



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 24TH MAY 2016 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chair
Councillor J. Pritchard - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, H. Davies, C. Gordon, D.W.R. Preece, D. Rees, J.E. Roberts,
R. Saralis, Mrs M.E. Sargent, J. Simmonds

Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning: D. Havard

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director for Education),
J. Elias (Service Manager - ALN), J. Garland (Service Manager - Social Inclusion),
S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), P. O'Neil (Community Education Manager),
S. Richards (Principal Finance Officer), J. Southcombe (Financial Services Manager),
L. Travis (Senior Community Education Manager), J. Morgan (Solicitor),
A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), Mr A. Farina-Childs
(Parent Governor), Mrs A. Gross (Parent Governor) and Mrs P.J. Ireland (NUT)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Councillor Derek Havard (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning), Councillor Dave Rees and Mr. Delwyn Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association) to their first Scrutiny Committee.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.P. James, G. Johnston and Mrs G.D. Oliver, C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive), Mrs J. Havard (NUT) and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 23RD FEBRUARY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 23rd February 2016 (minute nos. 1 - 15) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THIS 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.

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Councillor D. Havard (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning) provided details in respect of 21st Century Schools, including Phase 4 of Y Gwyndy and Islwyn High School. He confirmed that a final decision is awaited from the Education Minister in relation to the proposed establishment of Abertysswg/Pontlottyn Primary School.

Members were informed of 3 possible federation options involving primary schools across the borough and it is hoped that a consultation process will take place during the Autumn term.

The Cabinet Member was pleased to advise that the Department has received final approval of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2014-17 and that Estyn's inspection of the EAS will be completed on Friday, 27th May, 2016.

It was explained that the authority's engagement and progression function, which aims to identify, engage and track the progress of NEET (not in Education, Employment, or Training) has resulted in significant progress over the past year that builds on the success of the Youth Service, who host this function.

The Youth Forum has been invited to attend the Royal Opening of the Senedd on Tuesday 7th June where 5 young people will attend from across the authority.

The Committee were informed that a Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been developed as all staff within Education are required to attend basic safeguarding training on an annual basis. The policy has been approved by full Council and was subsequently issued to all staff during a training event delivered by Helen West, Safeguarding Manager, on 17th May 2016.

In concluding, the Cabinet Member confirmed the prestigious Achievement Awards for Looked After Children will be held on 4th and 6th July 2016. This is an opportunity to celebrate the hard work and courage of children and young people who have demonstrated significant progress in various areas of academic and social achievement. In many instances, these learners have had to overcome very challenging circumstances in order to maximise their life chances.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his informative report.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Mrs Catherine Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) introduced the report that informed the Committee of its draft forward work programme including all reports that were identified at the work programme workshop on 23rd February 2016, planned for the period June 2016 to April 2017.

Members were asked to consider the work programme and to make any amendments or propose any additional agenda items to be included for future meetings.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to Mr Tim Williams (Head Teacher of Islwyn High School) being invited to the meeting on the 5th July to provide an update in relation to the school's progress and the Budget Monitoring Report listed for 8th November 2016 and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment listed for the 10th January 2017 being placed on the Members Portal, the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to

- i) Mr Tim Williams (Head Teacher of Islwyn High School) being invited to the meeting on the 5th July to provide an update in relation to the school's progress and the Budget Monitoring Report for the 8th November 2016 and Childcare Sufficiency Assessment listed for the 10th January 2017 being placed on the Members' Portal;

the work programme appended to the report be approved.

8. CABINET REPORTS

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

9. THE DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2015/16 AND THE PRIORITIES FOR 2016/17

Mr Bleddyn Hopkins (Assistant Director for Education) introduced the report that updated Members on the Directorate's performance for the financial year 2015/16 and set out the Directorate's priorities for the financial year 2016/17.

An overview was provided in relation to the Council's 6 Improvement Objectives for 2016/17, with particular reference to "Improving outcomes for all learners, particularly those vulnerable to underachievement". A review of the Directorate's performance for 2015/16 has been undertaken as part of the Council's corporate planning process. Through the Self Evaluation process and taking account of Council priorities, introduced by the Council in 2014, the Directorate has identified 8 key priority themes for 2016/17, details of which were set out in the report.

Mrs Keri Cole (Chief Education Officer) delivered the presentation in relation to Performance Management in conjunction with her Officers who provided an overview on the priorities that were agreed for 2015/16:

- Improve standards of attainment in Key Stage 4 at the Level 2+ threshold
- Progress the Implementation of Behaviour Strategy
- Complete the ALN Review and Implement Recommendations
- Working in partnership, to promote the uptake of Free School Meals
- Deliver an effective and accessible Youth Service that supports the personal and social development of young people
- Deliver Adult Community Learning to improve the level of essential skills and provide opportunities to gain qualifications (formal and non-formal)
- Deliver high quality Library Services across the Authority
- Ensure compliance with Health and Safety Policy
- Continue to implement the 21st Century Schools Programme
- Meet the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Plan

The Chair thanked the Officers for the report and presentation and full discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought regarding local Member meetings in relation to 21st Century Schools and Officers confirmed that although the last 3 meetings convened by the Cabinet Member had been cancelled, they will continue in future. This is in addition to the monthly user group meetings where Local Authority staff, the Cabinet Member, the Contractor and the client agent (AECOM) attend.

It was explained that Improvement Objective 1 will continue for another year and the Local Authority judge this objective as partially met. Details of how the target is set and what was achieved were set out.

In terms of the implementation of the behaviour strategy, an update was provided in relation to fixed term and permanent exclusions in the last year and the training available to schools and governors. A member queried the impact the training is having on schools. It was explained that at this stage it is difficult to make a judgement as although the training has been rolled out, some schools will not be assessed until June and the outcome of the evaluation should be concluded in the autumn term.

Members discussed the Annual Learning Needs (ALN) Review and solutions in moving forward. Reference was made to upcoming Welsh Government (WG) Training Programmes namely Capacity Building Solutions, that offers good basic training at the foundation stage for assessing needs and the refreshed Autistic Spectrum Disorder Strategic Action Plan that focuses on raising awareness of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The committee was informed that Education Psychologists are not always required as some needs can be assessed and dealt with within the school and it is hoped that this strategy will be supported following the training sessions.

Clarification was sought in relation to the strategies used to encourage free school meal claimants to engage as the numbers dropped in January 2016. Officers confirmed that the team are working with partners such as governors and parent groups to increase the numbers and to move away from the stigma that has been associated previously. Cashless catering has also been introduced across schools and all efforts are made not to identify the children who are entitled to free school meals. Youth workers have reported that in many cases it is simply that children want to leave the school grounds with friends during the lunchtime period.

Reference was made to the Youth Service and details were provided in terms of the plan for restructure and grant funding. Members were informed that the Youth Service Curriculum is available at every centre and Wi-Fi is available in many centres. Although there are some black spots across the borough the youth service are currently working with I.T. to consider other options.

In terms of Adult Community Learning, Members congratulated Mrs Lyn Travis and her team for their work undertaken with changing priorities where funding streams have been reduced.

Consideration was given to the Service Improvement Plan themes for 2016/17, including:

- Improving standards of attainment particularly at key stage 4 at the level 2+ threshold
- Raising standards of attendance
- Reducing the impact of poverty on children and young people
- A complete review of EOTAS
- To complete the final phase of the ALN review
- Deliver 21st Century Schools Strategy and Development
- To meet the requirements of the CCBC Medium Term Financial Plan and
- To maintain and further deliver good practice in Safeguarding

Having fully considered its content, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the progress and performance against agreed outcomes for future priorities and recommendations be noted;
- ii) in noting the report Members supported the partial success at the full year stage in respect of the Improvement Objective Assessment.

The meeting closed at 8.27 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 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR