



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 11TH JULY 2017 AT 5.30PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David – Chair

Councillors:

Mrs C. Andrews, A. Collis, S. Cook, A. Farina-Childs, D. Havard, M.P. James, Mrs B. Miles, Mrs T. Parry, J. Roberts, R. Saralis and R. Whiting.

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Principal Finance Officer), Sarah Ellis, (Manager Inclusion and ALN), H. West (Team Manager – Inclusion Services), J. Southcombe (Financial Services Manager – Education), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), T. Rawson (Solicitor), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Councillor P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement).

Co-opted Members: Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor), Mrs P.J. Ireland (NUT), M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, D. Hardacre, Mrs G. Oliver, Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor).

2. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Mr Jenkins, Assistant Head Teacher of Ysgol Cwm Rhymini to the Scrutiny Committee Meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 7TH JUNE 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting

held on the 7th June 2017 (minute nos. 1-11) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. 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.

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement) advised the Scrutiny Committee of her attendance, along with the Deputy Leader and Mayor, to the Gwent Vibe music event and was pleased to present awards to 3 Caerphilly learners.

The Cabinet Member and Committee provided positive feedback on the visit that took place at Islwyn High School, noting that the school is an excellent resource and in particular, Members were pleased to note the lack of congestion at the school, as a result of the traffic management system in place, in which parents collecting by car, are asked to collect pupils 10 minutes after the end of school and can drive onto the premises.

A Member sought further information on the progress made against the Youth Forum's priority for Mental Health. Officers explained that this area is now being covered by the Healthy Schools team. It was noted that Mental Health can be impacted by a number of areas such as Substance Misuse and is an increasing concern across the borough. Significant work has taken place to gather information from schools, police and the voluntary sector and a more urgent response is required in this field.

Following the update, the Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Cabinet Member provide a newsletter to the Committee.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her report.

7. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Head of Democratic Services presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from June 2017 to July 2017.

Members were asked to note that a workshop has been arranged for the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 17th July, in which Members are asked to consider items for the Forward Work Programme for the next 12 months, however, Members were invited email any suggestions or comments to the Interim Head of Democratic Services prior to the workshop, should they feel it would be useful.

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 subject to any changes made at the workshop, the work programme appended to the report be approved

8. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet report listed on the agenda had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

9. SAFEGUARDING

The report provided Members with an update on the progress made in relation to Safeguarding in Education.

It was noted that Safeguarding is a priority within the Directorate and has continued to underpin all activities in all key plans. The Local Authority (LA) works with Children's Services, schools, parents, The South East Wales Consortium (SEWC), the EAS and other partners to ensure that there is a robust approach towards safeguarding arrangements.

The LA has a pivotal role in safeguarding activities at a national, regional and local level. This ensures that policy and practice are well informed. In accordance with statutory guidance, all schools and settings have a Designated Senior Person (DSP) for Child Protection.

As well as the provision of good advice and support, there are effective safeguarding programmes relating to training, practitioner forums and audit. Estyn school inspection reports indicate that there are appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in schools in Caerphilly.

There are robust monitoring arrangements in place with regard to the scrutiny of physical intervention forms. This ensures that the LA exercises its duty of care in relation to pupils and staff members. Scrutiny of the data indicates that there has been a downward trend in the number of incidents of physical intervention in schools and specialist resource bases since 2011/12.

There are robust systems in place regarding the recording and monitoring of discriminatory incidents. Guidance is updated to reflect any new categories as they are defined. The LA has been recognised by Stonewall as developing good practice in this area.

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed Mr Jenkins, Assistant Head Teacher of Ysgol Cwm Rhymni, who provided a presentation on Safeguarding and How Schools Keep Children Safe.

Members noted that there are a number of policies in place in order to Safeguard children, which include All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008, Keeping Learners Safe 2015 and Caerphilly Corporate Policy. Within each school there are designated Safeguarding Officers which have received advanced training (SEWSCB), in addition, all Members of staff within schools are provided with accredited training every 3 years on current and emerging issues.

Within Caerphilly CBC there are systems in place to ensure each school is audited and supported by the Education Safeguarding Team, Individual Safeguarding Record Files are kept up to date and retention and transfer of Safeguarding Records is paramount when pupils transfer to other schools. In addition, a multi-agency approach has been adopted for consulting risk assessments and conferences.

Members were asked to note that Communication is a major factor in Safeguarding. Staff are provided with regular updated on a 'need to know' bases, in order to avoid Data Protection breaches. Sources of communication such as email are effectively utilised and close links have been established with other agencies such as Children's Services (Social Services), Police, Youth Offending Service and Health and discretionary incidents are regularly reported to the Local Authority.

The Committee thanked Mr Jenkins for his presentation and invited H. West (Team Manager – Inclusion Services) to provide any further information.

Members were pleased to note that Safeguarding is very well supported at a Corporate Level, is adequately resourced and that Caerphilly has been recognised for best practice. Officers explained that, with the advancement of technology and the increase in Social Media usage, cyber bullying is a real issue and as a result, Staff need to be adequately trained in order to deal with this ever changing environment. Every Member of staff is now trained within a school and there are processes in place with agencies to ensure that agency staff are also trained. In addition, Members noted that the School Crossing Patrol is also provided with Safeguarding training, as following a discussion with students, it was determined that pupils felt comfortable talking to the “lollypop lady” should they have any concerns.

Members sought further information on the Auditing System currently in place. Officers highlighted that following a serious case review; staff attended a local school to gather relevant information and discovered a lack of file management and accurate recording and storing of information. As a result, the whole system was reviewed, information stored accurately, and relevant information shared where necessary. Following this, a policy was developed, with clear guidance to assist schools to accurately store and manage the pupil information they hold and regular audits are conducted in order to ensure this is adhered to.

A Member sought further information on the number of disclosures made and whether there had been an increase or if trends were recognised. Officers explained that data is not collected on disclosures. There are a number of procedures in place in order to provide children with safe spaces within the learning environment and encourage pupils to feel comfortable to disclose any issues or concerns with staff and that there are appropriate measures in place to support pupils and deal appropriately with the issue.

Members discussed challenges and it was noted that there are a number of challenges within Safeguarding, which include the increased reliance on IT, for contingency risks, data protection and cyber bullying. There are detailed policies and procedures in place in order to provide schools with guidance on Safeguarding, however training is a key element in ensuring that staff are aware of the processes, in addition, Members noted the importance of Governors receiving Safeguarding training.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons outlined in the Officers report:

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) an annual Safeguarding Report be provided to the Education Scrutiny Committee for information.

10. FINANCIAL PLAN EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING 2017/18

The report provided Members with details of the Financial Plan for Education and Lifelong Learning for 2017/18 and how the Directorate’s total available budget has been allocated for the financial year.

Members were reminded that the final 2017/18 Local Government Financial Settlement announced on the 21st December 2016 showed an increase in the Aggregate External Finance (AEF) of £0.326m (0.12%) for Caerphilly CBC. It was noted that whilst the Final Settlement resulted in a cash increase for Caerphilly CBC, after adjusting for new responsibilities and grants transferred into and out of the settlement the new position is an effective cash reduction of £0.342m.

As a consequence of the financial settlement, a package of savings totalling £9.046m was agreed to enable the Council to deliver a balanced budget for the 2017/18 financial year and

in part to assist with delivering a balanced budget in 2017/18. As part of the £9.046m, specific savings for Education and Lifelong Learning amounted to £867k.

The approved 2017/18 budget for Education & Lifelong Learning totals £125m.

As part of the Authority's budget process the Directorate has been given budgetary uplift of 1.2% (weighted average) for potential pay award costs, plus an uplift for the living wage and an increase of 1.6% for non-pay related inflation. In addition budgetary uplift was also provided to fund the 0.5% Apprenticeship Levy on payroll costs (introduced by the UK Government from April 2017) and Additional Holiday pay for staff working variable hours. These uplifts exclude Teachers and other school based staff. In addition 1.25% budgetary growth has been allocated to Schools (£1.334m). The Individual Schools Budgets (£99m delegated directly through the formula & £4m Post 16 grant & revenue support grant funded) will need to fund any pay, price and other growth related pressures within the cash limited budget.

An updated MTFP for Schools is included in the Report to Council. This update assumes that schools will receive an annual uplift in funding of 1.25%, but this will be subject to review as savings requirements are firmed up. Currently there is a shortfall of 0.28% for 2017/18, 0.35% for 2018/19, 0.48% for 2019/20, 0.35% for 2020/21 and 0.47% for 2021/22.

In total the Directorate's net budget for 2017/18 is £125m (excluding Central Support Service Apportionments) of which £103m (which includes £4m Post 16 funding) forms the Individual Schools Budgets.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

In noting the report, Members sought further information on the nil-impact savings totalling £867k. Officers explained that these savings have been achieved through restructure and changes to the way in which the services work; vacancy management, by not replacing staff in certain vacant posts in areas such as administration and library services; reducing budget allocations and reductions achieved by EAS (Education Achievement Service). It was reaffirmed that the term "nil-impact" is a corporate phrase applied to savings which have a zero impact to the public.

Members discussed budget pressures from Education Other Than At School (EOTAS), which has demonstrated an overspend and sought further information on how these can be accommodated in the future. Members were assured that this particular overspend was a one off as an investment in provision to reduce funds going forward. These budgetary costs refer to out of county provision for children with specific needs that cannot be provided within the borough, work is underway to provide earlier intervention where possible, in order to reduce the long-term commitment.

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 be noted.

11. EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING GRANTS 2017-18

The report provided Members with details of grant funding available to the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate in 2017-18.

The report detailed the grant funding currently available, however, it was noted that further grants could be made available in year, subject to new funding sources or the successful outcome of bids.

The report provided a brief description of the intended purpose of the grant funding and

further details were outlined within the appendix to the report.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Having considered the appendix in detail, Members sought further information on significant changes within the Grant Funding received. Officers outlined that, the overall levels of grant funding received for 2017/18 have remained the static, with the most significant change being the reduction of Community First Funding. However, this has been off-set by the Early Implementation of Childcare Offer Early Implementer Grant, which has been received. However, Members were asked to note that many of the grants have terms and conditions attached and can be subject to funding being “clawed back” should monies not be utilised or terms and conditions not adhered to.

Further discussion took place around the Childcare Offer Early Implementer Grant, which provides funding to enable the Authority to prepare and deliver the early implementation of the childcare offer across the Mid-Valleys East area from September 2017. Members noted that the scheme will be made available to working parents within this area and provide up to 30 hours of childcare and early education for up to 48 weeks of the year for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. It is anticipated that funding for the scheme will be made available for several years and that phase 2 could possibly include the rest of the Borough, or other Boroughs across Wales.

A Member sought further information on the allocation of school funding and Additional Learning Needs Grants. Officers explained that there no longer an ALN Grant, however, Welsh Government would allocation funding based on Free School Meal allocation within the school. It would be the role of the Head Teacher to best maximise the funding available to the schools and the Governing Body’s role to challenge this allocation, should they not be satisfied that the needs of the pupils and school are being met.

Members discussed Grants which have been assigned via the European Grant Body and sought further information on the funding implications as a result of Brexit. Officers reassured Members that the funding has been assigned by the UK Government and apportioned back via the Barnett Formula, therefore there would be no impact as a result of Brexit.

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 be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2017 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR