



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 10TH JANUARY 2017 AT 5.30PM.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, H.R. Davies, C. Gordon, M.P. James, G. Johnston, P. Marsden, Mrs G.D. Oliver, J.E. Roberts, J. Simmonds.

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director, Education), J. Garland (Service Manager - Social Inclusion), M. Thomas and J. Watkins (Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher, Hengoed Primary School), P. O'Neil (Senior Youth Service Manager), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), E. Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer), B. Davies (Solicitor), A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), Mr M. Barry and Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governors), Mrs J. Havard and Mrs P.J. Ireland (NUT).

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Karen Newby Jones (ESTYN) and Kate Murray (Welsh Government) to observe the Scrutiny Committee meeting and Mrs Thomas and Mrs Watkins from Hengoed Primary School who would deliver a presentation in relation to Attendance and Exclusions.

2. RETIREMENT – BLEDDYN HOPKINS

The Chair advised that this was the last meeting of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee that Bleddyn Hopkins (Assistant Director, Education) would be attending due to him retiring. He expressed his personal appreciation for the advice, support and guidance he had received from Mr Hopkins during his career as Head Teacher in the former Mid Glamorgan and Caerphilly Local Authorities and more recently as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. Members paid tribute to the manner in which he has carried out his duties and referred to the high esteem in which he was held by Members and Officers alike and wished him every success and happiness for the future.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: D.W.R. Preece, D. Rees, R. Saralis and Mrs M.E. Sargent.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5. MINUTES – 8TH NOVEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 8th November 2016 (minute nos 1 – 13) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY 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.

7. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor D. Havard (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning) informed the Committee that First Minister Carwyn Jones was invited to 'cut the first sod' at a special groundbreaking ceremony on the site of the new state of the art replacement school for Abertyswg and Pontllytyn Primary Schools on 15th December 2016. The £8 million development has been jointly funded by Caerphilly County Borough Council and Welsh Government, through its 21st Century Schools and Education Programme. This will provide pupils with a modern facility which is expected to open in January 2018. The Contractor, Willmott Dixon has commenced work at the site, which is located adjacent to Rhymney Comprehensive School near Abertyswg.

The Committee were advised that the formal 6 week consultation process which proposes to establish a Rhymney 3-18 all through school commenced on 3rd January 2017. A series of meetings will take place later this month and the Scrutiny Committee will consider the outcome of the consultation process at its next meeting in February.

Flying Start has successfully achieved an additional £128,000 for upgrading existing buildings this financial year, to ensure they are maintained in good condition and are welcoming community buildings for families. This will allow some identified community buildings and family centres to be redecorated, as well as carrying out health and safety maintenance works to ensure they are ready for continuing delivery for the next ten years.

The Cabinet Member provided an overview of attendance statistics in relation to Primary and Secondary Schools for 2014/15 and 2015/16 and comparisons were made with other Local Authorities across Wales.

Councillor Havard was pleased to advise the Committee that the Progress Scheme, which will be launched by the Children's Commissioner, Professor Sally Holland, will provide work experience within Caerphilly County Borough Council. This is part of the National Traineeship Programme which is funded by ESF money and backed by Welsh Government. A wide variety of placements will be offered to young people, aged 16 to 18 across a range of Council

Departments. In addition to this, the young people will also undertake a Level 1 qualification with the provider which will be ACT or ITEC. Those attending will receive a weekly allowance of between £35 and £50 plus travel expenses. At the end of the placement, the Council will endeavour to provide an apprenticeship or employment although where this is not possible, ongoing support will be provided via the provider and or a Youth Mentor from the Communities First Employment Team.

The Education Department are working closely with colleagues from Social Services to identify care leavers who it is deemed will benefit from the support and progression that will be offered. In addition any remaining places will be offered to NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young people whose lives might be affected by a wide variety of issues. On 2nd February, the launch of the scheme will involve addresses from Gareth Jenkins (Assistant Director, Children's Services), Janine Edwards (Service Manager CCBC 16 Plus Team), Councillor Keith Reynolds (Leader of the Council) and Professor Holland. There will also be a presentation of certificates for the first official trainees. Scrutiny Members were invited to attend the launch.

A member requested if consideration could be given to providing a resource base at the north of the borough. Officers confirmed they are currently reviewing the Behaviour Strategy in terms of children with complex needs and consideration is being given to the provision across the borough.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his informative report.

8. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE 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.

9. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from January to July 2017. Members were asked to consider the work programme and make any amendments or propose any additional items to be included for future meetings.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that a report on the Families First Programme be added to the meeting scheduled for the 4th April 2017 and the Cabinet Report on the Newbridge School Specialist Resource Base be brought to Scrutiny for consideration at a future meeting. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the foregoing, the work programme appended to the report be approved:

- (i) a report on the Families First Programme be added to the meeting scheduled for the 4th April 2017;
- (ii) the Cabinet Report on the Newbridge School Specialist Resource Base be brought to the Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting date.

10. 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.

11. IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND REDUCING EXCLUSIONS

The Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher of Hengoed Primary School delivered a presentation in relation to an Attendance Case Study undertaken at their School. The context of the school was set out and the Head Teacher advised that the school took a robust look at attendance levels based on an ESTYN Report received in December 2014 that stated attendance levels at the school were adequate. The catchment that serves the school is a Communities First Area and pupils come to school with a wide range of academic and social attainment. It was explained that in 2015-16, 32% of pupils claimed their entitlement to free school meals, which is well above the Local Authority (LA) and Wales average. Over the last three years, an average of 50% of pupils has been eligible for free school meals meaning that the school is placed in the highest benchmarking group (over 32%).

The Scrutiny Committee were advised of the actions taken to improve attendance levels, including using the Pupil Deprivation Grant to release the Deputy Head Teacher to take on a part time role as a Family Liaison Officer. Raising the profile of attendance through a variety of actions was set out, including:

- Prominent attendance display (foyer and in each class).
- Weekly attendance assembly (each class that reached the school target wins 5 minutes extra playtime, Archie Bear for the winning class).
- Close links with the Education Welfare Service and regularly held meetings with the Deputy Head Teacher and Parents where necessary. (EWOs visit the school on a regular basis to work with pupils discussing the importance of good attendance.) Pupils' thoughts and suggestions are updated and added to the display.
- Reviewed School Attendance Policy that informs all parents of required procedures.
- Termly 100% attendance trips.

An overview was provided in terms of how individual pupil targets were set and how the previous issue of reduced Monday and Friday attendance had been analysed. The specific teaching and learning actions implemented by the school were set out and Members were advised that this method has been shared with cluster schools across the borough.

In concluding, the Head Teacher confirmed that the Estyn inspectors report that indicates strong progress has been made to address a previous recommendation concerning pupil attendance and she stated that Hengoed Primary School will continue to strive to improve pupil attendance and achieve the challenging targets set.

The Chair personally thanked both the Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher for their presentation and congratulated the school on their achievements. This was supported by the Scrutiny Committee.

Clarification was sought as to whether fixed penalty notices have been issued to parents where attendance levels are low and the Head Teacher confirmed that one had been issued at the school that saw a dramatic impact on the child and their attainment. However, the school would prefer to use the Family Liaison Officer to work with the family in these circumstances.

The Service Manager for Social Inclusion delivered a presentation and report in relation to attendance and exclusions. She confirmed that the Local Authority works with schools, parents, SEWC, the EAS and other partners to ensure that a robust approach towards the increase in attendance and the reduction of exclusions is taken. These are urgent priorities within the Directorate and have continued to be a focus in all key plans. Officers work in

consultation with the EAS to monitor attendance and exclusions on a monthly basis and contact schools to clarify any issues identified.

The Committee were advised that attendance levels have improved in both primary and secondary schools from 2014/15 to 2015/16, details of which were set out in the report. In terms of national data, 20 out of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales are recorded as having improved secondary school attendance for 2015/16 compared with 18 in 2014/15 and Caerphilly was ranked joint 19th in comparison with 22nd in 2014/15.

Members noted there have been no permanent exclusions issued in primary schools for 5 consecutive years. The number of permanent exclusions issued in secondary schools has increased from 8 in 2014/15 to 14 in 2015/16, details of which were summarized in the report. There is a strong correlation between exclusions and gender as more exclusions are issued to boys than girls. There is also a correlation between exclusions in primary schools and FSM entitlement and there are less exclusions issued to children who are in Local Authority Care and those who have Statements of SEN compared with those who are not in these vulnerable groups.

In terms of de-escalation and behaviour management, it was explained that the Local Authority promotes Team Teach as an effective model. There has been a downward trend in the number of incidents of physical intervention in schools and specialist resource bases since 2011/12 and there are robust monitoring arrangements in place with regard to the scrutiny of the physical intervention forms. In this respect, the Local Authority exercises its duty of care in relation to pupils and staff members.

In concluding, the Service Manager advised that the implementation of the Revised Behaviour Strategy and the embedding of the outcomes from the ALN working groups across schools will be formally evaluated in the spring term of 2017.

With regard to attendance rates, a Member queried if improvements are sustainable in going forward. The Service Manager confirmed that effective changes have been made including having monthly targets for the schools as opposed to having only annual targets. This has proved a more rigorous approach in relation to target setting. In terms of moving forward, a Rapid Response Team will be developed (through existing staff) to work with schools and families, it is hoped that this will allow schools some 'breathing space' and facilitate effective planning. The Education Psychology Team are now fully staffed with experienced and enthusiastic staff that will assist the service.

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

12. JUNIOR AND YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES 2017

The Senior Youth Service Manager presented the report that informed Members of issues raised by Children and Young People via the Youth Service's Junior and Youth Forums. He confirmed that although the young representatives were not in attendance at the meeting they would present their report to Cabinet at a later date. He advised that following the Youth Forum Conference in October 2016 and the Junior Forum meeting in November 2016, Children and Young People have identified issues important to them and have voted on a Priority Issue for 2017. The process that follows the identification of issues was set out in paragraph 2.2. of the report.

The Junior and Youth Forums are structured and organised around the five themes of the Single Integrated Plan: Prosperous Caerphilly; Safer Caerphilly; Learning Caerphilly; Healthier Caerphilly; Greener Caerphilly, enabling children and young people to have a voice on issues that affect them. Junior Forum Representatives are aged 7-11 years; Youth Forum Representatives are aged 11-25 years.

At the Annual Youth Forum Conference young people are provided with the opportunity to explore issues previously raised via borough wide consultation. Young people attending the conference present their views on each of the themes and engage in a dialogue with relevant Officers and Cabinet members. From exploring all themes within the context of young people's lives, young people identify and agree on a priority issue for each theme. Each of which link in with the 7 Wellbeing Goals as set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act as they are being presented by the Children and Young People in the County Borough. The issues voted on following both Conferences were:

- Improvements to Public Transport
- Car Safety
- More awareness of what Social Services do for children
- Mental Health - Awareness of Mental Health needs to be improved and stereotypes should be challenged
- First Aid Education
- Adventurous Outdoor Play
- More rewards for children who are trying hard to learn
- More lights on cycle paths and walkways
- More awareness of Caerphilly tourist attractions.
- Provide free transport and improve public transport links to the tourist attractions.
- Awareness of local wildlife and the harm grass fire cause to natural habitats

Members noted that the top priority as was raised 12 months ago is raising awareness in relation to Mental Health issues and what services are available to help young people. It was explained that this is an ongoing issue and that CAMHS (Child and Adult Mental Health Services), is at full capacity in terms of services available. The Local Authority with Education Psychologists may need to consider looking at other approaches and developing innovative actions. A Member queried the priority *'Improvements to public transport'* and how this links in with *'A prosperous Wales'* Wellbeing Goal. The Committee were informed there is strong recognition from young people relating to accessing the County Borough and public transport where user friendliness and frequency has also been discussed. The Forum will need to engage with officers to obtain expert guidance on how this issue can be moved forward.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his informative report and for responding to questions raised during the course of the ensuing debate.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. This was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report:

- (i) the Junior and Youth Forum issues be presented to Cabinet;
- (ii) the proposal of the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue – 'Awareness of mental health needs to be improved and stereotypes should be challenged', be supported;
- (iii) the proposal of the Junior Forum in addressing their Priority Issue – 'More awareness of local wildlife and the harm grass fires cause to natural habitats', be supported.

13. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020

The Early Years Manager presented the report that sought the views on the draft Caerphilly Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-20 prior to its submission to Welsh Government for Ministerial recommendations and its presentation to Cabinet for approval to publish by 1st June 2017.

The WESP was developed locally but with a collaborative strategic approach through the Education Achievement Service, allowing for local authority development and accountability.

The WESP 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.

Members were advised that a Statutory Consultation was undertaken between 21st October and 13th December 2016 and responses were taken into account when finalising the plan, details of which were appended to the report. This WESP is aspirational and depends on Welsh Government funding to deliver the First Minister's programme for Government 2016-2021, Taking Wales Forward, working towards one million people speaking the Welsh language by 2050. Funding will enable delivery towards the aspirations for the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act for a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language that complies with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The objectives that are hoped to be achieved by 2020 are set out in paragraph 4.5. of the report. Within the action plan there are targets to continuously improve standards, under the 7 outcomes as identified in the Welsh Government Guidance.

It was explained the Team will work strategically together as a region with South East Wales Education Achievement Service. This will equip schools and education providers across age ranges and linguistic sectors with the capacity and sustainability to increase standards in Welsh and promote the use of the Welsh language within families, communities and workplaces. It will aim to stimulate and provide local, accessible, sustainable, community-focused provision to meet the growing demand for Welsh medium education. It is anticipated that an announcement from Welsh Government will be received by the summer in terms of funding.

The Chair thanked the Officer for presenting the report and responding to questions raised during the course of the ensuing debate.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the content of the Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan be noted and presented to Cabinet seeking approval to publish the final WESP following Ministerial recommendations.

14. FLYING START PROGRAMME

The Early Years Manager presented the report that captures the impact of the Flying Start Programme over the last 4 years and submits a plan for the standstill Programme delivery moving forward from 2017 onwards.

Caerphilly started delivering the full Flying Start programme with all 4 components in the initial ten Flying Start areas in 2008-09. Therefore those children completing the Foundation Phase in the summer of 2016 will be the first cohort of Flying Start children who had access to the full programme prior to Nursery. The Programme has expanded from 10 areas to 26 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA's) during 2012-16 expanding from 1252 children aged 0-3 to more than 2483 children aged 0-3 and their families. This has enabled a reach of 29% of the

children aged 0-3 in Caerphilly County Borough (based on Nov 2016 caseload data) in all of the 10% most disadvantaged LSOA's and some of the 20% most disadvantaged. These are based in the most disadvantaged areas in Caerphilly and targeted using the highest concentration of children aged 0-3 years living in income benefit households. Children do not leave the health visitor caseload or interventions until they transfer to school nursing in the September after their 4th birthday although these children are not counted in any returns to Welsh Government. Details of what the Flying Start Programme delivers are set out in paragraph 2.1. of the report.

Members were advised the Programme aims to establish positive behaviours in children and families, through healthy lifestyles, positive parenting, attendance and aspirations. Programme outcomes are based on the conditions of well-being and are developing a range of population indicators to show progression in these outcomes. Analysis shows that there are a higher number of children in Flying Start areas that have a higher proportion with developmental delays requiring additional support or specialist interventions. Over the last 4 years take up has increased and attendance is improving. The percentage attending Welsh medium provision has remained fairly consistent. The number of parents attending parenting programmes has increased and those families receiving bespoke packages in the home have significantly increased. Population indicators are for the borough and not broken down by Flying Start area. However, there is a trend in reducing teenage pregnancies, increasing immunisation rates, and decreasing rates of decayed missing or filled teeth. Parental feedback is gained through questionnaires and more recently through parent comments and reviews on Facebook, which is primarily regarding their childcare experience, which are very positive.

Members expressed their concerns in relation to Welsh Government funding that is committed up until 2018 and the fact the Plan referred to runs from 2017 – 2021. The Early Years Manager confirmed that Welsh Government is currently undertaking research in the different aspects of Childcare. While Flying Start are awaiting confirmation of budgets for 2017/18, a standstill budget is anticipated which means the Programme is under pressure to continue to maintain delivery at a budget per child as was set in 2006/7. This will mean evaluating all elements of the programme moving forward and focussing on the delivery of the four core elements to bring the budget back to the maximum expected £5.2million. This will be an ongoing pressure moving forward with greater efficiencies being required but the majority of budget being spent on frontline staff and buildings for community delivery.

In terms of raising awareness of the services the Flying Start Programme offers, a member requested an advertisement be placed in the Council's newspaper 'Newline', that could also include 'good news stories'.

The Chair thanked the Early Years Manager for presenting the report and responding to questions raised during the course of the ensuing debate.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report on the impact of the Flying Start Programme and the continued standstill delivery of the future Programme in accordance with the Flying Start Programme Pathway as appended to the report, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27th February 2017 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR