



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER 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. Durham, D.M. Gray, M.P. James, G. Johnston, Mrs G.D. Oliver,
J. Pritchard, R. Saralis, Mrs M.E. Sargent

Also Present:

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: Mrs R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Corporate Director Education and Lifelong Learning), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director, Our Schools Our Future, 21st Century Schools), T. Maher (Assistant Director Planning and Strategy), K. Cole (Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), A. Davies (Advisor – ALN, Inclusion Services), G. Evans (Senior Manager Library Services), M. Gingell (Senior Finance Officer), S. Richards (Principal Finance Officer), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), R.J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

Co-opted Members: Mrs P. Ireland (NUT), Mr A. Farina Childs (Parent Governor) and Mrs A. Goss (Parent Governor)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Gordon, D. Havard, D. Rees, J.E. Roberts and Mrs J. Havard of NUT

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 25th September 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 13, on page nos. 1 - 5), be approved as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There were no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

4. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor Mrs R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, verbally referred to Estyn's report detailing the findings of their inspection in July 2012 relating to the Quality of Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young People; the opening of Cwm Ifor Primary School yesterday (although the official opening has yet to be determined); and local nominations for the Sports Wales Coach of the Year Awards. The winners will be decided at a ceremony in Cardiff on the 14th November.

Councillor Passmore also updated Members on the temporarily relocation of Cwmcarn High School to the former Ebbw Vale campus of Coleg Gwent and the impact of super storm 'Sandy' to three visiting schools from the County Borough. Members were informed the tour operator, Leisure World, has confirmed the groups were moving to Washington and would continue with the planned itinerary.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for her presentation and asked that this be circulated.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

5. AGENDA SUMMARY

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

6. CONSULTATION ON WELSH MEDIUM SECONDARY PROPOSAL

The report sought the views of Scrutiny Committee Members on the above proposal, as part of the formal consultation process, prior to consideration by Cabinet as to whether to proceed to statutory notice.

Officers highlighted the work undertaken to date following Council's agreement on 7th August to commence statutory processes, in regarding the former St. Ilan site Welsh-medium development. The relevant formal consultation process includes a range of meetings and will formally conclude on 30th November 2012.

Members discussed the report and officers responded to general questions. In particular further clarification on the projected increase in pupil numbers, as detailed on page 5 of the consultation document, was given. Officers confirmed this would be kept under review.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Assistant Director, Our Schools Our Future, 21st Century Schools for his report and agreed to direct any additional comments to him.

7. PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS IN WALES - ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT 2011-12

The report informed Members of the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicators, during 2011-12. Members were reminded that the 4th Framework focuses on supporting local authorities to maintain a core Library Service during a period of financial constraint for the public sector in Wales.

Members were advised that Caerphilly County Borough Library Service met or exceeded 6 of the 9 Welsh Government Public Library Standards in 2011-12; and officers reviewed each of these in turn, highlighting successes and challenges alike. Officers confirmed that the Council's ongoing commitment to invest in its Library buildings has had a positive impact on Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator achievement.

Members noted that the County Borough's performance is deemed as average, when compared to Wales as a whole. The Welsh Government had however, given recognition to the substantial investment in library buildings and service enhancements within them, resulting in better performance in many of the Standards and Performance indicators.

Following discussion on the content of the report, the Scrutiny Committee made reference to the opening hours and accessibility of the library service, including the ability to lend electronically via e-readers. Officers confirmed that Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of a number of authorities in Wales to utilise electronic lending, but publishers did limit the service.

Members were also informed that Newbridge Library was due for completion by the end of February, early March 2013.

The Scrutiny Committee fully considered the report and:-

- (i) noted the information received from the County Borough Library Service with regard to its performance for 2011-2012 in working towards achieving the 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicator Set 2011-14;
- (ii) noted the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group assessment of this performance, as attached to the report by appendices; and
- (iii) endorsed the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2011-12 and recommended that Cabinet approve the report.

8. SCHOOL BUDGET FORMULA AND THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS RELATING TO STANDARDS

The report and accompanying presentation apprised Members of the operational methodology of the school funding formula, together with the impact on individual schools.

Officers reviewed the formula and general criterion applied and informed Members that there were two key elements to be considered when assessing funding to schools; which in total are referred to as the "Gross School Budget" (GSB). The two elements are:-

- (a) the amount delegated to schools to be spent directly at their own discretion – referred to as the delegated schools budget; and distributed to schools by way of a formula – the School Funding Formula (SFF). This comprises of 32 different criteria that can be categorised into 6 key areas, as detailed in appendix 1 of the report. There is only one statutory requirement that has to be addressed in the SFF - i.e. at least 70% of the funding has to be allocated based on the actual number of pupils residing in schools. Referred to as "Pupil-led funding".
- (b) the amount retained at the "centre" by the Council and spent on pupils.

Members were advised that Caerphilly County Borough Council is the 17th highest funding authority in Wales, spending £5307 per pupil. The Welsh average is £5462 per pupil. Whilst this appeared to be a small difference, the actual cost of funding CCBC at the Welsh average would require an additional £4.3m.

There are significant variations between CCBC schools when comparing the funding per pupil; and a number of reasons for this were detailed, including occupancy levels, different school types and the impact of social deprivation. Further clarification was given to Members on these points and officers suggested that should Members want to be fully acquainted with how the funding is allocated against the entire 32 criteria, a workshop would be arranged. This suggestion was welcomed by Members.

In closing, Members were asked to note that the Authority had made significant improvements. In 2009/10 the delegation rate was 70%, while in 2012/13 CCBC achieved the 80% delegation target that had been set. Currently, the School Budget Forum are considering what the most appropriate areas for delegation are, in order to reach the 2014/15 target of 85%. Members were invited to attend the School Budget Forum sub-group.

The Corporate Director of Education and Lifelong Learning emphasised that it was too simplistic to say that more finances improve opportunities and give rise to better outcomes. This comes down to leadership, quality teaching, self-evaluation and knowing strengths and areas for development. Resources needed to be targeted in the right areas thereby achieving maximum effectiveness.

Members thanked the officers for their informative presentation and a discussion followed.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report and that further discussions were to take place with School Budget Forum on the options available for the future.

9. INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT PROGRESS IN READING (PRESENTATION)

The Manager of Learning, Education and Inclusion introduced Andrea Davies, Advisor – Additional Learning Needs, Inclusion Services. Together they gave Members a presentation on the results of reading tests undertaken in June 2012 in both primary and secondary schools.

Officers advised that a specific test was introduced to ascertain if the functional reading age of pupils was improving across the county borough. The all Wales reading test (AWRT) indicated that while there had been improvements from the year before, results were still low. Results illustrated that year 3 pupils showed higher levels of improvement than those in year 5.

Officers evaluated pupils with a reading age 6 months or more below their chronological age and grouped them into 5 bands for comparison purposes. Pupils in the first 3 bands (A, B and C) responded quickly and improved their reading skills, while those in Bands D and E had additional learning needs and a different approach was required. The importance to challenge those who read well was also highlighted.

Ms Davies demonstrated the additional challenges and work undertaken to assist pupils in Bands D and E, in particular the move for earlier intervention and the use of specialist teachers. The York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) was being used as a baseline measure and an intensive 10 week intervention programme implemented with group sizes of 4 pupils.

The specialist teachers will need to work more closely with class teachers and build upon class teacher planning to enable pupils to generalise strategies into the class settings. There is an expectation that specialist teachers will work both in a withdrawal capacity and in class to support identified pupils. This will produce more effective results within the schools and enable specialist skills to be transferred into general classes.

It is anticipated that a rolling programme of support be placed across schools, with a process of constant review taking place with specialist teachers giving feedback at regular team meetings. Schools had also been consulted to ensure adequate resources were available.

Members thanked the officers for their detailed presentation and they considered the information provided. Clarification was sought regarding the qualifications of the specialised teachers and the physical assistance given to schools. Confirmation of the funding arrangements was also given.

Officers confirmed the programme was being continuously monitored and weekly meetings held. Currently the programme was within its 7th week and positive feedback had been received from head teachers and pupils. Further information and a fixed data set would be established once the initial 10 week period had been completed. However, it had already become apparent that some flexibility was required and the 10-week period could be extended. Pupils could either remain on the programme or alternative assistance may be identified.

The Corporate Director of Education and Lifelong Learning reminded Members that there was little data available in this area and it was only now that it was being captured. The programme itself was helping to target the relevant children better and was a fundamental difference in the way specialist teachers worked. Its prime goal was to cascade skills and build upon the school's capacity. The need to retain specialist teachers was recognised, but the programme would allow their strategies to be used by all.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation and ongoing programme and requested a copy of the presentation be forwarded to them.

10. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

Councillor R. Saralis requested a report on the timelines for 21st Century Schools be prepared for consideration at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. Officers advised that this information would be contained within a report to be presented to a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, before the end of the year.

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were received and noted without discussion:

- (1) An Update On The South East Wales Education Achievement Service (EAS) Formerly Known As The Integrated Achievement Service (IAS);
- (2) Youth Service Review;
- (3) Summary of Members' Attendance - Quarter 2 - 1st July to 30th September 2012.

The meeting closed at 7.00 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 15th January 2013, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN