



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 5.30PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David – Chair
Councillor G. Oliver – Vice Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Principal Finance Officer), Sarah Ellis, (Manager Inclusion and ALN), E. Sullivan (Interim Scrutiny Officer), 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, D. Hardacre, Mrs B. Miles, R. Saralis and Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor).

2. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Mrs Rees, Head Teacher of Gilfach Primary School and Park Primary School 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 – 11TH JULY 2017

RESOLVED that, subject to it being noted that Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor

Representative) was present at the meeting, the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 11th July 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

The Committee noted that the Cabinet Member had tendered apologies and would provide an update at the next meeting.

7. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from September 2017 to July 2018.

Members were asked to consider the work programme and to make any amendments or for additional agenda items to be included for future meetings. Members were asked to consider the addition of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) to the Forward Work Programme for 7th November 2017. In addition, Members were reminded that any requests for reports to be included on the Forward Work Programme could be requested via email to Democratic Services.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to the inclusion of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan report the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the addition of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Report, the work programme as 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. SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES UNDER THE NEW COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (CIF) – SEPT 2016 TO JULY 2017.

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed Mrs Rees, Head Teacher of Gilfach Primary School and Park Primary School, who provided a presentation on Leading School Improvement.

Members noted that when Park Primary School was inspected by Estyn in 2015 it was categorised as a red category school and as a result was targeted for intensive intervention from the Local Authority (LA) and the Education Achievement Service (EAS), in addition the school was subject to a warning notice and additional governors were appointed to the governing body. Following a further Estyn monitoring revisit in July 2016, the school was

placed into the category of requiring Significant Improvement.

At the end of the academic year 2015-16, the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher retired and the Headteacher, Mrs Rees of Gilfach Fargoed Primary School was asked to adopt an Executive Headship role from September 2016.

Members noted that, at the time when Mrs Rees took over the role, Park Primary School was the lowest achieving school in the family and had undergone a serious decline in standards over a two year period. The development of pupils' reading and writing skills was not consistently good and pupils' performance overall in Key Stage 2 had notably declined in 2014. The number of persistent absentees and unauthorised absences were relatively high with a few pupils persistently arriving late at school. Pupils did not place an active role in any decision making about their life in school, there are shortcomings in curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. Governor's involvement in the school's strategic direction, self-evaluation and school improvement was relatively underdeveloped.

The Committee noted that the Headteacher planned a number of changes within the school, which began with an honest self-evaluation, Post Inspection Action Plan (which was inspected and approved by Estyn in Autumn 2016). The team was expanded to include a new Deputy Head Teacher, who was initially seconded from Gilfach Fargoed, SENCo, additional teaching and teaching support staff. Work was then undertaken to develop new focus on Standards, which began by sharing best practice, both within and outside of the school, observations took place and weekly reflection meetings were set up to reinforce the ethos and to support well-being.

The Headteacher highlighted that, since the inspection, significant work has been undertaken to improve standards in teaching and overall excellence within the school, there is a greater Governor involvement, target attendance for 2016-17 has been exceeded and this term, Estyn are due to revisit the school and it is hoped that categorisation will improve to Amber.

Going forward, the school aims to continue to focus on standards, continue to reduce inconsistency in teaching and learning, develop the role of the whole school community and build on further engagement with pupils, parents and governors.

The Committee thanked Mrs Rees for the detailed presentation and congratulated her on the extensive work undertaken to make significant improvements.

A Member sought further information on the revised Estyn Inspection Process. It was outlined that there is a common inspection process, following which a PIAP is developed and the progress against which is reviewed regularly. The new process has implemented less formal observations of classrooms and enables inspectors to spend time with learners, discussing lessons and their learning, enabling more meaningful feedback to be obtained.

A Member sought further information on the morale of staff within the school. It was noted that staff morale has improved, the weekly reflection meetings have assisted in raising morale, as openness and honesty is encouraged and staff are encouraged to raise any issues or concerns in order that they can be addressed.

The Committee thanked the Headteacher for the report and welcomed Mr Andrew Williams from EAS to present the Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes Under the New Common Inspection Framework (CIF) – Sept 2016 to July 2017.

The report informed Members of the judgements made by Estyn Inspection teams of Caerphilly Schools for the academic year 2016-2017 (where published) and provided a summary of Caerphilly schools' inspection judgements since the introduction of the new Common Inspection Framework in September 2010.

The schools included within the report were inspected during the Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms 2016-17. Each of them was inspected under the new arrangements for

inspections, which came into effect on 1st September 2010.

The report identified the schools and the dates on which the inspections took place, together with the outcomes where available.

The Committee noted that, during the previous academic year, 14 Caerphilly schools were inspected, of the 14, 1 School was deemed as excellent, 11 schools were deemed good, 1 adequate, and 1 school was deemed unsatisfactory (Bedwas High School) and as such is subject to Estyn Monitoring.

The report provided an update on the previous inspections undertaken between September 2014 and July 2016. It was noted that 12 Caerphilly schools were inspected. Of these schools 8 were placed in a follow-up category, but 6 have now been removed and 2 have remained in the follow-up category from the previous year.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the detailed report and discussion ensued. Members were pleased to note the improvements, however sought further detail on plans to improve and for more schools to obtain excellent categorisation. Officers explained that there are a number of areas of deprivation across the borough, which has an impact on attainment, however, work is underway to identify the areas of excellence in schools and share best practice to assist improvement.

The Committee discussed the Estyn Inspection and Bedwas High School and sought reassurance that this would not be repeated. Members were assured that this inspection report was a wake up call and has created an opportunity to look at the school, its processes, management, staff and Governors and ensure that standards improve.

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

10. PUPIL ATTAINMENT AT FOUNDATION PHASE, KEY STAGE 2 AND KEY STAGE 3 - 2017

The report informed Members of pupil's attainment in teacher assessment at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

All schools are subject to rigorous reporting and monitoring of standards each year, with the principal focus in Key Stages 2 and 3 being on English/ Welsh first language, mathematics and science and the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in all three core subjects – the core subject indicator (CSI).

It was noted that in the Foundation Phase, schools report on the performance of 7 year olds in language, literacy and communication (English and Welsh language) (LLC), mathematical development (MD), and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural development (PSDWCD). The foundation phase indicator (FPI) measures the percentage achieving the expected outcome in all three areas of learning.

Whilst assessment of LLC and MD is broadly comparable to performance in English/Welsh and mathematics at KS2 and KS3, PSDWCD is not assessed in the same way as science. Instead it provides a holistic assessment of pupils' wellbeing and the extent to which they are able to inter-relate appropriately with those around them. It also reflects a growing awareness of culture and diversity and of the environment in which they live. As such, it is an important measure of their overall 'readiness' for learning. Achievement in each of LLC, MD and PSDWCD is measured in relation to one of six 'outcome' descriptors.

The Committee noted that the 'average' pupil is expected to achieve outcome 5 by the end of the foundation phase (formerly national curriculum level 2), with more able pupils achieving outcome 6 (formerly level 3). At the end of key stages 2 and 3, the 'average' pupil is expected to achieve level 4 and above and level 5 and above respectively and more able pupils are expected to achieve level 5 and 6 respectively.

In addition to performance at the expected level, it is important also to analyse performance at the Expected Level +1 at each stage.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the detailed report and discussion ensued. Having considerations for the report, Members discussed the trends and indicators at length and raised a query regarding the Gender Gap and how this could be reduced. Officers explained that Gender Gap is a common issue for all Local Authorities, work is underway to provide a variety of activities in order to find the right motivation for boys, in an aim to reduce the gap.

The Committee discussed performance of schools and it was noted that there are a number of examples in which Primary Schools have seen massive improvements following Estyn Reports, within a short time scale, however secondary Schools seem to take more time, which is due to the size, culture and complexity of issues. The Estyn Inspection Report of Bedwas High School, which was placed in special measures was discussed and Members expressed their disappointment, however the Estyn report has been accepted and significant work is underway with the school and Governing Body in order to make the necessary improvements to bring the school out of special measures.

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. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMBINED SENSORY AND COMMUNICATION SERVICE (SENCOM)

The report provided Members with an update regarding the proposals to transfer the Gwent Visual Impairment Service, currently hosted and managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) on behalf of the five Local Authorities (LAs) in the South East Wales Consortium to Torfaen County Borough Council. Torfaen currently hosts and manages the Hearing Impairment (HI) Service and the Communication Intervention Teams (ComIT) on behalf of the region. The report sought the views of Members prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

The report detailed all consultation outcomes undertaken between November 2016 and June 2017 in relation to the proposal. It was noted that feedback overall was positive with service staff identifying benefits such as greater flexibility, more efficient use of resources and combined budgets, however, some of the threats identified included the potential loss of IT systems, harmonising job descriptions and terms and conditions. On consultation with third sector colleagues, feedback was positive and it was felt that timescales were sufficient to ensure a smooth transition and continuation of service, providing minimal disruption to Service Users.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report at length and raised queries in relation to the impact on Service Users and how concerns raised by staff would be addressed. Officers explained that there are currently 3 teams providing services across the boroughs, often services could be duplicated, as individual need isn't necessarily limited to one service. As a result, the combined service would reduce the duplication of service delivery and provide a more streamlined service to the users, whilst also reducing resource requirement and working more effectively. In reference to staff concerns, Officers explained that consultations have been conducted and work is underway to consider the variety of systems currently in place across the service areas, consideration would be given to streamlining this to the most effective of the systems and data transfers undertaken. In addition, Terms and Conditions of contracts need to be considered as these differ across Authorities.

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 Scrutiny Committee noted the report; and
- (ii) the transfer of the VI service to Torfaen CBC be supported and recommended to Cabinet for agreement.

12. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS BAND B PROPOSALS

The report aimed to consult Members on priorities contained within the Council's draft 21st Century Schools Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) that required submission to Welsh Government (WG) by 31/07/17 and sought approval to establish a Cross Party Working Group, whose remit would be to review and discuss the proposals in detail.

The Committee noted that due to tight timescales stipulated by WG it was not possible to obtain Member approval prior to the submission of the SOP. However, the proposals were approved by the School Strategy Board and discussed in detail with the Cabinet Member. It has been made clear to WG that submission has yet to receive Member approval, and may be subject to change.

The Band B 21st Century Schools Programme is due to begin in April 2019 and last until March 2024. This comprises of £1.1 billion of both capital and revenue funding.

The aims of the investment programme, outlined by WG, are to:

- Reduce the number of poor condition schools and colleges
- Reduce surplus capacity and ensure we have the right size schools and colleges in the right location that:
 - provide enough places to deliver Welsh and English Medium Education;
 - Ensure the effective and efficient use of the Educational estate – encouraging the wider use of school buildings for Community facilities and usage.

In addition the Council's proposals have identified schools using additional local priorities as outlined in detail within the report.

The draft Strategic Outline Programme submitted to WG contained a bid for projects in the sum of £78 million of capital funding and up to £32 million of revenue (MIM) funding.

In addition, the report proposed that a Cross Party Working Group be established to brief Members on the Council's priorities, that have been identified in the Strategic Outline Programme submitted to WG and consult Members on the individual schools identified during this process. The findings of the Cross Party Working Group would be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee meeting in January. In addition, the views of Members would be included in the report, prior to its presentation to Cabinet and Council.

The Committee thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued. Members discussed the programme and sought information on the process and whether schools were aware of the programmes. Officers explained that there are a number of schools, which have been earmarked for the programme, each case would be required to complete a business case, which would be considered by the Welsh Government, if approved, a consultation process would take place. At the moment, schools have not been informed, however, subject to approval, consultations will take place.

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 content of the report be noted and it be agreed to establish a Cross Party Working Group to discuss the proposals in more detail at individual school level;
- (ii) The findings of the Cross Party Working Group be reported back to the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee in January, prior to the proposals being presented to Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 7.53pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2017 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR