



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 12TH JANUARY 2016 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

C. Gordon, D. Havard, M.P. James, Mrs M.E. Sargent, D.W.R. Preece, J.E. Roberts and R. Saralis.

Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure: R. Passmore

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director for Education), P. O'Neill (Senior Youth Service Manager), J. Garland (Service Manager - Social Inclusion), S. Ellis (Principal Educational Psychologist), L. Perkins (Education Welfare Officer), L. Travis (Senior Community Education Manager), C. Jones (Youth Forum Co-ordinator) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

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

Also Present:

R. Berrigan, J. McCarthy (ESTYN), M. Sims (Headteacher, Heolddu Comprehensive), L. Prosser (Chair, Youth Forum) and D. Thomas (Education Representative, Youth Forum).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, H.R. Davies, G. Johnston and Mrs G. Oliver.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 3RD NOVEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that in noting that the attendance of Mrs A. Goss, Mrs J. Havard and Mr M. Western had not been recorded, the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3rd November 2015 (minute no. 1 – 14) 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, informed Members that the First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones AM, officially opened Y Gwyndy School on Wednesday 9th December, which is a £20m state-of-the-art Welsh Medium Education Campus for Caerphilly. Details of funding were provided and the progress achieved since the works started in 2012.

Members noted that Trinity Fields School and Resource Base has recently been presented with two prestigious awards, the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) and Investors in Families (IiF) Quality Mark. The IQM recognises and celebrates the inclusion work going on in schools, on both a local and national scale. The School also met the standards required for becoming a Centre of Excellence and has become the first Special School in Wales to achieve the Investors in Families Quality Mark for the third time. This award is made to schools that are committed to working with the whole family to improve outcomes for children.

The Scrutiny Committee were informed that the Youth Forum has been awarded a Youth on Board Award (2015) by the British Youth Council. This is the National Youth Council of the UK and is a youth-led charity that empowers young people aged 25 and under to influence and inform the decisions that affect their lives. Young people are empowered to raise their own issues and discuss them at Scrutiny/Cabinet and also meet with CCBC Officers, along with AMs, MPs & MEPs.

In concluding, the Cabinet Member confirmed that Newbridgel, St. Cenydd and Pontllanfraith Comprehensive Schools are no longer being monitored by Estyn.

Councillor J. Pritchard wished to give formal recognition to the Council's vision to develop the Y Gwyndy campus and acknowledge the high standard of provision.

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. JUNIOR AND YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES 2016

Councillor M. Prew, Youth Champion welcomed Dylan Thomas (Education Representative, Youth Forum) and Lauren Prosser (Chair, Youth Forum) to the Scrutiny Committee. They delivered a presentation regarding the issues raised by children and young people via the Youth Service's Junior and Youth Forums and set out the current Priority Issues chosen and also sought support and confirmation that they be presented to Cabinet for consideration.

The Junior and Youth Forums are structured and organised around four themes: Education for Life, Living Environment, Health, Social Care and Well-Being, and Regeneration. Junior Forum representatives are aged 7-11 years and Youth Forum representatives are aged 11-25 years.

Members were advised of the Youth Forum Conference in October 2015 and the Junior Forum Meeting in November 2015, where children and young people have identified issues important to them and have voted on a Priority Issue for 2016.

The issues and priorities raised by the Youth Forum were noted by Members and a discussion ensued regarding raising awareness to mental Health issues, increasing employment opportunities for young people, making young people feel safer in their communities and establishing the provision of Wi-Fi in all building-based locations.

The Junior Forum representatives identified a priority for each theme and these were discussed with particular reference to respecting the natural habitat of wildlife, misbehaving pupils taking up too much lesson time, stopping hunger by providing more foodbanks and reducing the price to public transport.

The Chair thanked the Youth Forum for delivering a competent presentation and requested that his congratulations be recorded in relation to the Youth Forum's success and BYC Awards achieved.

Following consideration and discussion of the report, the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee, recommended that the Junior and Youth Forum issues be presented to Cabinet.

By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

8. IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REPORT AND ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS PRESENTATION

Jackie Garland, Service Manager, Social Inclusion, delivered the report and presentation at agenda items 9 and 10, as one item.

Members were advised that improving attendance and reducing exclusions continue to be priorities for the LA and are targets in all key plans. The LA works with schools and other partners to ensure a robust approach towards the reduction of exclusions and increase in attendance rates.

The Committee noted that LA Officers monitor exclusions on a monthly basis and contact schools to clarify any issues identified. Targeted interventions are agreed between the LA and EAS. The impact of this accelerated approach has been significant so far with regard to some of the exclusion indicators. It was noted that there have been no permanent exclusions issued in primary schools for 4 consecutive years and the number of permanent exclusions issued in secondary schools decreased from 14 in 2012/13 to 8 in 2014/15. However, there have been no permanent exclusions from the EOTAS provisions.

There have been increases in the overall number of fixed term exclusions in primary and secondary schools and the overall number of days lost due to fixed term exclusions in primary and secondary schools. There have also been increases in the number of pupils receiving exclusions in both primary and secondary schools. Ms Garland explained that the increase in these indicators is a cause for concern and a priority for the LA. It was clarified that whilst the number of days lost due to fixed term exclusions of 5.5 days and fewer has increased across both phases, the number of days lost due to fixed term exclusions of 6 days or more has decreased in secondary schools.

The implementation of the Behaviour Strategy and the embedding of the Pivotal model of behaviour management training across schools should facilitate the reduction in exclusions. Ms Garland welcomed Mr Mathew Sims, Head Teacher of Heolddu Comprehensive School, to the Scrutiny Committee who provided Members with a brief presentation in relation to his School's Attendance statistics.

Members noted the challenges presented and strategies implemented for raising attendance at Heolddu Comprehensive School, where the Appointment of a Family Liaison/Attendance Officer has had a significant impact. Mr Sims confirmed that new processes are more robust and targeting support for specific groups of learners is essential. The School has also introduced an Inter-form attendance league which recognises pupil's attendance.

A query was raised regarding the most effective strategy that the school has employed and Mr Sims confirmed the introduction of the Family Liaison Officer has already had a significant impact on the school's approach to raising levels of attendance.

The Committee thanked the Head Teacher for the presentation and for responding to the questions raised.

Ms Garland then presented the report in relation to Attendance in Schools within the borough.

Members were informed of the National Statistics First Release *Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2014/15*, published as SDR 135/15 and *Absenteeism from Primary Schools in Wales*, published as SDR 198/2015, that provides a national overview of school attendance and absence rates and can be viewed at www.statswales.gov.uk.

The primary school attendance data for 2014/15, records a 0.1% improvement in comparison with 2013/14. Whilst 41 of the 75 primary schools showed improved attendance, 27 primary schools showed a decrease in attendance from the previous year.

Secondary schools have seen a decrease of 0.2% the same period. Whilst 6 out of 14 secondary schools show improved attendance, 7 schools showed a decrease in attendance from the previous year.

Members noted that 18 out of the 22 LA's in Wales are recorded as having improved secondary school attendance for 2014/15 compared with 21 in 2013/14. Caerphilly was ranked at 22nd. This is a cause for concern and a priority for the Local Authority.

There remains evidence of a strong correlation between poor attendance and those children and young people eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) as indicated in the Secondary School statistical release. Improving attendance remains a priority for the Local Authority and is a

target in the Learning Education and Inclusion Service Improvement Plan.

Clarification was sought in relation to the Behaviour Strategy and Members were informed that a Members' Seminar will be convened. This was unanimously agreed by the Members present.

In concluding, Ms Garland informed the Committee that the Education Department are receiving more support from EAS in relation to exclusions and that data is monitored on a monthly basis.

Having fully considered the report, the Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer and noted the contents.

9. UPDATE ON EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS)

Andrea Davies, EOTAS Manager, delivered a presentation and updated Members on the provision for pupils who are educated other than at school (EOTAS).

It was explained that EOTAS provision caters for the needs of children and young people from Nursery to Y11. Pupils enter into the provision following an application made to EOTAS Panel which meets on a monthly basis. Pupils' details and information are reviewed by Panel Members who include representatives from Educational Psychology Service, Behaviour Support Service, Youth Service, Education Welfare and the EOTAS team members. Cases are reviewed and placement decisions can be made based on individual pupil need. Outcomes from the panel are shared with the mainstream school.

Members noted a combination of options are available for pupils entering EOTAS provision. This may include full 5 day placements or part time placements shared with their mainstream schools. It is important that this provision is appropriate and of high quality and should also offer outcomes for pupils and value for money.

Ms Davies set out the aims of the provision including pupils returning to mainstream education, accessing relevant curriculums, addressing behavioural needs, coordinating multi agency service input and providing support for families. Details of the qualifications achieved during 2014/15 were provided.

Clarification was sought in relation to home tuition and Members were informed that when parents elect for this option, the Local Authority can only intervene where pupils are subject to Special Educational Needs or there are Child Protection issues associated.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and noted the contents.

10. EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF) PROJECTS 2014-2020

Lyn Travis, Senior Community Education Manager, presented the report that informed Members of four projects, Bridges into Work 2, Workings Skills for Adults 2, Inspire 2 Work and Inspire 2 Achieve. The first two projects have received approval for European Social Fund support, whilst the two Inspire projects are at advanced business planning stage.

Despite the recent upturn in the economy, unemployment and economic inactivity is still an issue for concern in the county borough. Since 2013, Caerphilly Officers have participated in the development of regional proposals seeking to build on the success of employment support operations delivered under the 2007 – 13 ESF Programme, including Bridges into Work, Prevent and Working Skills for Adults.

Reference was made to a number of operations that have now been approved by the Welsh

European Funding Office (WEFO) and others that are at an advanced stage of development, nearing approval. Those approved include the WG led Communities4Work operation, that matches some of their investment in the Communities First programme, with CF teams now supported to deliver employment and support in the most deprived areas of Wales.

The successors to Bridges into Work and Working Skills for Adults were approved by WEFO in August 2015, the CCBC match funding for these operations was endorsed by CMT in July. Bridges into Work 2 will provide essential employment support for adults in non-CF areas, whilst Working Skills for Adults 2 will provide upskilling opportunities for those who are low skilled and low paid in work, to address the in work poverty agenda. Both projects will provide direct delivery until January 2018, with project closure by the end of April 2018. Torfaen County Borough Council is the Lead Sponsor on these 2 projects.

Members sought clarification in relation to 'Inspire 2 Work' and 'Inspire 2 Achieve' projects and were informed that both are in the advanced business plan stage. The projects focus on the clearly identified need to address the issue of young people who are either NEET (not in employment, education or training) or at risk of becoming NEET. These have not yet been formally approved by WEFO. The Lead Sponsor on both projects is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Members thanked the Officer for the detailed report and noted the contents.

11. 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.

12. 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. Reducing Exclusions.
2. Minutes of the Caerphilly Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held on the 10th June 2015.
3. Budget Monitoring 2015 - 16.
4. Summary of Members Attendance – Quarter 2 – 1st July 2015 to 30th September 2015.

The meeting closed at 8.25 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 9th February 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR