



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER 2013 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Preece – Vice Chairman- Presiding.

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, C. Durham, C. Gordon, M.P. James, Mrs M.E Sargent, 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), K. Cole (Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), T. Maher (Assistant Director, Planning and Strategy), G. Evans (Senior Manager Library Services), T. Cunnick (Manager Community, Youth Service and Adult), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W. David, D.M. Gray, D. Havard and Mrs G.D. Oliver, together with Mrs S. Evans (Caerphilly Governors Association).

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 the report was for Members information and for noting, therefore no declarations were required.

2. MINUTES – 27TH JUNE 2013 AND 9TH JULY 2013

Councillor Mrs M Sargent raised concerns that a report has not been presented on Hendre Infant School going into Special Measures. The Acting Chief Executive confirmed that this is an ongoing and very sensitive matter and Members will be updated as and when possible.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee (Performance Management) held on 27th June 2013 (minute nos. 1-3, on page nos. 1-4) and the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 9th July 2013 (minute nos. 1-13, on page nos. 1-6), 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

None of the Cabinet Reports listed on the agenda had been called 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 informed Members that the figures for School Attainment 2012/13 have not yet been confirmed but a full report will be brought to Members at a later date.

Councillor Mrs. R. Passmore advised that the performance of pupil in Foundation phase has increased year on year. Key Stage 2 has seen an improvement in all subjects, which contribute to an increase in the core subject indicator from 82.7% to 84.3%, which has exceeded the target of 83%. Key Stage 3 has also shown an overall improvement, contributing to the core subject indicator from 68.4% to 73.5%. Key stage 4 results are provisional results and it was advised that they should be treated with caution as they may be subject to change. However, it was reported that the percentage of learners achieving the level 2 threshold rose by over 4% to 68.05%, and there was an overall increase in level 2+ English and Maths, although the performance varied across schools. It should be noted that 5 out of the 15 secondary schools in Caerphilly made more than a 5% improvements in this indicator.

The Cabinet Member referred to the Flying Start Programme Expansion 2013-15. An outline of the programme was provided and members were pleased to note that the expansion will offer an entitlement to families in a further 9 areas, making 19 in all. The number of children who will benefit from this programme will also increase from 1,262 in 2011/12 to 2,246 in 2014/15. Cabinet has now approved the recruitment of staff required to implement this expansion.

Finally, the Cabinet Member highlighted the achievements of The Basement Youth Information Network, CYPN Award Finalists. Councillor Passmore was delighted to inform Members that following the judging of the Children and Young People Now Awards 2013. The Basement Youth Information Network has been voted as a finalist in the category for The Advice and Guidance Award.

The Basement is a youth information and support service, which provides free, confidential and impartial advice, information and advocacy for young people between the ages of 11 and 20 within the Borough. The Children and Young People Now Awards have become the hold standard for everyone working with children, young people and families in the UK. These awards provide a great source of pride and recognition for all those who strive day in, day out, to improve the lives of others. They offer an opportunity to raise the profile of projects and initiatives to funders and the general public.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

The Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE-ONE YEAR ON-PRESENTATION

Steve Davies (EAS Wales) presented to the Committee, an update on the achievements and Performance of the Education Achievement Service in the past year. The EAS provide support to schools and teachers to improve the standards of Education throughout the Borough. This service has been identified by a number of outside bodies to be effectively run and “appears the yardstick for others to follow”.

A full discussion of the report then ensued with Members debating the benefits of cross county working. Members queried the approach used by EAS within the Programme. Steve Davies confirmed that the process aims to set a bar for a consistent approach. Effective Leadership is paramount in any process and there has to be consequences for non-delivery. The Service has been recognised nationally for the progress made so far.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

8. PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION 5 OF THE POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN (PIAP)

The report outlined the progress made following the Estyn Inspection in July 2012. The recommendation was to reduce the number of surplus places within schools. Since this time, work has been undertaken to address this. During the Inspection, it was acknowledged that the Local Authority (LA) had clear priorities in the strategic plans to transform the education opportunities for learners through improved learning environment. However, there was a judgement that there was unsatisfactory progress in reducing the number of surplus places in both secondary and primary schools. The PIAP focused on the urgent need to take action to address issues raised, in particular implement phase 1 of the secondary rationalisation to reduce the number of secondary schools.

Members outlined that there has been press coverage relating to school closures, these were not discussed with the Committee, however, it was confirmed that this information is not accurate and that the actions stand as those agreed at the meeting of Council on 23rd July 2013. Officers advised that there are timescale issues at present with the absence of Assistant Director of Education, Bleddyn Hopkins, however, work is underway to secure a temporary replacement. Consultation with schools will be underway following this and meetings will be arranged as soon as is viable.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

9. REVIEW OF ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Keri Cole updated the Committee on the progress made in relation to the service Review for Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Services.

Members were asked to note that in January 2012, the Director initiated a review of ALN and Inclusion Services. These services included support for children with additional needs,

through a specialist team of teachers, psychology, behaviour and education welfare services. The purpose of the review was to ensure that the needs of children and young people were being met and that services provided were cost-effective and efficient.

Members referred to the report and queried why there was no Member involvement from this Committee in the Task and Finish Groups. It was confirmed that the groups were made up of officers and were undertaken at an operational service level. Members were assured that they would be updated through this Committee in due course.

Members raised concerns in relation to the ALN Payments. Officers responded with clarification that children in receipt of ALN had an alternative funding method, as part of the review, this funding is being looked and any overpayments will be clawed back. Members were informed that the LA is meeting statutory targets and time scales in relation to Educational Psychologist assessments as a result of staff changes and additional staff taken on board.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

10. PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS IN WALES- ANNUAL LIBRARY UPDATE REPORT 2012-13

Gareth Evans (Interim Manager Community Education) 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 2012-13. Members were asked to note that the Caerphilly County Borough Library Service have made a number of improvements, meeting or exceeding 6 of 9 Welsh Government Public Library Standards in 2012-13. Physical visits to Libraries have increased by 11.3%; percentage take up of computer facilities has remained constant, however Annual Issues has declined by 7.5%.

A full discussion of the report ensued, with Members debating the impacts responsible for an increase in IT usage within Libraries and the implementation of Universal Jobmatch. Member sought clarification on the projections for the new Library in Caerphilly. Officers confirmed that the project is due to be completed and open by the 6th January 2014. The facility will have a great deal to offer the community and Members were informed that the Welsh Government requires a performance update report 6 months following its opening.

11. CAERPHILLY STATUTORY YOUTH SERVICE

Tanis Cunnick, Community, Youth and Adult Service Manager outlined to Members the outcomes of the review of the Youth Service conducted in December 2012. The report and presentation outlined the recommendations of the review, the rationale for prioritisation and delivery. The strengths were highlighted and the areas that will be addressed over the coming months, together with the priorities deemed for urgent action.

Members thanked officers for the presentation and discussed in detail the possible implications for the use of Morgan Jones Library for a Youth provision and the expansion of the Youth Club service to cover half term periods. Officers confirmed that visits are underway to a number of properties within the Borough and the Youth Service is working with the Library Service to possibly use some space. Officers also stated that work is underway with Young People in the Youth Forum to increase attendance at Youth Clubs and change the views of Young People on the facilities on offer.

12. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

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

Councillor J. Roberts requested a report on the School Crossing Patrols in the County Borough. S. Aspinall confirmed that a report would be prepared and will be presented at the next meeting.

Members requested that for future meetings, a sheet containing Acronyms would be beneficial and it was agreed that Officers would be requested to include a list of Acronyms in their reports where required.

14. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. There were no items brought forward for review.

1. Budget Monitoring 2013-14
2. SACRE Minutes - 10th June 2013

The meeting closed at 7.33 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, 5th November 2013, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN