



## **EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON THURSDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY 2013 AT 5.00 P.M.**

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PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

H.R. Davies, C. Durham, C. Gordon, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, M.P. James, G. Johnston,  
J. Pritchard and J.E. Roberts,

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: Councillor Mrs R. Passmore

Youth Champion: Councillor M. Prew

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Corporate Director - Education and Lifelong Learning), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director - Our Schools Our Future, 21st Century Schools, K. Cole (Manager - Learning, Education and Inclusion), T. Maher (Assistant Director - Planning and Strategy), G. Evans (Senior Manager - Library Services), A. West (Schools Admissions and Exclusions), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager) and C. Jones (Youth Forum Co-ordinator)

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

Youth Forum: Lewis Harding and Matthew Rodrick

#### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D. Rees, R. Saralis and Mrs M.E. Sargent. Mrs A. Goss (Parent Governor) and Mr T. Cross (Cardiff ROC).

#### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 15th January 2013 (minute nos. 1 - 12, on page nos. 1 - 5), be approved as correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3. CALL- IN PROCEDURE**

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call in procedure

**4. CABINET REPORTS**

The Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

**5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEISURE**

Councillor R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning gave a verbal report, which referred to the current horsemeat issue and the work being done with suppliers and Trading Standards on testing sample products. It was confirmed that no horse DNA had been detected in any samples of products used by schools catering services.

Members were reminded that a seminar on Phase 1 of the 21st Century Schools initiative had been scheduled for 6:00pm on Thursday, 7th March 2013 and urged all Members to attend.

The successes achieved at the Annual Youth Excellence Awards on Thursday, 21st February 2013 were noted and particular reference was made to Mr. Curtis James who received his Foundation Apprenticeship certificate during the ceremony.

Members noted the launch of a new intergeneration club at Blackwood Comprehensive School on the 5th March 2013, where older members of the community would be able to dine with pupils at the school and take part in activities on a fortnightly basis.

**6. REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

**7. EDUCATION PRIORITIES - PRESENTATION JUNIOR AND YOUTH FORUM**

Lewis Harding and Matthew Rodrick introduced a film by the Junior Forum on their priorities, and then gave a presentation that identified the Youth Forum priorities for the coming year. The presentations noted the priorities for Regeneration, Education, Health, Social Care and Wellbeing and the Environment and detailed the Youth Forum's contribution to addressing these issues and what response they would like see from the Local Authority.

The Junior Forum identified 'bullying' as their education priority and the Youth Forum identified better transition services as their education priority.

The Junior Forum felt that teachers needed a better understanding of what bullying means and the Youth Forum felt that better transition information from schools to colleges and higher education was required.

The Chair thanked Lewis and Matthew for introducing the film on behalf of the Junior Forum and congratulated them on their presentation on the Youth Forum's priorities.

Members noted the issues raised by the Junior Forum in relation to bullying and the effects of bullying and in particular 'cyber bullying' were discussed at length. The work of the Local Safeguarding Board in relation to this issue was noted along with the work done with schools in terms of reviewing policies and raising awareness.

Clarification was sought in relation to any specific problems with transition information. The Youth Forum felt that there was a definite lack of information available on courses, syllabuses and colleges. Officers confirmed that this would be picked up as part of the review on the 14 to 16 and 16 to 19 provision. Schools offering A Level courses would be meeting to discuss issues and local colleges were being approached to offer students taster session on the courses they offered from September 2013. Reference was made to a new initiative that would introduce students who might not have considered higher education as an option, to university life. Lewis and Gareth welcomed this as a positive step forward and thanked the Scrutiny Committee for allowing them to attend today's meeting and for listening to their presentations.

Councillor M Prew, Youth Champion thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their continued support of the Junior and Youth Forums.

The Director of Education thanked Lewis and Matthew for their excellent presentations and recognised the fantastic achievements of the Junior and Youth Forum and the hard work of the Officer's that supported them.

The Education Scrutiny Committee recommended that Cabinet actively considered the points raised by the Junior and Youth Forum. The Cabinet Member for Education agreed to provide feedback to Cabinet.

## **8. AGENDA SUMMARY**

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

## **9. ESTYN ACTION PLAN PROGRESS PRESENTATION**

The presentation updated Members on the progress of the post inspection action plan against each of its five recommendations.

Recommendation 1 was confirmed and the EAS specialist HR strategy was detailed. The colour coding system used to identify performance was noted. How this system connected to the school Banding criteria and Estyn inspection reports was fully explained and Officers emphasised the importance of not taking Banding levels in isolation, as this was not the only measurement of a schools performance.

The actions taken in relation to school target setting were noted and the support provided to schools was fully explained. Members were advised that four schools had set targets lower than their previous years performance and the challenge process initiated as a result was detailed. Although Officer's were mindful that there might be a very good reason for setting a target at this level, it did require follow-up with the school. The challenge process would include meeting with the respective Head Teachers, looking at the Year 11 cohort and any associated actions for vulnerable pupil groups identified. Barriers to achievement for individual pupils would also be identified and suitable interventions introduced.

Recommendation 2 was confirmed and the action required in order to strengthen the level of challenge to secondary schools was outlined. Members noted the use of current WG Banding information in targeting interventions into schools in Band 4 and 5 and the support provided by the EAS System Leader. Focused action plans would be developed and funded in order to support those schools that had fallen within the Banding width, improve their position.

Clarification was sought in relation to the Banding formula and what specific criteria impacted on the band awarded to an individual school, Members expressed frustration and confusion with regard to the award process. It was agreed that a further presentation on Banding would be scheduled for a future meeting.

Recommendation 3 was confirmed and the actions required in order to improve the robustness of self-evaluation and target setting were noted. Members were advised that the self-evaluation process had been updated in line with the Common Inspection Framework and a continuous inter-departmental challenge process had been initiated using Estyn descriptors in order to further embed a culture of self-evaluation and target setting.

Recommendation 4 was confirmed and the action required to align corporate and partnership-planning process detailed. Members were advised that the Single Plan would be out for consultation on the 22nd of March 2013.

Recommendation 5 was confirmed and the actions required to reduce surplus capacity were detailed. Officers confirmed that a Members Seminar had been organised for Thursday 7th March 2013 in order to brief Members on the Phase 1 process and an information pack would be distributed to all Members fully detailing the options going forward.

A full review of all secondary schools had been undertaken in order to ensure the accuracy of the information provided with regard to surplus capacity. Members noted that Caerphilly currently had 3000 English Medium surplus places and projections had showed that this trend would increase to 4000 by 2022.

Clarification was sought in relation to the criteria for school closures and Officers confirmed that the key principles would be detailed in the packs provided to Members at the Seminar. The Seminar would also explain Welsh Government expectations in relation to the Phase 1 process and a target date of January 2015 had been set, by which time the Authority would be required to evidence the progress made. Officers confirmed that this was just the start of the evaluation process and there were no set ideas or proposal to put forward at this stage.

The Director confirmed that Members would inform and influence the process the going forward and it would be for them to make the final judgement.

Clarification was sought in relation to the timescales involved and Officers confirmed that Phase 1 would be completed by the end of the summer term, followed by the drafting of a formal proposal in September 2013. The statutory closure process was explained and Members noted that a formal closure could take between 2-3 years to complete.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation.

## **10. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN**

The report informed Members of the content of the draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2012-2015 (WESP) and the associated responsibilities of the Council.

Working with key stakeholders the WESP action plan contained an analysis of current provision and captured the innovation and good practice that promoted and encouraged Welsh language education, as well as establishing targets for improvement.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought in relation to provision of Welsh medium primary education in the Risca area. This was acknowledged to be an area of development that was being monitored however although Risca would continue to be priority at the moment there was the issue of affordability.

Members sought and received reassurances that there would be enough places to meet the demand in Welsh medium education for Caerphilly children over the next few years.

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered its content noted the draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and recommended that Cabinet approve the final Caerphilly County Borough Council WESP.

#### **11. CONSULTATION - PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2014/2015**

The report sought to consult with Members of the Scrutiny Committee on the proposed changes to the Schools Admission Arrangements for 2014/2015.

The consultation was explained and Officers confirmed that the only significant change proposed related to the closing date for waiting list, which would with Members agreement be extended to the 30th September 2013. The extension would take into account the start of the academic year and give continuity to the waiting list.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and full discussion ensued.

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed the extension to the waiting list closing date and fully endorsed the proposed admission arrangements for 2014/2015.

#### **12. CASHLESS CATERING SYSTEMS IN THE SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE**

The report sought to inform members of the benefits and constraints of installing cashless payment systems throughout all school catering operations.

There were currently 12 secondary schools but no primary schools operating cashless systems. Their success in maximising the take up of both free and paid meal provision was recognised and the percentage take-up of free school meals served was confirmed as 60% for all Caerphilly schools and 67% for those served by Caerphilly Catering. The benefits of the systems were referenced and the financial constraints associated with installing and operating a cashless system were noted.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her report and Members questions were welcomed.

The different systems offered were discussed at length and reference was made to a barcode option. Factors preventing the take up of free schools meals were debated and Members noted the variety of media being used to raise awareness and encourage parents to take up the option.

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered its content noted the report.

#### **13. DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE COUNTY BOROUGH LIBRARY SERVICE**

The report provided an update to members on Library Service developments and achievements.

Members noted the link between library improvements and the 11% increase in visits over the last four years together with a 15% uplift in book borrowing over the same period. Officers anticipated that this trend would continue as both Bargoed Chapel and Risca Palace became more established and the new library developments in Aberbargoed, Newbridge and Caerphilly were completed.

The planned modernisation programme would be completed during 2013-2014 seeing an overall investment exceeding £12M being spent on the various projects. Officers confirmed that Caerphilly was now recognised at the lead Authority in the co-location of Library Services and had to date the Bargoed Chapel developments had secured 5 prestigious awards most noteworthy being the Project of the Year Award.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and Members questions were welcomed.

The Director of Education acknowledged the success and hard work of the Library Services Team and its Senior Manager.

Members welcomed the positive news from the Library Services and congratulated them on the programme of improvements to date and the achievement of the service to improve visitor numbers and book issues.

Members also welcomed the news that Aberbargoed Library would be reopening and would include a multi-agency information and resource centre.

The Scrutiny Committee having fully considered its content noted the report.

**14. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Members noted the forward work programme for the next meeting.

**15. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE PLACED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA**

There were no requests made for future agenda item.

**16. INFORMATION ITEMS**

The Committee noted the following item for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports, none of which were brought forward for review:

- (1) Minutes of the SACRE meeting held on the 12th December 2012.

The meeting closed at 19:23 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 9th April 2013, they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIRMAN