



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 5TH JUNE 2013 AT 5:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chairman

Councillors:

H.R. Davies, C. Durham, C. Gordon, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, G. Johnston, J. Pritchard,
D. Rees and R. Saralis

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: Mrs R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director, Our Schools Our Future, 21st Century Schools), K. Cole (Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), S. Davies (Education Achievement Service), L. Bosanko-Williams (Children's and Young Peoples Partnership Coordinator).

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

Observing:

Councillors M. Adams, Mrs B. Jones, A. Lewis and Mrs J. Summers

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, M.P. James, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D.W.R. Preece, J.E. Roberts and M.E. Sargent, Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC).

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

It was with great sadness that the Chairman announced the passing of Councillor Mrs Anne Collins. Members and Officers stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of Councillor C. Durham in the list of attendees of the meeting it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 9th April 2013 (minute nos. 1 - 10, 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

There had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LEISURE

Councillor Mrs R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Life Long Learning gave a verbal report and referred to the recent award received by the Caerphilly Family First Information Service from the National Association of Family Information Services. The award recognised the quality of the services provided to both parents and professionals throughout the borough and the efforts of the Officers were applauded.

The appointment of Mrs Tanis Cunnik as Community, Youth and Adult Services Manager was announced and Members were advised that Mrs Cunnik would take up the post in July 2013.

The Cabinet Member provided an update on Library Services and noted that Aberbargoed Library and Resource Centre had been officially opened after its £90,000 makeover. Phase 1 of the Memo restoration initiative had been completed with Newbridge Library opening on the 24th of June 2013. Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre was scheduled for opening by late December 2013 or early January 2013 and would provide state of art services to the residents of Caerphilly.

The work of Gareth Jones and this team was acknowledged and the Cabinet Member formally thanked them for their commitment and dedication to the service.

Front-line catering staff had been recognised in a recent awards ceremony at Penallta House for their role in achieving Welsh Governments Appetite For Life standards and Glyn Gaer Primary School received a special award for its 100% performance over 3 years.

Finally, the Cabinet Member highlighted the Active Pathways award ceremony attended by Gareth Jenkins who presented Caerphilly learners with their certificates.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was give to the following reports: -

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

The Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN UPDATE - PRESENTATION

Mr Steve Davies (EAS) presented an update on the progress of Recommendations 1 and 2 of the Post Inspection Action Plan.

The progress made on Recommendations 1 was detailed and Members noted that the criteria for the revised Intervention Framework had been agreed and the colour coding used was confirmed. The EAS worked with schools on their category award and governing bodies would be informed of the schools position. If required an Intervention Plan would be implemented which incorporated measures around leadership action, improving teaching and learning, as well as the establishment of a Literacy and Numeracy Team. The Governing Body and Local Authority would then approve the plan and the importance of the Governor role going forward was emphasised.

Members noted the progress made in strengthening teacher assessment and pupil tracking as the next level of challenge going forward. Pupil tracking would establish the position of the individual child, monitor and track progress and identify what specific interventions should be applied in order to improve performance.

The developments in relation to performance information were detailed and the 'School Secure' software programme was highlighted as this package allowed data to be shared safely from a single source.

The work done to raise the levels of boys' achievement and reduce the gap in performance with girls was detailed.

Literacy and numeracy strategies were defined and the impetus of the intervention plans confirmed. The partnership between schools and the EAS was outlined and the way in which the costs of the intervention plans would be shared was explained. Members noted the introduction of the 'Outstanding Teacher' programme and how good practice would be shared between the different departments within a school as well as different schools was noted. The intervention programme for Welsh as a second language was also detailed and Members noted that support would be structured and targeted where there was the greatest need.

In concluding Recommendation 1 Mr Davies confirmed that Leadership development would also be targeted and training programmes introduced to nurture quality candidates for prospective Deputy Head and Head Teacher positions.

Questions were welcomed on Recommendation 1.

Members acknowledged the important role that Governors would play going forward and requested further information as to how the number of Governors would be increased. Mr Davies confirmed although this initiative was in a very informal stage at present it was hoped that a core group of volunteer Governors would be established in order to provide short-term support to Governing Bodies.

Members fully discussed with the link between social deprivation and performance and how this could be addressed through targeted intervention. Reassurances were sought that any sharing of good practice would not be to the detriment of the facilitating school. Mr Davies confirmed that it would not happen and provided further information on the way in which good practice and good leadership would be shared. The funding of support interventions was discussed and the use of SEG money and Pupil Deprivation Grants to improve performance was noted.

Clarification was sought with regard to younger children and if initiatives such as 'Flying Start' were having a positive impact. Officers confirmed that the 'Flying Start' team were currently undergoing a full evaluation and a collection of case studies had been produced as part of the evaluation evidence. Members requested that examples be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members emphasised the importance of whole school wellbeing and the positive impact this had on performance was acknowledged. It was noted that a series of surveys would be developed in order to gather this type of qualitative data, specifically how teachers and children felt about their school.

Clarification was sought as to when the categorisation of Caerphilly Schools would be available and Mr Davies confirmed that the best way to present this data was still under consideration however the breakdown was noted as: Green - 2 Secondary Schools, 18 Primary School and 1 Special School, Yellow - 1 Secondary School and 45 Primary Schools, Orange - 5 Secondary Schools and 11 Primary Schools, Red - 5 Secondary Schools and 1 Primary School and Purple - 1 Secondary School and 2 Primary Schools.

The progress made on Recommendation 2 was detailed and the improvements made to strengthen the level of challenge to secondary schools noted.

Quality assurance process for System Leaders were explained and the work done to ensure the quality of reports was detailed. It was noted that schools would also be surveyed on System Leader performance.

In relation to under performing departments in English and Maths, Members were advised that the support provided should see results next year.

Members' questions on Recommendation 2 were welcomed.

Clarification was sought as to what, if any, pupil tacking took place after secondary education. Officers confirmed that a 'keeping in touch' strategy was currently under review and the Local Authority would be sharing information with Careers Wales.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the presentation and thanked Mr Davies for his attendance at the meeting.

8. PHASE 1: SECONDARY RATIONALISATION

The report and presentation updated Members on the progress of the Cross Party Working Group.

The Group had agreed a 10-week programme to establish a process aligned to the HM Treasury 5 case model and which they were currently halfway through. During weeks 1-5 individual school data was considered and trigger points established, from this point a scoring matrix and options process was used to compare schools and identify groups of schools for appraisal. A regional grouping was agreed as the best way forward and the four regions established as well as the schools contained within each region were detailed for Members information.

During the Group's discussions two issues arose which Members felt required consideration irrespective of their inclusion within the Phase 1 process. These were the need to review Post-16 Education and the need to move from single sex to co-educational schools.

The Group favoured the new schools approach, if affordable e.g. 2 schools closed and 1 opened. With this in mind Officers sourced information from the provider Sunesis, this company had developed a template for providing new school builds more cheaply than that associated with conventional building methods. The possible savings were noted and Members requested that details of the company website be circulated for information.

The Group also considered how best to announce the rationalisation programme, whether it would be more prudent to announce Phase 1 only at this point in time or to announce all 3 Phases with all the schools names. The Group was mindful that funding had not been secured for Phases 2 and 3 and to announce those schools now, might cause unnecessary anxiety should the funding not become available going forward.

The Group's work programme for weeks 6-10 was detailed and was devoted to options appraisal and site options. It was also noted that further work on surplus places would be undertaken in order to identify any anomalies and this in combination with the Phase 1 programme should see the Authority on target to meet Welsh Government requirements.

The timetable of the process going forward was detailed and Members noted that statutory processes would commence during the Autumn Term 2013. The final decision whether or not to proceed to Statutory Notice would then be made during the Spring Term 2014.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his report and full discussion ensued.

Members acknowledged the work of the Cross Party Working Group and formally thanked Bleddyn Hopkins and his team on the quality and detail of the reports they presented and for the advice given over the last five weeks.

Members considered the discussions around the announcement issues and agreed that given the uncertainty of funding for Phases 2 and 3 it would be imprudent to announce them at this time and recommended that only Phase 1 be announced.

Clarification was sought with regard to the impact of SEN Units on a schools performance data and Members felt that this should be taken into consideration during the assessment process. Officers acknowledged the affect that this had on performance data but advised that SEN units had been excluded from capacity and surplus places calculations, however particular facilities like SEN and leisure facilities had been taken into account in the individual school data. Reference was made to Pontllanfraith Comprehensive and the particular issues affecting the school were noted. Officers acknowledged the concerns raised and confirmed that representations had been made to Welsh Government on the issues presented.

Clarification was sought in relation to the scoring matrix and Officers confirmed that a detailed report of all the trigger points and options analysis would be presented at the next meeting.

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

9. EVALUATION OF CAERPHELLY'S FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAMME

The report provided an overview on the evaluation of the Families First Programme and the key findings for its first year.

The Families First programme commenced in November 2011 and sought to transform services for families at risk by delivering a 'Team Around The Family' approach. In order to identify good practice, value for money and to inform future commissioning requirements an independent review was commissioned.

The review focused on the programme level of the 8 projects that had been in operation over a year, in order to establish the difference made for families as well as identifying areas of improvement and recommendations for future development. The overall approach of the review was detailed and the way in which all the projects rallied together was commended. The engagement methodology was noted and the qualitative and quantitative data gathered detailed.

The key strategic findings noted the need to introduce a 'single front door' for all referrals, a greater whole family focus in services delivery that included families with disabled children and enhanced partnership working and increased information sharing particularly between the projects. Members noted that 6 out of 8 projects surpassed delivery, quality and outcomes targets and the confidence of Managers and Practitioners was high. Development work on the TAF (Team Around the Family) and JAFF (Joint Assessment Family Framework) models was confirmed and noted that 171 families had identified positive outcomes. The key strengths of the TAF model were recognised and the areas for development were highlighted. The areas rating the highest confidence were noted as basic skills, health (smoking cessation) and addressing parenting needs. The programmes were effective at engaging harder to reach families and had built trust with families with a broad range of needs.

A copy of the Families First leaflet was circulated and Members noted that the content had been developed through consultation and using parent's own words. Officers confirmed that the final evaluation would be available at the end of the month and would be made available on line.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for her presentation and full discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought with relation to referrals, how best to signpost families to the service and how Families First programmes differentiated from Social Services. Officers explained that Families First tried to work with families before they required Social Service intervention and operated on whole family approach. Referrals to them were made through Practitioners but a surprising number of service users also self-referred. Members were advised to use Family Information Services as a referral point and the leaflet distributed earlier in the meeting also provided key contact information. Officers acknowledged the hard work of the different projects within the programmes and the way in which they embraced the changing face of service provision and were very encouraged by the successful outcomes for families, which had exceeded expectations.

Members requested that a list of agencies that referred to the Families First Programme and contact information for the programme be circulated for information.

The Cabinet Member congratulated the Families First programme on their first year and for making a real difference to families.

The Scrutiny Committee having considered its content noted the report.

10. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Committee noted the forward work programme.

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

There were no requests made.

12. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following item for information, full details of which were included within the Officers report:

1. Summary of Member Attendance - Quarter 4 - 1st January 2013 - 6th May 2013.

The meeting closed at 19:36 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 July 2013, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN