



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 4TH JUNE 2014 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chair
Councillor J. Pritchard - Vice Chair

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, C. Durham, C. Gordon, R. Saralis

Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning - Mrs R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), K. Cole (Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), T. Cunnick (Manager, Youth Community and Adult Education), G. Evans (Interim Manager Community Education), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director), T. Maher (Assistant Director Planning and Strategy), D. Jones (Service Manager, Health Safety and Welfare), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), E. Lewis (Connecting Communities Manager), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A. Blackman, H.R. Davies, D.M. Gray, D. Havard, M.P. James, G. Johnston, Mrs G.D. Oliver D.W.R. Preece, Mrs M. Sargent and J.E. Roberts.

1. WELCOME

Members were pleased to welcomed Bleddyn Hopkins back to the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee.

2. VICE CHAIR

In noting that Councillor James Prichard has been appointed as Vice Chair, Members paid tribute to the way that the former Vice Chair, Councillor Denver Preece, had carried out his role and duties during his term of Office.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES - 8TH APRIL 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 8th April 2014 (minute nos. 1 - 10, on page nos. 1 - 4) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. CALL - IN PROCEDURE

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

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Councillor Mrs R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, provided Members with a verbal update on the Schools Challenge Cymru programme, recently announced by the Minister for Education and Skills, and advised that of the 40 schools selected, six are within the county borough.

Members were then advised that in recent weeks all 18 of the Borough's Public Libraries have had their public and staff computer workstations refreshed by the Authority's IT Team (some 234 PCs in total). The new equipment offers much improved public access to the Internet and other online facilities to residents across Caerphilly free of charge and coincides with the introduction of wireless provision in a number of new sites and improved broadband provision at a number of the larger sites. An Expectant Parents Project has also been launched. The collaboration aims to arm parents with new skills and qualifications.

The Cabinet Member was pleased to announce that following an intensive teaching/training session last week at Bedwas Adult Education Centre, in conjunction with Bedwas Leisure Centre, 8 young people achieved their Level 2 pool lifeguarding QCF qualification award. Members commended those who participated on the course and congratulated them on their achievement.

In closing, Councillor Passmore made reference to the 5 mile walk undertaken by Alex Silver to raise money for the charity Help for Heroes. This was more remarkable as Alex's parents had been advised that he would never walk or talk. He is already planning his next event, abseiling down a building. Members acknowledged this achievement and recognised his commitment to raising money for the charity.

With regards to the Schools Challenge Cymru programme, a query was raised as to the criteria used and to the level of assistance that will be given. Details of the variety of factors used as criteria were outlined and it was noted that each school would work with a Schools Challenge Cymru advisor and be given the opportunity to access proven expertise, and to deliver a package of support that is individually tailored to meet each school's needs and the needs of their learners. It is anticipated that best practice will be shared with other schools.

7. CABINET REPORTS

None of the Cabinet Reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

8. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

S. Mutch (Flying Start Coordinator) presented an overview of the report, which provided information on the Caerphilly Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2014 - 17 and sought approval to publish by 1st June 2014. The report provided a detailed analysis of the current provision and proposals to improve standards, highlighted best practice and included targets for continuing improvement and provision.

It was noted that individual WESPs must be submitted to fulfil the legal duty of each local authority, although regional collaboration must be identified within individual plans. Statutory consultation was undertaken between 31st January - 4th April 2014 and responses were taken into account when finalising the Plan.

Members were advised that the Plan was developed regionally with lead support from the Education Achievement Service, to enable a collaborative strategic approach, whilst allowing for local authority development and accountability. Of the 7 outcomes identified in the Welsh Government Guidance, there is a strong local emphasis on outcomes 1, 2 and 6 with outcomes 3, 4, 5 and 7 being more regionally directed. It fulfils the local authority's duty to monitor and improve standards of Welsh language educational attainment and it directs the appropriate use of the Welsh Education Grant funding, which is regionally administered.

A query was raised as to how the Plan is monitored and Members were advised that it is updated and monitored regularly by the Caerphilly WESP Forum and through the South East Wales Consortium Strategic WESP. Progress is reviewed on a termly basis. It was also noted that the Plan does not provide details of where the lack of provision has been identified and it was explained that this is achieved through a monitoring process which is taken into consideration by the Local Forum. Reference was also made to the funding stream, and in particular, 21st Century schools funding. It was noted that the Plan will be implemented through Regional Welsh Education grant funding and that 21st Century funding, which is primarily to target surplus places, can be used to fund a new school.

Members were pleased to note the number of areas covered by the Plan and were advised that the local authority remains committed to supporting parental choice through equitable support in both Welsh and English medium schools.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

9. RESTRUCTURING MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS - COUNTY BOROUGH LIBRARY SERVICE

G. Evans (Interim Manager Community Education) presented proposals for restructuring management arrangements in the Library Service and sought the views of Members in respect of the changes proposed within the report.

He advised that the proposed change will reduce the Library Service senior management team by 2 Grade 10 Officers with a move to a more public facing flat structure. All Officers at Grade 10 or below will be geographically based, placing managers in close proximity to the Authority's key library delivery sites whilst retaining specialist areas of expertise at Grade 9 or above (the current temporary interim structure and proposed new senior management arrangements were detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively). Within the present senior staffing tier three Grade 10 and Grade 9 posts will be reduced and redesigned on the basis of one Grade 10 and three Grade 9 positions. Two current vacancies at Grade 7, Community Librarian level, will be ring fenced for Officers at risk of displacement through this process.

Members were advised that the proposed new structure has been developed in co-operation with the managers directly affected by the changes and that discussions have been held with the relevant Trade Union. The proposed new structure is the outcome of this consultative process. This structure will retain the Library Services human resource capacity in areas of strategic importance, namely services to children and young people, adult services, and the digital agenda and will ensure that the Service meets the requisite Welsh Government Public Library Standard under the 5 Quality Framework, 2014-2017.

Following consideration, the recommendation in the report was moved and seconded. By a show of hands it was unanimously agreed that the proposed management arrangement changes as detailed therein be endorsed.

10. SELF EVALUATION REPORT FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SPRING 2014

K. Cole (Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion) presented the report, which detailed the content of the current self-evaluation document for the Directorate. She advised that in July 2012, Estyn inspected the local authority, and as it was placed in the category of Estyn monitoring, a self-evaluation report was produced. Since that time, the document has been updated and the areas for improvement for each of the quality indicators identified (as appended to the report).

Reference was made to the recommendations that were made at that time and to the progress on each, which are addressed within the self evaluation under the quality indicators identified (standards, provision and leadership/management). It was noted that as a result of recommendation 3 (improve the robustness of self evaluation and target setting) much work has been undertaken to design and implement a rigorous and robust programme of activities which has led to a consistent approach across the directorate.

Members were advised that Corporate Governance has high priority and, as a result, the self evaluation practice across all Directorates has also been reviewed and improved. The Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning has contributed to this process as it is recognised as an example of good practice. The self-evaluation document has been updated and refined several times in response to internal challenge meetings and the self evaluation summary now be circulated to schools and other partners for comment.

A query was raised as to how quality indicators for performance in the foundation phase continue to be above the Welsh average, whereas for other stages it is slightly lower than the National average. The Manager advised that performance at KS2 is good and continues to be high and has increased over the past five years. KS3 and 4 are seen to be adequate, with upward trends in certain areas. It was accepted that whilst this remains a challenge, significant progress has been made and there are systems in place to manage the process to ensure that the data is more meaningful (with an individuals data being used to track performance and interventions put in place if required). It was noted that a presentation would be made to the meeting in September when a comprehensive overview, including the differential between the levels will be explained, and details on the progress on a number of initiatives and strategies that have been implemented would be outlined.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

11. SERVICE PRIORITIES 2014/2015

E. Lewis (Connecting Communities Manager) gave a presentation on the service priorities within the Caerphilly Single Integrated Plan. She referred to the structure of the planning process and to the performance management arrangements that are in place to develop and take forward service priorities. It was noted that the following have been identified for the Directorate:-

- Raise standards of attainment for all learners
- Develop a multi-agency approach to address the impact of poverty on pupils and their communities, to enhance regeneration
- Reduce the gap in attainment between pupils in advantaged and disadvantaged communities
- Transform educational opportunities for learners by providing improved learning environments

Reference was then made to the proposed action for each of the priorities and to the processes that will be put in place to achieve the aims. The link to the corporate plan, single integrated plan and service improvement plan and the common themes throughout the priorities and to the link with other services areas were explained.

A query was raised in relation to the collection of data for pupils, and as to how those who require EOTAS provision (Education other than at Schools) are tracked. The Acting Deputy Chief Executive advised that a system that holds the information is being refined so that all data is held on one database. An Information Sharing Protocol has been developed and is currently under consideration.

Reference was made to the number of proposals to take forward as a result of the identified priorities and, with regards to the service priority which seeks to 'reduce the gap in attainment between pupils in advantaged and disadvantaged communities' as to how they will be achieved. It was explained that where there is a gap identified, processes will be put in place and resources will be targeted to the areas where they are most required. Consultation will also be undertaken with other agencies (through their information sharing protocol) to try and meet needs and identify the barriers. Further details (including case studies) would be presented to the meeting in September.

Members noted the contents of the report and thanked the Officers for their informative presentation.

12. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 2013-2014 YEAR END REVIEW

E. Lewis (Connecting Communities Manager) advised that 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 report provided an update on the progress of Improvement Objective 3 (develop an effective and accessible Youth Service that supports the personal and social development of young people, for the year 2013/14) and the service's evaluation of whether it has been successful or not.

Members were advised that at the year end, all actions have been achieved and as such the objective has been deemed successful. Specific reference was made to the appendix to the report which outlined both the actions, a summary of the outcomes, the evidence which supported this conclusion and to the scorecard which detailed the actual, target and intervention data. Reference was made to Action 1 which had required a comprehensive review of the Youth Service to identify areas of best practice and areas for development and to the positive feedback that has been received. The recommendations from this review have been included within the Draft Caerphilly Youth Service Strategy as priorities for action. Clarification was sought as to how the mapping exercise has been undertaken. The Manager explained that it had been based on extensive consultation with the respective Groups and evidenced from information collated on the geography of the area, the location of existing services, the quality of premises and an analysis of attendance. The findings of the review will be presented to Members at a future meeting.

Progress has also been made on other actions, including the development of a data management system to monitor youth service engagement, the appointment of an Accreditation Officer, the alignment between the Youth Service and EOTAS, the development of a Connecting Communities Service and Raising Awareness Project.

Members noted the content of the report and the progress made in each of the areas identified.

13. UPDATE ON THE ASBESTOS REMOVAL PROGRAMME FROM CCBC SCHOOLS

D. Jones (Service Manager, Health Safety and Welfare) presented an overview of the report, which provided an update of the current position of asbestos in all Caerphilly maintained schools, provided a review of the category of asbestos in schools and detailed the asbestos removal programme which has commenced to further reduce the level of asbestos products in school buildings.

She advised that the Authority is committed to reducing the risk to health from asbestos products within its school buildings and a programme has commenced which will remove all amosite asbestos products from occupied areas of school buildings the next two years (37 schools). The first phase of works, which has commenced, will address works required in the 24 category 2 schools, which have amosite containing products in low-level areas, which are vulnerable to impact-to-impact damage such as asbestos wallboards in classrooms. On completion of the project, 95% of Caerphilly owned schools will be free from amosite asbestos products within occupied areas of each school.

With regards to the first phase, it was confirmed that currently the asbestos containing material is undamaged and school staff are fully aware of the procedure to follow should damage take place. Clarification was sought on the categories as outlined in the report and it was explained that there are no schools in category 1, those in categories 2 and 3 are being addressed as part of the asbestos removal programme, those in category 4 show no amosite containing materials in occupied areas and those in category 5 are asbestos free buildings.

A query was raised in relation to the non-maintained schools and it was noted that there are two schools which fall into categories 3 and 4. Details of the surveys have been provided to both schools and they are able to access capital funding to undertake works as required.

Members noted that the surveys and subsequent air samples taken to date provide reassurance that the risk posed by asbestos within school buildings is being well managed and therefore the risk from its presence is regarded as low. The schools have worked closely with Offices on the precautionary measure put in place, which has resulted in a proactive approach to managing the asbestos risks in schools.

Members thanked Donna Jones for her informative presentation, and following its consideration and subsequent debate, noted the contents of the report. They wished to place on record their appreciation to Health and Safety Team for the work they have undertaken, particularly with schools.

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

There were no requests for any reports to be prepared for consideration at a future meeting of the scrutiny committee.

15. INFORMATION ITEM

The Committee noted the following item for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. It was not brought forward for review.

1. Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 8th July 2014, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN