



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 14TH JANUARY 2014 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, Mrs. A. Blackman, H.R. Davies, C. Durham, C. Gordon, D.M. Gray, D. Havard,
Mrs. G.D. Oliver, J. Pritchard, R. Saralis and Mrs. M. Sargent

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. Cunnick (Manager - Community, Youth Service & Adult), A. Davies (Advisor, ALN), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services), G. Thomas (Principal Engineer), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.P. James and from P. Ireland (NUT)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES – 5TH NOVEMBER 2013 AND 16TH DECEMBER 2013

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman, subject to the inclusion of Councillor J.E. Roberts' apology for absence in the minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2013.

- Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 5th November 2013 (minute nos. 1-12, on page nos. 1-5)

- Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 16th December 2013 (minute nos. 1-2, on page nos. 1-3)

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 informed Members that after spending more than a year at a temporary site in Ebbw Vale, pupils and staff made a happy return to Cwmcarn High School last week for the start of the new term.

Councillor Mrs. R. Passmore thanked the dedicated team of officers for their hard work to ensure that the logistical challenge of transferring pupils, staff, equipment and resources was as seamless and quick as possible. Members noted that a Special Assembly was held on the first day back and the Cabinet Member for Education and Life Long Learning relayed the council's perspective to the viewing public and media.

Councillor Mrs. R. Passmore congratulated the staff and pupils at Lewis School Pengam for their fantastic entry into the Media4schools Competition. Councillor J.E. Roberts added that the Young People who made the film have been presented with awards and offered to show the DVD at a future Scrutiny Committee.

Members were happy to note the progress made and thanked the Cabinet Member for the update. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to view the DVD at a future committee.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. AGENDA SUMMARY

The Scrutiny Committee noted the proposed agenda for the meeting.

7. STANDARDS OF PUPIL ATTAINMENT IN CAERPHILLY- FOUNDATION PHASE, KEY STAGE 2, KEY STAGE 3 (FINAL) KEY STAGE 4 (PROVISIONAL);

Mr. E. Pryce presented a report to the Committee and highlighted key performance in pupils' attainment in teacher assessment at foundation phase, key stage 2 and key stage 3 (Final) and key stage 4 (provisional). Members were asked to note that the Welsh Government Completion of final validation of key stage 4 performance data has been concluded, but the national comparative data is not yet available.

Performance in the Foundation Phase remains above the Wales average for all indicators with 85.0% of pupils achieving the Foundation Phase Indicator in 2013, an increase from 84.3% in 2012. Caerphilly currently ranks 7th in Wales when compared with other local authorities, which is well above Caerphilly's Free School Meal (FSM) ranking.

Members queried the FSM take-up data for Welsh schools and the data's accuracy to measure deprivation in comparison with other Local Authorities. Officers confirmed that there is less take up of FSM in Welsh Schools and they are over-all performing well. The FSM data is used by both ESTYN and EAS to measure deprivation across schools throughout Wales.

The Director added that the Welsh Government has changed the key indicators and Caerphilly CBC's performance is still showing an upward trend, however there is always room for improvement in order to drive up standards.

Members thanked the officers for the report and presentation and noted that further data on banding and individual schools would be presented at a later date.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

8. STATUTORY LITERACY AND NUMERACY TESTS- PRESENTATION

Mrs. A. Davies presented Members with the National Reading Test Outcomes for Years 2-9 for 2013. Members were asked to note that the figures presented were in relation to attainment below the National Average for Literacy, which does not include Special Education Needs.

Members thanked the officer for the presentation and discussed several items around the achievements by schools and the evident correlation between high FSM take-up and below average pupil performance. The Officer confirmed that the exercise had identified a number of issues, which would be addressed to ensure that appropriate intervention support is targeted to pupils/schools.

Officers added that there is a lot more collaborative work being conducted in schools with EAS, Flying Start, Communities First and Youth Services to provide a whole package of support services to children and their families. The service has introduced a tracking system and regular visits to schools to review pupil progress and identify need for additional support where necessary.

The Scrutiny Committee was pleased to note the contents of the report and the hard work being conducted by the Department, Schools and EAS.

9. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE SIX-MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires all local authorities in Wales to set and publish a set of priorities that improve the life of citizens. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) use Improvement Objectives (IO) and other data/ information to evaluate the Council's annual progress on key performance indicators to measure the outcomes and impact on the citizens of Caerphilly.

The Council identified the development of the Youth Service as a priority and T. Cunnick, Community, Youth Service & Adult Manager provided Members with an overview of six-month progress of Improvement Objective 3- Develop an effective and accessible Youth Service that supports the personal and social development of young people. Members noted the report and that progress at the half-year stage is on target and the service will continue to aim to achieve all key targets within timescale.

Members discussed the actions in the report. Further information was sought on the bid to Welsh Government (WG) to facilitate an early intervention process and whether there would be an opportunity for more schools to take part. The Officer confirmed that a draft bid was sent to WG and agreed in concept. A detailed bid was submitted in November and confirmation is pending as to whether the bid has been successful. Six schools are currently on board with the project as they meet the criteria. Subject to funding, the project would be offered to additional schools at a later date where possible.

Members were asked to note that the Draft would be discussed at SMT and presented to the Committee in March.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

10. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL SERVICE

G. Thomas, Principal Engineer provided Members with an overview of the School Crossing Patrol Service (SCP) within Caerphilly County Borough and informed Members of the procedure used to review the need for School Crossing Patrol provision at a site.

School Crossing Patrols provide a valuable service to the community and are employed to help children cross the road safely on their journey to and from school. Caerphilly CBC currently employs 63 permanent School Crossing patrols across the County Borough. The service forms part of the Transport Strategy and Road Safety Team within the Engineering Services Division.

Operational practices are guided by National Road Safety Great Britain's School Crossing Patrol Guidelines. The guidelines set down a procedure that is used by officers within the Council to assess whether the provision of a School Crossing Patrol is justified at a specific location. The assessment is based on the number of children walking to and from school and traffic flows at the site in question, and also takes into account site-specific characteristics. The procedure is followed when reviewing the ongoing need for SCP provision after a site becomes vacant and to assess whether the establishment of a new SCP site is justified.

Members thanked the officer for the report and discussed several crossings throughout the borough.

The report referenced School Travel Plans; a member queried whether these were compulsory in all schools, their purpose and whether they should be made compulsory. The Officer confirmed that they are not compulsory but suggested that Councillors recommend to the Governing Bodies to adopt.

Further information was sought on the cost of the School Crossing Patrols. Officers confirmed that there are 63 part-time employees which cost's the Highways Department £360,000 p/a and an average cost of £4,000 per site.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the report and also recommended that Officers present the benefits of School Travel Plans to Head Teachers and encourage Governors to endorse.

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

Members were reminded of the revised Forward Work Programme process, however, it was agreed to accept requests at this meeting.

1. Cllr. W. David requested a report from EAS outlining comparative welsh attainment data for Literacy and Numeracy.
2. Cllr. C. Durham requested a report on the Asbestos Surveys conducted in Caerphilly CBC Schools

13. 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. Education, Schools and Equalities Report 2013;
2. Consultation- Proposed Admission Arrangements 2015/2016

The meeting closed at 19.16p.m.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 6th March 2014, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN