



## EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH  
ON TUESDAY, 9TH JANUARY 2018 AT 5.30PM.

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PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

C. Andrews, J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, A. Collis, S. Cook, A. Farina-Childs, D.T. Hardacre,  
B. Miles, Mrs T. Parry, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, R. Whiting.

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Interim Head of Service – Education, Planning and Strategy), A. Davies (Service Manager – EOTAS), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), C. Jones (Youth Forum Co-ordinator), P. O'Neill (Senior Youth Service Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), C. Jones (Legal Executive), 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 P.J. Ireland (NUT), Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

Youth Forum Representatives: Emily Jones (Chair), Dylan Thomas (Vice-Chair), Ewan Kinsman (Learning Representative), Councillor M. Evans (Youth Champion).

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Havard, M.P. James.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 3. MINUTES – 7TH NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED that subject to it being recorded that Mr M. Western was in attendance at the meeting on the 26th September 2017, the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 7th November 2017 (minute nos 1 – 11) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. MINUTES – 7TH DECEMBER 2017**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 7th December 2017 (minute nos 1 – 4) 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) delivered a verbal statement providing the Scrutiny Committee with an update in relation to Library Services, Rhymney 3 – 18 School (Idris Davies School 3 – 18) and Adult Learning Academic Year 2016/17.

It was explained that Libraries within Caerphilly are supporting all ages to refine their design, logic and problem solving abilities as part of the 3 strand coding programme. The sessions available cover a range of skills e.g. creating websites to boosting employability skills. Details are available at local libraries and on the Twitter feed @ CaerphillyLibs. The Cabinet Member congratulated Julie Thomas from Deri Library who received the runner up place for the prestigious UK Public Library Champion of 2017. This recognition was for making a real difference to library users, especially with her unique links with the Community and School.

Members were informed that the £8 million development Rhymney 3 – 18 School (Idris Davies School 3 – 18) was designed by the Councils' Property Services Team. The project is jointly funded by Caerphilly County Borough Council and Welsh Government 21st Century Band A Programme. The school offers Flying Start provision, with the Primary phase accommodating 240 pupils plus nursery. The new primary building has achieved the "BREEAM" excellence standard for its certification of the assessment of the asset's environmental, social and economic sustainability performance.

In terms of Adult Learning Provision, and the whole of the Gwent Partnership, Caerphilly has achieved a successful completion rate of 91%. This is an excellent outcome and an indication of the tremendous work the Adult Learning Team has achieved this year. Members noted the outcome that was significantly above the 85% threshold set by Estyn. In 2018 Caerphilly will continue to work strongly with the partnership to deliver high quality adult education.

In concluding, Councillor Marsden advised that she had recently attended an in-depth meeting with Officers from the Education Department in terms of attendance levels within schools. She confirmed that there will be further meetings held in particular looking at historical strategies and environmental factors. They will also look at national comparators and will look for a more robust method of data collection. Emphasis was placed on intervention planning and it was explained that the team will be looking in greater detail i.e. books used and classes within schools and regular meetings will be held with performance management. The team will be going into schools looking at criteria on a regular basis.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her informative report.

Clarification was sought in terms of the Adult Learning Provision and if statistics were available for 'drop out' numbers and if there is a follow up for those succeeding beyond the provision. Officers confirmed this information would be distributed following the meeting.

## **7. 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.

## **8. 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 January to July 2018.

The Scrutiny Committee were referred to an email that was sent on the 5th December 2017, where Members had agreed to remove the EAS Business Plan from the January meeting and added to the meeting scheduled for the 26th February 2018.

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 the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the work programme appended to the report be approved.

## **9. 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.

## **10. JUNIOR AND YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES**

The Youth Forum Co-ordinator introduced the report and the representatives from the Youth Forum delivered their presentation that informed Members of issues raised by Children and Young People via the Youth Service's Junior and Youth Fora. The report sought the views of Members prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

An overview was provide of the Youth Forum Conference in October 2017 and the Junior Forum meeting in November 2017, where Children and Young People have identified issues important to them and have voted on Priority Issues for 2018. The previous agreed process that follows the identification of issues was set out in the report.

The structure of the Junior and Youth Fora was discussed and it was explained that they are 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, details of which are set out in paragraph 4.1.2. and 4.1.3. in the report. The Youth Forum Overall Priority Issue is Bullying and to increase peoples' understanding of what is classed as bullying and to help people understand how to deal with bullying. The Junior Forum Overall Priority Issue is Homelessness where it is considered more support is needed for homeless people.

The Youth Forum representatives delivered their presentation in terms of reaching their priority issues and what they achieved in 2017.

The Senior Youth Service Manager extended his appreciation for the continued hard work undertaken especially in 2017, by the Youth Service in achieving their priority issues and this was supported by the Youth Champion and other Members of the Scrutiny Committee.

In terms of the priority issue of Bullying, a Member asked if all schools adopt the same policy. The Youth Forum considers that schools need continuity in this area and that policy's need to be displayed in schools. Officers confirmed the Council has a model policy in place, although this may not be implemented consistently as this may depend on the profile within individual schools. An excellent campaign has been undertaken where the Local Authority has looked at the different types of bullying and introduced this policy as a result.

The Chair thanked the Youth Forum for attending the Scrutiny Committee, delivering their informative presentation and for responding to questions raised.

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

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 – Bullying, be supported;
- (iii) the proposal of the Junior Forum in addressing their Priority Issue – Homelessness, be supported.

## **11. CAERPHILLY BEHAVIOUR MODEL AND PROVISION**

The Service Manager for Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) presented the report that updated Members of the work that has been undertaken thus far to review the current provision and model across Caerphilly and the emerging outcomes. The report describes the actions taken to ensure Caerphilly has proposals informed by a range of stakeholders to provide a fit for purpose behaviour model and continuum of provision for Caerphilly learners.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the Local Authority is committed to meeting the needs of all learners within an inclusive whole-school approach, including those learners who at some point may require a greater support than the majority of their peers. All learners should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential. To ensure all learners have access to an appropriate education the Local Authority has engaged with a range of stakeholder to review the current behaviour provision. These include primary and secondary Head Teachers, staff based in current behaviour provisions and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) staff.

It was explained that stakeholder group meetings have been held in relation to the behaviour model proposed that also considered the continuum of behaviour needs across Caerphilly, including those learners attending EOTAS provisions. It has been recognised that a graduated response across a range of cost effective in house provisions is a more sustainable and

preferred option. The main outcomes of the stakeholder group's meetings have identified several key recommendations that are set out in paragraph 4.9. in the report.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager for her informative update.

A Member referred to Professor Donaldson's report and asked if this had been considered in relation to the policy. It was explained that Officers do not know how this report will impact. The report has generated a lot of media interest but the theory behind this is positive, looking at life skills and pathways with no associated labelling. Emphasis was placed on 'getting the balance right' and this should be used to support behaviour. In terms of low level disruption, there are some links between behaviour and standards of teaching. This is a complex area where schools and the Local Authority are under pressure. The absolute right decision must be made when considering moving a child from a school due to behavioural issues. It is a radical decision and could be considered irresponsible. Each case is unique and must be considered on its own merits. Officers confirmed they will continue to work closely with schools in relation to this issue.

Clarification was sought in relation achieving best value for money and whether the Local Authority could deliver a provision internally as the current EOTAS provision during Primary and Secondary Schools can have high cost implications. It was explained that this process is not a cost cutting exercise and in the short term this may prove more expensive. It is hoped that in the long term and with the impact of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) Act 2015, this provision will be more effective.

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.

## **12. IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

The Strategic Lead for School Improvement presented the report that informed Members of the progress being made in improving attendance in schools within the Caerphilly Borough. During the academic year 2016/17 there was a disappointing decrease of 0.1% in secondary school attendance in comparison with 2015/16 and the primary school attendance data has stayed the same as the previous year. 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, referred to in the report.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the Local Authority works with schools and other partners including South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) to ensure that a robust approach towards improving attendance is taken. Improving attendance remains a priority for Caerphilly and this continues to be a focus in all key plans. Attendance is monitored on a monthly basis and targeted interventions are agreed between the LA and the Education Achievement Service (EAS). The impact of this accelerated approach has been effective in reducing absenteeism in the schools targeted.

A summary of comparative data in relation to attendance in primary and secondary schools was set out in the report. The 2016/17 statistical release provides a national overview of codes schools used to report pupil absences. Members noted the individual school data on persistent absentees in secondary schools.

In terms of the Education Welfare Team, Officers confirmed the structure of the team and how those Officers play an essential role within schools as part of their statutory duty. It was also explained these teams no longer exist in many Local Authorities.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update.

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.

**13. REVISED GUIDANCE FOR THE INSPECTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES**

The Strategic Lead for School Improvement presented the report that informed Members of the changes to the inspection of Local Government Services from September 2017. The report identifies how the inspectorate will conduct pilot inspections of Local Government Education Services (LGES) from September 2017. The Scrutiny Committee were advised that this information will be reviewed by Welsh Government following the pilot inspections and will be used from September 2018. The draft document Guidance for the inspection of local government education from September 2017 (Estyn, 2017) was used as the basis for the report.

This information sets out the inspection arrangements for local government education services and offers guidance to inspectors on making inspection judgements. The document also identifies how Estyn will follow up with local authorities causing significant concern.

A Member queried how this guidance compares with previous policies. It was explained that Welsh Government provided the guidance, which has now been updated. The Officer referred to a neighbouring Authority that has recently been through the inspection process and he confirmed that many comments received were from vulnerable groups. A questionnaire is available for residents of Caerphilly and not just for parents to complete. The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the evidence that has been gathered will be presented to ESTYN and the Strategic Lead for School Improvement confirmed he will report back to this Committee later in the year with an update.

In terms of working with Estyn outside of Inspections, Officers confirmed that meetings are held, however the Authority does not receive feedback and there is no formal record kept of the meetings.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the update.

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 8.05pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2018 they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIR