



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 2016 AT 5.30 PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chair

Councillors:

J. Bevan, C. Gordon, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D. Rees, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis

Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning: D. Havard

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director, Education), G. Evans (Interim Manager – Community Education), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), A. Wyburn (Solicitor), A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: M. Barry and R. Morgan (Parent Governors), P.J. Ireland (NUT), M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education), P. Ward (Head Teacher, Bedwas High School)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Martyn Western back following a period of ill health and also Peter Ward, Head Teacher of Bedwas High School to the Scrutiny Meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, M.P. James, G. Johnston, Mrs. P. Marsden, D.W.R. Preece, J. Pritchard (Vice-Chair), Mrs M.E. Sargent, J. Simmonds, D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), J. Havard (NUT).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 27TH SEPTEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 27th September 2016 (minute nos. 1–12) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. 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.

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor D. Havard (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning) updated the Scrutiny Committee in relation to 21st Century Schools. He confirmed the final phase of Y Gwindy School project was completed at the end of October that include a 3G pitch, multi-use games areas and adaptations to the school hall to facilitate multi gym facilities. Members were advised that Welsh Government wrote to Cwmcarn High School on 5th October consenting to the request of the Governing Body to issue a Notice under Section 80(1) of the School Standards and Organisation Wales Act 2013. In response, the Governing Body formally gave two years' written Notice of their intention to discontinue the School. It was explained that at its meeting on 30th November, Cabinet will be asked to approve the commencement of a consultative process to establish a Rhymney 3-18 School with effect from 1st January 2018 that would incorporate Rhymney Comprehensive and the new Abertysswg/Pontlottyn Primary schools.

Members were informed that Cabinet agreed on 5th October to a proposal to commence a consultation to create a combined regional Sensory and Communication Service which would involve Caerphilly County Borough Council based staff from the Visual Impairment Service transferring to Torfaen County Borough Council. The outcome of the consultation together with a full outline business case will be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee in the New Year.

The Cabinet Member was pleased to announce that on Thursday 10th November, Ystrad Mynach Library will officially reopen after a highly successful internal makeover with Council funding of £48,000. Customer feedback to date has proven highly complementary.

The Committee were advised that following a recent re-designation of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, a decision was passed by full Council to allocate a co-opted place on the Committee to a representative of the Youth Forum and this will significantly enhance Caerphilly's reputation and commitment to the Participation Agenda that is already recognised by Welsh Government, as excellent.

Details were provided in terms of recent visits by Kirsty Williams, Education Minister and Professor Donaldson who attended the official opening of the new Rebound Therapy Room at Trinity Fields School and Lewis School Pengam. Reference was also made to a visit from Welsh Government to determine how the statutory guidance for children and young people's participation is being implemented.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his informative report.

Clarification was sought in relation to the requirement of a further consultation relating to the proposed Rhymney 3-18 School. It was confirmed that it is a Welsh Government requirement that a full statutory consultative process is undertaken as changes have been

made to the character of the proposed School. It was explained that pupils, staff, parents and governing bodies would be involved with this process and timescales of the consultation were set out.

7. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE 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.

8. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Head of Democratic Services presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from November 2016 to April 2017.

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

A Member requested a report be added to the Work Programme relating to Families First. This was not scheduled on the Programme as it was agreed that Officers would make enquiries in this area following the meeting, the information will then be distributed to Members. It was suggested that a Special Education for Life Scrutiny Committee be held on Thursday 15th December to consider 2017/2018 Medium Term Financial Plan Budget Proposals. A report on Rhymney 3-18 all Through School be added to 27 February 2017 meeting with the Budget Monitoring Report originally scheduled for the 27th February 2017 placed on the Members' Portal.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to the foregoing, the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that subject to the following, the work programme appended to the report be approved:

- (i) a Special Meeting for the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee be scheduled on the 15th December 2016, to consider the Medium Term Financial Plan Budget Proposals for 2017/2018;
- (ii) A report on Rhymney 3-18 all Through School be added to 27 February 2017 and the Budget Monitoring Report scheduled for the 27th February 2017 be placed on the Members' Portal.

9. 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.

10. ISLWYN HIGH SCHOOL – SITE VISIT

The Chair gave permission for this item to be brought forward on the agenda.

The Assistant Director of Education provided Members with an update following the site visit that was held on the 16th September 2016. Mr. T. Williams, Head Teacher gave a brief presentation on the progress at the site visit that was attended by the Cabinet Members for Highways, Transportation and Engineering and Education for Lifelong Learning, Local Ward Members, Chair of Governors, Members of the Scrutiny Committee and appropriate officers, to gain a better understanding of the site. Reference was made to the concerns previously raised by Mr Williams including, safety issues surrounding car parking and traffic management, the size of the site and recreation and physical education (PE) space and lack of classroom space. It was emphasised that the new school had been built having regard to Wales Parking Standards and to comply with all Planning and Highways conditions. It was acknowledged that congestion problems were inherent in most schools nationally on a daily basis. One of the planning permission conditions requires the completion of a School Travel Plan (STP) to be submitted to the Council for approval within six months of the date of occupation of the school. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering gave an assurance that the arrangements would be monitored regularly following the full opening of the school in June, 2017.

In terms of the size of the site and PE space Members had been apprised of the site size relative to Building Bulletin Guidance in 2013 when the matter was deliberated by the Task and Finish Group. The design brief expressly requested flexible spaces in view of the pupil bulge in the shorter term. Alternative areas that could be used within the school during PE times for different classes were set out. It was explained that classroom space comparisons were made with two neighbouring schools of almost identical size. Islwyn High School is the most spacious and also has an area that does not count towards the pupil capacity calculation. The school has been designed having regard to long term future proofing and to complement sustainability and regeneration strategies and has been supported by the Welsh Government as part of its long term 21st Century Schools Strategy. The Scrutiny Committee were advised that It is acknowledged that there will be some challenges for the new school to manage during the initial period of the pupil bulge, but there are sufficient spaces to accommodate these additional pupils.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update.

Clarification was sought into the operational date for the school opening and Members were informed the proposed date is Monday 26th June 2017. This will allow all year 11 pupils to sit their GCSE's at their current schools. A Member queried if a traffic management assessment was undertaken and was advised that this is a requirement of 21st Century Schools. The recommendations were fed back and specified in the planning application to include dropped kerbs and bus lanes. In relation to traffic management improvements a revised safe route to the school was discussed at the site visit that falls in line with the Wales Parking Standards. The Contractor also met with and considered the needs of people who are visually impaired.

Reference was made to the demolition of the two schools that will be closed and the Scrutiny Committee were advised that no decision has been made as yet. The sites are likely to be transferred to Property Services and the priority for Education will be to move to the new site. A Member requested further information as to whether the schools are surplus to requirements or if the facilities can be re-used. Officers will make enquiries following the meeting and make any information available to Members.

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

RESOLVED that the update in respect of the issues raised at the site visit on the 16th September, be noted.

11. MID YEAR (SIP) PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2016/17

The Chief Education Officer introduced Mr Ward, Head Teacher of Bedwas High School who delivered a presentation in relation to Learning Pathway Centres. This is a provision for non-main stream students that matches the needs of individual students by providing a flexible curriculum. He confirmed the initial concept was to provide alternate education for KS3/4 pupils with hubs on school sites. Funding is provided by an Age-Weighted Pupil Unit and Pupil Deprivation Grants. Details of the team involved were set out. The Head Teacher explained why this model was chosen and referred to the Bedwas Inclusion Programme that has been tried and tested. There are currently 2 centres (Heolddu and Lewis School) and a third centre has been agreed at Y Gwindy. The intention is to have 4 hubs across Caerphilly County Borough Council providing an opportunity for the students to achieve qualifications and life/social skills.

The Chair thanked the Head Teacher for his informative presentation and Members questions were welcomed.

Members queried how they could support this Education provision and were informed that the team are looking at a two to three year programme in an area that is challenging and will hopefully offer different strategies in going forward. The Head Teacher asked that this provision be supported as some children just don't 'fit in' main stream school anymore and the Local Authority have a duty to look after all children. He advised there are a range of benefits available to individual pupils, such as attending full time, gaining qualifications and engaging with different people.

The Chief Education Officer and Assistant Director then presented the report that updated Members on the Mid Year (April 2016 – September 2016) performance of the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate against the 8 identified priority themes set within the Service Improvement Plan for 2016-17 (appended to the report). The Directorate sets its service improvement actions using a variety of methods, taking into consideration statutory responsibility, national, regional and local strategic documents and the aspirations of Caerphilly County Borough Council. Members were advised that the Service Improvement Plan and Improvement Objective have been monitored on a regular basis by Education and Lifelong Learning's Directorate Management Team (DMT) as part of the Directorate's performance management process. At the mid-year point the Directorate class the improvement objective as being partially successful. The reason for this judgement is that, whilst there has been good progress within many areas, there is a need for further development in multi-agency work and the use of systems in schools.

It was explained that the report contributes to the 5 ways of working in the context of a long term strategy, preventing problems occurring or getting worse, integration of public bodies' well-being objectives, collaborating to meet the objectives and involving a diverse range of stakeholder perspectives.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their informative report and for responding to questions raised during the course of the debate.

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

RESOLVED that the progress made in meeting the actions set out in the Action Plans and the judgement of the progress with the Improvement Objective being partially successful at the 6 month stage, be noted.

12. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ANNUAL LIBRARY STANDARDS ASSESSMENT 2015-2016

The Interim Manager for Community Education presented the report that informed the Scrutiny Committee of the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, Core Entitlements, and Qualitative Indicators, during 2015-16. This is the 2nd year of the new Framework that will operate until March 31st 2017 and includes a number of assessment areas with a focus on outcomes and qualitative measures in addition to traditional standards of attainment.

It was explained that Caerphilly County Borough was assessed as meeting 17 of the 18 Welsh Government Core Entitlements for Public Library Service provision, with one Entitlement met in part, the same performance as last year. The Library Service was deemed as meeting 4 of the 7 Quality Indicators during 2015-16, 3 met in part, and none failed in totality. Quality Indicator performance is lower than that achieved in 2014-15 when 6 were met in full and one partially. This is largely due to budgetary pressures from funding reductions relating to staffing, Book and Non Book Materials allocations, and a modest increase in Wi-Fi provision with one additional Library virtually enabled leaving 5 sites outstanding. The Welsh Government assessors and peer led Reference Group state that whilst Caerphilly County Borough Council Library Service has clearly been affected by the present financial climate that it is "doing well to maintain performance", details of which were appended to the report.

The Scrutiny Committee were informed that overall the assessment of the County Borough Council's Public Library Service for 2015-16, whilst largely positive, recognises the financial challenges that have impacted on Standards and Quality Indicator attainment during the year under review. Caerphilly are providing a first class service and Members were advised of the recent improvements made to Ystrad Mynach Library.

Clarification was sought in relation to Wi-Fi availability within libraries and the cost involved. Members were advised that Broadband is now available across the 18 Library sites and Wi-Fi is available at 13 of those sites, the cost of Wi-Fi per site is approximately £1200 per annum. A member queried the percentage of spend in relation to children's literature and was informed the spend whilst above the required level enabling the Library Service to support Literacy improvements within the County Borough, was deemed as failing to meet the set criteria for resource budget allocations within the 5th Framework as it exceeded the proportion of under 16's resident in Caerphilly. It was explained that Welsh Government wants to ensure that funds are spread across children's and adults materials and this objective is to be taken from the new Framework.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved with the addition of Members noting that Library Services are doing well in times of budget cuts that have resulted in reduced levels of staffing and opening hours. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the foregoing:

- (i) Caerphilly County Borough Council's Library Services Performance for 2015-2016 in working towards achieving the 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards 2014-2017, be noted;

- (ii) the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group Assessment of this Performance, be noted;
- (iii) the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee endorses the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2015-2016;
- (iv) Caerphilly Library Services are doing well in times of budget cuts that have resulted in reduced levels of staffing and opening hours, be noted.

13. WELSH MEDIUM PROVISION – CAERPHILLY BASIN

The Assistant Director of Education presented the report that had been requested by a Member at the Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 27th September relating to the impact upon English medium provision in the area. The report considers the provision of school places to ensure the Council's Key Strategies are best achieved. It was explained that the report links directly to the Education for Life, Sustainability, Regeneration and Equality Strategies and links to the Learning theme of Caerphilly Delivers and the Local Service Board single integrated plan.

Members were advised that the report contributes to the Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016. In particular A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language (in the context of heritage, language and culture) and a prosperous Wales (in the context of a well skilled and educated economy) and a more Equal Wales. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to supply sufficient school places, subject to parental preference, and in so doing requires determining the number, size, composition and location of its Schools. Details of the Welsh medium nursery provision within the Caerphilly Basin allocated places and admission numbers were set out from 2010 to date along with figures relating to English and Welsh medium Primary Schools.

It was explained that Welsh Government are due to announce details of Band B (2019-2024) of the 21st Century Schools Programme shortly. It is likely that additional Welsh medium primary provision within the Caerphilly Basin will be a priority consideration. In the event that this occurs, then there would longer term be a need to review secondary Welsh medium provision within the County Borough, albeit currently there are projected to be sufficient places until 2025 at least.

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

RESOLVED that the existing provision in relation to Welsh medium provision in the Caerphilly Basin and any consequential impact upon English medium provision, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR