



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 9TH JULY 2013 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David – Chairman.

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, C. Gordon, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, M.P. James, G. Johnston, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D. Rees, J.E. Roberts 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), E. Pryce (Senior Adviser, Performance and ICT, EAS Wales), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer).

Co-opted Members: Mr, M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan), Mr, A. Farina-Childs (Parent Governor) and Mrs, P. Ireland (NUT).

Observing:

Councillors M. Adams, L. Gardiner, Ms. J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, A. Lewis and J.A. Pritchard.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Durham, D.W.R. Preece, J. Pritchard and Mrs M.E. Sargent, together with Mrs A. Goss (Parent Governor) and Mr P. Jones (NAHT).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Several members sought advice as to whether they should declare an interest in agenda item 7(3), relating to Secondary Rationalisation, as they are members of school governing bodies. It was confirmed that it was dependant on whether their school would be affected by the recommendations in the report. Members associated with school governing bodies that are not affected by the recommendations could declare an interest if they so wished, but it would not be prejudicial, and as such the Code of Conduct would not prevent them from taking part in the discussion or voting thereon. However, members associated with school governing

bodies that would be affected by the recommendations should declare an interest and leave the room during discussion of the item.

Councillors W. David, H.R. Davies, C. Gordon, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, G. Johnston, Mrs. G.D. Oliver, D. Rees, J.E. Roberts and R. Saralis declared an interest in agenda item 7(3). Details are minuted with the respective item.

2. MINUTES – 5TH JUNE 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 5th June 2013 (minute nos. 1-12, on page nos. 1-7), be approved as a 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 Estyn inspection and report, which show that the Authority is making good progress against the post-inspection action plan and is demonstrating a clear direction in monitoring improvement.

The Minister for Education and Skills commissioned Robert Hill to undertake a review into Future Delivery of Education Services in Wales, which has now been published. There will now be a three-month consultation period, with an announcement on 13th September 2013 as to the way forward.

The Cabinet member announced that 95% of primary and secondary schools in the Authority have signed up to the Lloyds TSB National School Sports Week, with a commitment to providing a variety of sporting activities for young people. The Authority had the highest take-up of the scheme in Wales, demonstrating that Caerphilly schools are committed to providing sporting opportunities and leading the way in Wales.

Members were pleased to note that Bedwas Library will shortly be undergoing an internal refurbishment in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. The refurbishment will include a new public DDA-accessible toilet, a new carpet, redecoration and a new shelving system and furniture. The library will close on Saturday, 3rd August 2013 and reopen on Monday, 23rd September 2013. Customers will be encouraged to borrow more items for a longer period and made aware of neighbouring libraries during the closure period.

Finally, the Cabinet Member highlighted the achievements of youth volunteer Gerraint Jones-Griffiths. Gerraint joined the Caerphilly Youth Forum and became the Environment representative, taking the lead on the Priority Issue for the year, which was Council parks. Through Gerraint's tireless campaigning, Caerphilly Council has enforced a smoking ban in all children's play areas in the county. Gerraint has also trained as a Young Inspector, inspecting youth provisions to ensure standards for young people are met, and he chaired the Learning

Disability Wales Annual Conference in November 2012. The Cabinet Member extended congratulations to Geraint, who after being nominated for the Outstanding Personal Achievement Award at the Autism Heroes Awards in June 2013, was awarded second place, with an invitation to speak at the following year's event.

Members endorsed the comments within the Cabinet Member's report and wished to record their acknowledgement of the continued efforts of Sports Development and Leisure Services within the Authority's schools.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

The Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES UNDER THE NEW COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (CIF) - SEPTEMBER 2012 TO JULY 2013

Mr. Ed Pryce (EAS Wales) presented the report, which informed members of the judgements made by Estyn inspection teams of Caerphilly schools for 2012-2013, and contained a brief analysis of the inspection findings for each school. Schools are inspected according to the new Common Inspection Framework, which consists of 3 key questions incorporating 10 quality indicators, such as outcomes of standards and wellbeing, provision of learning experiences, teaching, care, support and guidance, learning environment, and leadership and management. Overall summary judgements are based on a 4-point scale (Excellent, Good, Adequate and Unsatisfactory) with "Excellent" difficult to achieve.

Most of the Authority's schools inspected have generally performed better than the Estyn "Expected" Profile and of the 10 completed inspection reports, none have been judged as "Unsatisfactory". Overall, 78% of Caerphilly schools have been judged as "Good", with 22% judged as "Adequate". Prospects for improvement are better than the national average, but there needs to be more work carried out to achieve the "Excellent" standard, requiring sector-leading practice that has not seen before.

There are 4 follow up categories for schools that have been judged to be "Adequate" or "Unsatisfactory", with follow-up from Estyn or the Local Authority, and if schools do not make progress, then there is the possibility of them "requiring significant improvement" or "requiring special measures". The report summarised progress made at Heolddu Comprehensive School, which was placed in Special Measures following an Estyn report in 2011 and monitoring visit in November 2012. The Estyn team visited the school in May 2013 and noted that the school was making good progress towards the recommendations.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Pryce for his report and Members discussed the individual quality indicators and how they compared to the national average. The definition of "sector-leading practice" was clarified as Estyn inspectors determining that the working practices are amongst the best they have observed in the sector, and that this best practice is being shared with others. Members asked what was being done to improve performance in key indicators, and it was confirmed that Education are addressing standards and focusing on lower-performing schools. It was also confirmed that EAS Wales held a minimum of 3 focus meetings a year to address standards and recognised the importance of doing so.

Members discussed follow-up activity at Heolddu Comprehensive School and found the report encouraging, and there was clarification on the recommendations established by Estyn and the Special Measures that were put in place. It was confirmed that on the re-visit, some factors were met, but because there was a dip in Key Stage 4 data, an additional recommendation was added. Therefore, the school are now working to a revised set of

recommendations. Members wished to record their appreciation on the efforts being made to improve on the Estyn recommendations.

Members discussed the CIF 4-point scale and the feasibility of attaining “Excellent” in schools. It was confirmed by officers that this is an aspirational target and that it is very easy to slip into the “Adequate” category, and that it is important to read behind the judgements on individual indicators. Members stated that they would like to see examples of excellence measured, with case studies of schools leading in the right direction, and examples of sector leading practice.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

8. PHASE 1: SECONDARY RATIONALISATION

Councillors W. David, H.R. Davies, C. Gordon, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, G. Johnston, Mrs. G.D. Oliver, D. Rees and J.E. Roberts declared an interest in this item (as they belong to school governing bodies not affected by the report recommendations). They therefore remained in the room and took part in the discussion and subsequent vote. Councillor R. Saralis declared an interest in this item (as he is a school governor for one of the schools affected by the recommendations) and left the room during discussion of the item.

Mr. Bleddyn Hopkins, Assistant Director, Our Schools Our Future, 21st Century Schools presented the report, which updated Members on the progress of the Cross Party Working Group. As part of the 21st Century Schools programme of secondary rationalisation, a Working Group was established to make recommendations in relation to addressing the issue of surplus school places. The Group agreed a 10-week programme to establish a process aligned to the HM Treasury 5 case model, which has now been completed.

During weeks 1-5, individual school data was considered and trigger points established, and 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. The Working Group strongly favoured an option to close 2 schools in a region and open a new school, rather than close 1 school per region.

During weeks 6-10, the Working Group then considered an options appraisal process, which identified potential trigger points and applied them to individual school data to produce a scoring matrix. This identified the two lowest-scoring schools as Oakdale Comprehensive School and Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School. The Working Group then examined 9 possible locations for a new school site and the preferred site was Oakdale Plateau 3 within Oakdale Business Park. The timescales indicate that the new school start date will be 1st September 2016. The Working Group has therefore requested that Members endorse the recommendations in the report.

Members extended their thanks and congratulations to the Cross Party Working Group and formally thanked Bleddyn Hopkins and his team on the quality and detail of the reports they presented.

A full discussion of the report then ensued, with Members debating the scoring matrix used and the items included in the assessment. Members queried if an existing Authority building could be adapted for a new school, but it was clarified that it would be difficult to incorporate all the requirements, and adaptations would have to be made to meet health and safety regulations. It was confirmed that the governing bodies of Oakdale and Pontllanfraith Comprehensive Schools would be involved in the consultation process.

Members from Argoed, Pontllanfraith and Ynysddu wards relayed positive comments from their constituents, having held consultation surgeries and met with school governors, and advised that their wards are generally supportive of the proposal with no major objections. All three Pontllanfraith ward Members wished for it to be noted that they fully support the recommendations. However, Members stated that their constituents would prefer their children to stay in the same school throughout their secondary education years, and not be disrupted by a move to another school, particularly those children in Years 10 and 11. There were also concerns about the proposed changes to catchment areas. The Chairman confirmed that the proposals would go out to consultation and the concerns would then be addressed.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that, for the reasons contained in the report:-

- (i) The Phase 1 proposal as debated in paragraph 4.37 of the report be agreed, the way forward as outlined in paragraph 4.38 of the report be endorsed, and recommended to Cabinet (16th July 2013) and Full Council (23rd July 2013);
- (ii) The 50% match funding contribution for CCBC as outlined in paragraph 6.2 of the report be endorsed;
- (iii) The 2 principles of the Working Group as outlined in paragraph 4.9 of the report and the proposal to progress the Mid and Upper Rhymney Valley region for Phase 2 be noted.

9. PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION 3 OF THE POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN (PIAP)

The report, which informed Members of the progress made towards meeting Recommendation 3 within the Post Inspection Action Plan, was received and noted.

10. PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION 4 OF THE POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN (PIAP)

The report, which informed Members of the progress being made towards Recommendation 4 within the Post Inspection Action Plan, was received and noted.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Details contained in the forward work programme were received and noted.

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

Councillor P.J. Bevan requested an update on the progress of the Education Achievement Service. S. Aspinall confirmed that a report is currently being prepared and will be presented to the next meeting of the Education For Life Scrutiny Committee in September 2013.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

1. Education and Leisure Grants 2013-2014.
2. Financial Plan Education and Life Long Learning 2013-2014.
3. Student Finance Wales Modernisation.

The meeting closed at 6.26 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 Tuesday, 24th September 2013, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN