



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE,
YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY, 21ST JUNE 2012 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chairman
Councillor D.W.R. Preece - Vice Chairman

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, C. Gordon, D. Havard, M.P. James, Mrs. G.D. Oliver, J. Pritchard,
J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, Mrs. M.E. Sargent

Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning - Councillor R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Corporate Director - Education, Lifelong Learning and Leisure), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director Our Schools Our Future), T. Mayer (Assistant Director Planning and Strategy), G. Evans (Interim, Manager Community Education), D. Phenis (Community Development Manager), E. Pryce (Senior Adviser - Performance and ICT), K. Cole (Interim Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), J. Rowe (Leisure Services Manager), C. Rogers (Principal Business Performance Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer) H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

T. Crosse (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education), Mrs. J. Havard and Mrs. P. Ireland (NUT)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Durham, D.M. Gray, G. Johnston, D. Rees and Mr. P. Jones (UNITE)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES - 4TH APRIL AND 29TH MAY 2012

RESOLVED that subject to it being noted that the reference in minute no. 8 (dated 4th April 2012) should read Senghenydd Drop in Centre and not St. Cenydd Youth Drop in Centre and the reference to the Cabinet member in the minutes dated 29th May 2012 should read Rhianon and not Rhiannon, the following minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 4th April (minute nos. 1 - 12, on page nos. 1 - 5) and 29th May 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 3, on page nos. 1 - 4).

3. 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.

4. CABINET REPORTS

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

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor Mrs. R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, tabled her report which referred to the launch of the Awen Gallery at Risca Library, the Literacy Olympics programme which took place during Adult Learner's Week (14th - 18th May), the Olympic torch relay (when an estimated 30,000 residents welcome the Olympic Flame in Caerphilly), the presentation of a National Quality Award for being "Healthy Schools" to both Markham Primary and Bedwas Comprehensive Schools, and the development of the new library and customer services centre at Risca Palace as a local arts venue. Reference was also made to the opening of the new library in Abercarn and the celebration of achievement event in Adult Learners Week. It was noted that the opening of Cwm lfor Primary has been delayed from the start of the Autumn Term to immediately after October half term.

Members noted the tabled report and disappointment was expressed at the delay of the opening of Cwm lfor Primary School.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

Members of the Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Corporate Director - Education, Lifelong Learning and Leisure referred to the Inspection, which will take place between 2nd - 6th July 2012, advised on what the inspection will be based (previous inspection report and authority self-evaluation) and gave details of those who will carry out the inspection.

She advised of the key questions that will be asked (how good are outcomes, how good is the provision and how good is the leadership and management) and detailed the areas for inspection in each of those categories. At the end of the inspection the Inspectors will make two key judgements:-

- How good is the local authority's performance based upon judgements made on the 3 key questions
- Inspectors' confidence in the local authorities ability to drive its own improvement in the future.

The performance and prospects will be rated on a four point scale (excellent, good, adequate or unsatisfactory) and whilst the formal result will not be available until October it is general practice for the Inspector to give a verbal update at the conclusion of the inspection.

In noting that the Inspection will be based on both the previous inspection report and the authority self evaluation, it was explained how the process of self evaluation has been evidenced, with the strengths and areas for development being identified in each of the recognised areas (standards, well being, resource management, partnership working, support for school improvement, improving quality, support for additional learning needs, access and school places, promoting social inclusion and leadership).

Details of the strengths and areas for development in each of those areas were discussed and Members were pleased to note that performance at KS1 and KS2 is good, KS4 is improving and performance post 16 is excellent. They were advised that further work is required on KS3 data prior to any evidence being submitted. It was agreed that a copy of the self-evaluation report summary document would be forwarded to all members for information.

8. OUR SCHOOLS OUR FUTURE STRATEGIC PROCESS – 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

The Assistant Director - Our Schools Our Future, gave an overview of the development of the 21st Century schools programme and advised of the number of reports that had been presented to Council at each stage of the process. He referred to the strategic planning process that has been put in place and to the key issues within asset management, planning of school places, school organisation and the consultation protocol which will be used to inform the process. Members were advised that all four key documents are in draft and it is anticipated that they will be published for consultation in the autumn term.

By way of an update he referred to the Estyn Inspection report presented in 2009 which had recommended the development of a whole-authority plan, confirming how the authority intends to address surplus places and showing how the authority intends to meet its corporate commitment to bring all school buildings up to standard by 2022. Reference was also made to the Welsh Government regional seminars in 2009 which, in 2010, had resulted in the preparation of a long-term strategy - the Strategic Outline Programme. The revised bid in 2011 had resulted in the submission of three priority areas totalling £92m (priority 1 Former St. Ilan site Welsh medium development £20m, priority 2 Rhymney 3-18 £12m and priority 3 Secondary Rationalisation £60m) and it was noted that Welsh Government approval had been received in principle, in December 2011.

It was noted that Officers have met Welsh Government Officials regarding the bid 'Challenge' phase, and Welsh Government confirmed that it could afford the B and A programme (2014-2021) as profiled by the 22 local authorities but is not able to give a firm commitment beyond the first 3 years of programme. However, local authorities can fund schemes pre April 2014 which, subject to business case approval, would be refunded by Welsh Government at a later date. Business cases are only required in the first instance for those projects due to commence in first 3 years of programme i.e. 2014-2017.

During the remainder of 2012 the Strategic Outline Case will be retested by Welsh Government (late summer/early autumn), the Outline Business Cases will be submitted for schemes within the first 3 years and subsequently the Full Business Cases will be submitted. There will then be the final approval of the bids. It was noted that each of the three priorities would be subject to the statutory consultation process (which will be detailed as part of the strategic planning process). It was pointed out that if any one person should object to what is proposed the matter would have to be referred to the Ministers for determination.

Members thanked the Assistant Director - Our Schools Our Future for his informative presentation and for responding to their queries raised during the course of the debate, particularly in relation to timelines, funding and the statutory consultation process.

9. THE CAERPHILLY SKILLS STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report which advised of the recent developments within the Caerphilly Skills Strategy. Members were advised that the structured and coherent countywide strategy covers all skills, including literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Members were reminded of the detailed consultation that had been undertaken in order to develop the strategy and reference was made the success of the introduction of the foundation phase guidance, training information and skills strategy. It was noted there has been significant engagement with schools which has included training and professional development for school staff which will ensure there is a commonality of approach. The introduction of the standardised reading test has also shown evidence of improvement and as there is now a consistency of approach the statistics are more meaningful when analysed. Similarly where schools had been performing below an acceptable level measures had been put in place to support the intervention process. The success of these initiatives can be seen in the provisional data that is available but Officers will continue to offer support, monitor and challenge the process.

It was noted that phase two of the strategy (2012-13) would focus on key stage 3, numeracy and further developing the links with families. Although quantitative data will not be available until July 2012, early qualitative data indicates strongly that this focused strategy has had a very positive impact on pupils' reading ages. What is already very evident is that head teachers and their staff are taking this challenge very seriously and are working tirelessly to address the skills' deficit, acutely aware that learners need this additional support in order to be successful in realising their ambitions. Some aspects of numeracy have also been implemented and evaluated. These include the Numeracy Toolkit and a training programme for data handling.

Members were advised that to further secure the success of this strategy, progress has also been made within the Monitoring, Challenge, Support and Intervention Programme details of which were outlined.

The Corporate Director - Education, Lifelong Learning and Leisure referred to the ongoing commitment to improve pupil performance and work with schools to achieve this aim. She advised that the use of the school effectiveness framework remains the key driver for improvement and the skills strategy has been embraced and taken forward by all schools and will continue to be progressed in order that the appropriate skills required can continue to be addressed.

Members noted the information contained within the report and thanked both the Corporate Director - Education, Lifelong Learning and Leisure and Interim Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion for responding to their queries raised during the course of the debate, particularly in relation to the use of quantitative data, banding, targeting support, use of audits of adult literacy and numeracy and the use of good practice case studies.

10. DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND LEISURE - END OF YEAR EVALUATION 2011-2012

The Corporate Director - Education, Lifelong Learning and Leisure gave an overview of the report which provided an evaluation of the performance of the Directorate for the financial year 2011-12 (review of education performance Summer 2011, qualitative evaluation against key priorities and quantitative performance indicators for individual service areas). With the assistance of a power point presentation the Officers in attendance gave an overview of their specific areas of activity.

Details of the education performance for summer 2011 were outlined and data providing a summary the percentage of free meals, the Wales index of multiple deprivation summary, KS1, KS2 and KS3 summaries and KS4 progress were provided and explained.

During the course of the debate a request was made for the comparative data for the last five years to be presented to a future meeting and that statistics for individual schools and the percentage of eligibility of free school meals also be provided in order that education attainment can be compared. These requests are reflected in minute no. 11 - requests for reports to be included on the next available agenda.

Reference was then made to the Directorates priorities and Members received a comprehensive analysis, delivered by the respective Officer, which highlighted the key priorities and objectives, what went well and what needs to improve within each service area (planning and strategy, community education and libraries, community development, leisure services, catering services and learning education and inclusion). The performance indicators for each of the service areas were also outlined in detail.

Members thanked the Officers for their informative presentations and for responding to their queries raised during the course of the debate in relation to school meals, library and leisure facilities, extra curriculum activities, collaborative arrangement and the behaviour and attendance policy and guidelines.

11. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

The following requests for reports were received.

1. Councillor M.P. James - arising from the report on the end of year evaluation as it relates to education performance it was requested that comparative data for the last five years be provided – Mr. E Pryce explained that this was shown in the line charts within the presentation which compared Caerphilly performance with Wales over 5 years. Rank positions for each indicator were provided for the current year and previous year for each of the last 4 annual scrutiny presentations if required;
2. Councillor J. Pritchard - arising from the report on the end of year evaluation as it relates to education performance it was requested that statistics for individual schools and the percentage of eligibility of free school meals be provided in order that education attainment can be compared - Mr. E. Pryce explained that a previous presentation to scrutiny on 4th June 2012 had presented a range of FSM information. This could be provided again if required;
3. Councillor Mrs. M.E. Sargent – it was requested that performance on religious education in primary and secondary schools be provided - the Director advised that whilst Religious Education is part of the curriculum, there is no statutory requirement for schools to assess pupils level in the subject at the end of each key stage. At GCSE level examination results are available, but as the subject is optional it is very difficult to accurately compare the performance of schools and no comparative information is contained within the All Wales Core Data Set.

12. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports, none of which had been brought forward for review.

1. Fochriw Community Centre;
2. Schools Budget Forum Minutes - 25th April 2012;
3. Caerphilly Standing Advisory Council For Religious Education Minutes - 20th February 2012;
4. Forward Work Programme.

13. JEREMY ROWE - LEISURE SERVICES MANAGER

It was noted that Jeremy had secured the position with Bridgend County Borough Council and Members wished him every success in his new role.

The meeting closed at 7.25 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2012, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN