to achieve, what the EAS will do to achieve their vision and ways in which the EAS will capture their work and share information with their partners. Following the consultation session with Caerphilly Corporate Management Team, the changes that will be implemented within the final version of the Business Plan were highlighted to the Committee.

During the course of the debate a query was raised regarding specific funding to support teaching staff moving from English medium to Welsh medium education. The Director for EAS responded to the query and advised the Scrutiny Committee that she was not aware of the specific funding that the Member was referring to but would seek further information and clarification. In terms of professional learning the Sabbatical Scheme, which offers courses to teaching staff to increase the number of practitioners who can educate through the medium of Welsh, was highlighted. The EAS Assistant Director for Policy and Strategy referred to sections in the report which related to finance and informed Members that the delegation rates to schools increased to 95.5% in 2021/22. It was highlighted that the philosophy is to maximise the grants available to schools and minimise the grants returned to Welsh Government.

A discussion took place regarding engagement with schools and it was noted that schools and educational settings continue to face the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following consideration of the report, the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Commented on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process, before submission of the final EAS Business Plan to Cabinet for approval.
- (ii) Considered the main strengths and areas for development within Caerphilly and considered how EAS and LA services can be aligned, therefore ensuring all pupils meet their full potential.

8. DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SIX MONTH UPDATE 2021/22

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Scrutiny Committee with the 6-month Education Service Performance Assessment which is part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. Members were informed that the Performance Assessment (referred to hereafter as the DPA) is the Directorate's self-assessment and forms part of the Council's overall self-assessment activity. It provides information and analysis for 6-month period April – September 2021.

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services summarised a number of key points. The Service Improvement Plan priorities were outlined and Members were asked to note the progress that has been made so far, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Reference was made to the Resources section of the DPA and two key points were raised. Firstly, the challenges presented by Covid-19 in relation to sickness absence and the associated self-isolation. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services emphasised need to

recognise, as a Committee, a record of successfully keeping the majority of schools and classes functioning in spite of the challenges, which has been a real testament to Team Caerphilly. Secondly, Members were asked to note the current projected underspend for Education and Corporate Services, much of which has been a result of additional grant funding coming into the system. Members were informed that work is currently being undertaken with colleagues in Finance to re-invest into some much-needed additional capacity across the LEA and it was noted that a report on this will be presented over the coming weeks.

During the course of discussion, concerns were noted regarding the small font size of the DPA and the difficulties experienced by Members reading it on screen. In response to a Member's query, it was explained that the DPA's are an opportunity to bring together a range of information and intelligence and that the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet are involved in the self-assessment process by scrutinising the information contained within.

Following consideration of the item, the Education Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Education Services Directorate Performance Assessment and discussed, challenged, and scrutinised the information contained within.

The meeting closed at 6.13 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2022 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR