



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY, 7TH JULY 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, C. Durham, C. Gordon, D. Havard, M.P. James, Mrs G. Oliver, D.W.R. Preece, J. Roberts and R. Saralis.

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: R. Passmore

Together with:

C. Harrhy (Corporate Director - Education & Community Services), (K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director for Education), H. Morgan (Team Leader - Integrated Transport Unit), P. O'Neill (Senior Youth Service Manager), A. Price (Interim Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Co-opted Members: Mr A. Farina-Childs (Parent Governor), Mrs A. Goss (Parent Governor) and Mrs J. Havard (NUT).

Also Present:

K. Evans (Headteacher – St Gwladys Primary School) and I. Timbrell (Digital Technology Coordinator – St Gwladys Primary School).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.R. Davies and G. Johnston.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 4TH JUNE 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th June 2015 (minute no. 1 – 8) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THIS COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL - IN PROCEDURE

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

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

Councillor R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, provided details of the Gwent ACL Partnership Celebration of Achievement 2015 event, which is presented across 5 Local Authorities and Coleg Gwent. For Caerphilly, Christina Kerr received an award for Learner of the Year, for attendance on courses through Bridges into Work, volunteering for Language and Play and a local nursery and progressing to Basic Skills courses in Literacy and Numeracy, before enrolling on a childcare qualification through work based learning. An award for Tutor of the Year was presented to Gary Brown, a numeracy tutor at Risca Basic Skills; and Learning Group of the Year was awarded to Bryn Awel Primary Family Learning class. Members noted that an additional award was presented to the outreach admin staff across the 5 counties for their dedication to providing the best possible support to learners. This was endorsed by a section in the very positive Gwent 5 County Estyn report.

Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School have launched their Intergenerational Club, which enables participants of all ages to undertake activities such as art sessions, board games, bingo and reading. These activities will then be followed by a light buffet lunch. The Scheme is currently in its infancy and therefore, depending on feedback from the older persons involved, it will then take place on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis thereafter.

In addition, the Cabinet Member was pleased to announce that, following auditions for membership of each the National Youth Arts Wales (NYAW) groups for 2015, 16 students from Caerphilly were successful. Once again this represents a significant achievement for these talented young people, their teachers and the Music Support Service and congratulations were extended to all involved.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Cabinet Member for the update.

6. 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.

7. SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES UNDER THE NEW COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (CIF) – SEPT 2014 TO MAY 2015.

E. Pryce, EAS provided an overview of the report which detailed the judgements made by Estyn inspection teams of Caerphilly schools for the academic year 2014-15 (where published), along with a summary of Caerphilly schools' inspection judgements since the introduction of the new Common inspection Framework in September 2010.

Members noted that the schools included in the report were inspected during the Autumn and Spring Terms, 2014-15. Each of them was inspected under the arrangements for inspections that came into effect on 1st September 2010 and the reports included a number of recommendations for the school to address. These recommendations are school specific, and are not included in the report.

It was noted that, in total, 70% of schools were judged to be "good" overall, with a further 30% judged to be "adequate". Prospects for improvement were better with 6% judged Excellent, 71% judged to have "good" prospects for improvement, 20% of schools judged to have "adequate" prospects, but with a further 3% (2 schools) judged to have unsatisfactory prospects for improvement. The Local Authority is currently supporting these schools in partnership with the EAS.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and sought further information on Caerphilly CBC's rank position, in comparison to other Local Authorities in Gwent. The Officer explained that Caerphilly are ranked in various positions depending in the category, although well placed, there is room for improvement.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and invited Mrs K. Evans (Headteacher St Gwladys Primary School) and Mr I. Timbrell (Digital Technology Coordinator – St Gwladys Primary School) to deliver a presentation, which outlined the schools ethos, vision and the work conducted within the school to create a happy, safe, consistent and welcoming educational environment.

A Member, having acknowledged that St Gwladys Primary School sits within an area of high deprivation and Communities First Support area, sought further information on school outcomes and barriers to learning. Mrs Evans (Headteacher) explained that the school has a dedicated team of staff, all working towards the same goals. There is a keen emphasis on nursery education. St Gwladys provides a full-time nursery provision from 18 months plus, and it is felt that, by starting with early years, a learning ethos begins. There are a number of barriers for many of the pupils at the school, however all pupils are encouraged to reach their full potential and, given every opportunity possible to do so.

A Member queried how the school intended to maintain the motivation for continuous improvement, since the positive outcome from Estyn. Mrs Evans explained that, although the result was pleasing, the work and effort was not for inspection purposes and is something that is always done within the school. Staff are dedicated to ensuring that children achieve to the best of their abilities and are "all equally special".

The Committee considered the presentation and report, discussed at length and noted the report. Members were invited to visit St Gwladys Primary School. It was agreed that Officers would liaise to arrange visits to St Gwladys Primary School, Cwm Ifor Primary School and Trinity Fields, as per discussions at previous Scrutinys.

8. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH EDUCATION TRANSPORT MTFP 2015/15 – ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

At Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 20th May 2015, Members were presented with a range of discretionary home to school and college transport services and options which would assist the Local Authority to meet its obligations in respect of 2015/18 Medium Term Financial Plan to achieve a 20% general reduction in overall spend.

As per Member request, the report provided details of revisions made and additional information and options in respect of discretionary services, ET1 (Post-16 mainstream), ET2 (review of walking distances), and ET11 (review of hazardous routes – negligible or low risk).

Members were asked to note that any changes made to education transport policy are covered by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 that states that a local authority must agree to publish the information before 1st October of the year preceding the start of the academic year they will apply for.

ET1 – Post 16 Transport for Mainstream Students

Members supported the introduction of a fixed parental contribution for all post-16 students which would provide a potential saving of 500k per annum based on £180 charge per student per year, on the basis that officers have consideration for hardship and low income families and consider alternatives.

The report recommended an introduction of a daily charge of £1.50 with no concessions for post-16 travel, the implementation of a cap to the upper age limit, with provision ending at the end of the academic year in which the student reaches their 19th birthday.

In addition, Members were provided with additional information on an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which is available to pupils aged 16-19, in further education or undertaking unpaid work-based learning, whose parents are in receipt of a set level of taxable income. The Allowance provides a payment of £30 per week, which is paid fortnightly.

Members raised concerns for the removal of concessions for those in receipt of FSM and students ability to attend further education. Members were reminded that there is a requirement to make significant savings, however, at present only discretionary services were under consideration.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the Scrutiny Committee Support the Officers recommendation to introduce a daily charge of £1.50, with no concessions, to Post-16 Transport for Mainstream Students. By a show of hands (and in noting that there were 8 against), this was not supported by the majority present and further options would be considered by Officers.

ET2 – Review of Walking Distances

At a previous meeting, Members supported a proposal to increase the Statutory Walking Distances to 2 miles for Primary School and 3 Miles for Secondary School, as statutory distance, with the exception of Islwyn West and Gwindy 21st Century Schools.

The report provided additional information on the potential geographic areas affected by the change, along with 2 options for consideration in order to move towards statutory distances. These included the removal of discretionary provision in its entirety, noting that provision would be retained for existing pupils in the relevant phase of education. Alternatively, retaining the service with the introduction of an appropriate charge, this was recommended at £1.50 with full concession for FSM students.

A member highlighted that the options did not contain a protection for the 21st Century Schools (Islwyn West and Gwindy), and highlighted the impact the daily charge could have on families with low income.

Having consideration for the Officers recommendations, it was moved and seconded that the Scrutiny Committee support the introduction of a daily charge at a lower price of £1 per day with full concession for FSM students, including an exemption for existing pupils within the new 21st Century Schools at Islwyn West and Gwindy for a maximum of 4 years. By a show

of hands (and in noting that there were 4 against), this was agreed by the majority present.

ET11 – Review of Hazardous Routes (Negligible or Low)

Members supported a proposal to conduct an assessment, under the revised Guidance 2014, on routes which were assessed as negligible or low, with outcomes fed back to the Committee. Members noted that, upon further consideration, it is anticipated that a review of hazardous routes could result in a saving of £91,000 towards the £1.3m requirement.

Discussions ensued and a Member requested an additional route be considered within the review. The Member highlighted that a number of parents from Wattsville (Cwmfelinfach Primary School catchment area) noted that Crosskeys is a short walking route. The Officer explained that, in considering the route, the catchment areas could change, impacting upon both Primary and Secondary Schooling and possibly destabilising impact on numbers.

Members raised a number of concerns about changes within their wards, which would impact on the assessment, such as loss of lighting and reduction in crossing patrols. It was agreed that Members would await the outcome of the route assessments and consider following the outcome.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the Scrutiny Committee were in support of an assessment being conducted, under the revised Guidance 2014, on routes which were assessed as negligible or low, with outcomes being fed back to the Committee. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

9. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 2014-15 YEAR END REVIEW

P. O'Neill (Senior Youth Service Manager) provided Members with an overview of the report, which highlighted the progress made against the Council's Improvement Objective (Improvement Objective 3 – Develop an effective and accessible Youth Service that supports the personal and social development of young people), for the year 2014/15 and provide the service's evaluation of whether the IO has been successful or not.

The report highlighted the progress made against the targets, positive work that has taken place and noted that at the year end, all actions had been achieved and as such the objective had been assessed as successful.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and sought further information on the activities and educational curriculum undertaken at youth clubs. The Officer explained that there are a number of projects undertaken, exploring a variety of topics and activities. A recent project has focussed around health and physical activities are encouraged within the Youth Clubs to promote the project.

The report referred to Youth Work in Schools, which was introduced as a pilot scheme in Lewis School Pengam, Pontllanfraith, Rhymney and St Martins Schools. A Member requested further information on the project, the emphasis on Free School Meals and any positive outcomes. Officers explained that the project employs a Youth Worker and a Family Worker and aims to provide Targeted Intervention, both within the learning and home environment. It was noted that there were some issues with the project initially, however, since it's relaunch and information sharing amongst Head teachers and Local Authority staff, the project now targets the most appropriate students and aims to provide support in school, and with the family in the home environment.

A Member sought further information on the work conducted with 17 – 25 Year Olds. It was noted that Youth Services are more popular with young people under 17, however, many Young People often engage through the various activities and groups, such as the Junior and

Youth Forums, volunteering, taking advantage of qualifications and training and some seeking employment within the Youth Service.

Discussions ensued around the various work of the Youth Service and further information was sought around links with Multi-agencies, with particular reference to Mental Health. The Officer explained that work is conducted with external agencies and Young People to develop suitable resources that provide appropriate information to Young People on a number of issues such as Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol.

The Scrutiny Committee congratulated the Youth Service on meeting the targets and thanked the Officer for the positive report.

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

There were no requests for items to be placed on the next available agenda.

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

1. Modern Foreign Languages in Caerphilly Schools.
2. Financial Plan Education and Lifelong Learning 2015/16.
3. Education and Lifelong Learning Grants 2015-16.
4. Summary of Members Attendance – Quarter 4 – 1st January to 14th May 2015.
5. SACRE Minutes – 9th March 2015.

The meeting closed at 8.20 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 22nd September 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR