



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY 2018 AT 5.30PM.**

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, D. Havard, Mrs T. Parry, and R. Whiting

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), T. Rawson (Solicitor), S. Richards (Interim Head of Service – Education, Planning and Strategy), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Pryce (Educational Achievement Service), K. Bevan (Educational Achievement Service), J. Wood (Educational Achievement Service), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor Representative) and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.P. James, B. Miles, J.E. Roberts and R. Saralis and from Councillor P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement) Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor Representative) and Mrs P.J. Ireland (NUT).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 9TH JANUARY 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 9th January 2018 (minute nos 1-13) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. 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.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

It was noted that an apology for absence had been received from Councillor P. Marsden, Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement as such the report previously circulated was noted without comment.

6. 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.

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 February 2018 to July 2018.

Members were asked to consider the following changes to the forward work programme, Education Strategy to be moved from 24th April 2018 to the 3rd July 2018 and a report on Additional Support Delegation would be added to this date. Exclusion data to be incorporated into the report to Review of Provision for Most Vulnerable Learners rather than received as a separate report and added to the 22nd May meeting – reports on Schools Causing Concern and Value for Money EAS also be added to the 22nd May 2018, it was noted that the Service Improvement Plan also scheduled for this date would now presented as Directorate Priorities and the Childcare Offer for Wales would be presented as an information item. In relation to the meeting on the 3rd July 2018 it was suggested that members consider taking the Additional Learning Needs report as an information item which would make the four items for that agenda the Education Strategy, Self Evaluation, Library Services Review and Wellbeing Objectives 2017-18 Review.

During the debate it was moved and seconded that the request from Councillor A. Collis for a report on Safeguarding in Education in light of recent increases in child cruelty and abuse figures be included in the forward work programme and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed. It was suggested that this could be incorporated into the Wellbeing Objectives 2017-2018 Review planned for the 3rd July 2018

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report and the proposed changes and aforementioned additions to the forward work programme be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the aforementioned amendments and additions the work programme be approved and published.

8. 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.

9. KEY STAGE 4 / KEY STAGE 5 PERFORMANCE 2017

The Chair welcomed Mrs L. Perry, Headteacher at Newbridge School and Cwmcarn High School. Mrs Perry gave a presentation which detailed the achievements and challenges faced by the schools.

The challenges faced by Cwmcarn High School during 2016 and 2017 were referenced and the measures taken to safeguard the wellbeing of the pupils were noted. Mrs Perry expressed her pride in the efforts of staff and the commitment of pupils in terms of improving attendance and the results achieved at Level 1 (97%), Level 2 (66%) and Level 2+ (58%). Members were advised that leadership had been very much the focus during this period, with clarity on roles and responsibilities being a driving force for success. The important role that Governors played in the development plan was also emphasised.

The various programmes initiated in order to provide quality of care and support learning throughout this period of uncertainty were detailed and noted as a model of good practice.

In terms of Newbridge School, Mrs Perry detailed the school's improvement journey and the results achieved. Key Stage 4 results were confirmed for Level 1 (98%), Level 2 (93%), Level 2limit (68%) and Level 2+ (58%). The Level 2limited grading was explained and noted that going forward only 40% of vocational subjects would be incorporated into the data set. Achievement at Key Stage 5 – L5+ core subjects were noted and non- core subject achievement (Physical Education, Design and Technology etc) were also detailed. Members were advised that attendance at Newbridge School had increased incrementally over the last 7 years, achieving 94.7% in 2016/17.

In conclusion Mrs Perry outlined the future challenges facing Newbridge School and the actions being taken to ensure that these high standards for young people are sustainable over time.

The Chair thanked Mrs Perry for her presentation and Members questions were welcomed.

Members commended Mrs Perry for her commitment under very difficult circumstances and her remarkable efforts to ensure there was no impact on the children at Cwmcarn High School or Newbridge School, which must have been difficult to balance.

Mr E. Pryce, Education Achievement Service introduced the report which advised Members of pupil performance and Key Stage 4 (age 14-16) and Key Stage 5 (age 16-18).

Members were referred to the table at section 4.1 of the report which detailed the key performance measures used to evaluate and compare the full range of achievement. In terms of the Capped Points 9 data set, it was noted that this included only the best 9 results for each pupil for selected qualifications. Cohort sizes were confirmed as 1,966 (all pupils) and 201 (Welsh medium).

Caerphilly's position in terms of ranking least to most deprived areas was noted as was the Free School Meals (FSM) indicator. Mr Pryce advised that the L2 inclusive threshold performance of FSM pupils had declined by 5.6pp to 24.5% in 2017 but the national average had also declined within this period however the Caerphilly FSM gap is narrower than that across Wales. Gender gap difference was confirmed at 43.8% boys and 50.7% girls at the Level 2 threshold. LA rankings were detailed in the table at section 4.13 of the report and a

number of positives were noted in terms of green schools. Although it was accepted that there were challenges ahead to ensure that improvements were sustainable particularly in terms of red and amber schools.

Reference was made to the FSM Benchmark Summary which compared the performance of similar schools and Members were advised that the number of Caerphilly schools above the median had increased for all indicators and subjects except Welsh as a first language and science. Caerphilly also exceeded the LA benchmarks for performance at the Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Mathematics. For the LA Key Stage 5 performance data there had been a small drop on last years figures (96.6%) however the cohort had also reduced.

The Chaired thanked Mr Pryce for his report and Members questions were welcomed.

Members acknowledged the data collected in relation to FSM and Gender gap but queried if any data was collected in terms of special needs, ethnic or refugee pupils and how progress was tracked for these groups. Mr Pryce confirmed that these groups were monitored by both an authority and regional data set, although SEN was more difficult to track at KS4 as there were fewer pupils within that definition at this stage. Reference was made to the STRIVE database which allowed more comprehensive data collection. Members noted the work being done with Young Carers and Looked After Children in order to identify any delays in their education and find the right tuition to meet their specific needs.

Attainment in levels in Maths, English and Science were queried together with the nature of the strategies employed to improve these areas. The role of the Challenge Advisors and the Specialist Learning Support Network and how they worked to improve outcomes for schools and pupils was detailed. The collaborative approaches and inter-school co-operation via small teams sharing good practice with each other in order to drive improvement was explained. Members welcomed the initiative and acknowledged that its success would be very much reliant on the full engagement of the school and its leadership.

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

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

10. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2018-2021

Ms J. Wood, EAS introduced the report which sought the committee's views on the draft EAS Business Plan 2018-2021 and the Local Authority Annex 2018-2019 prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

The Business Plans priorities and progress made against them were summarised as were the outcomes from the Regional Estyn Inspection and the progress made towards their recommendations.

Members were referred to section 4.18 of the report which detailed the EAS regional ambitions and 4.22 of the report which detailed the regional key stage targets for 2017-2020 together with the Local Authority attendance targets. Ms Wood confirmed that the target for Caerphilly schools could be found in Appendix B of the report in the LA Annex 2018-2019 documents. These documents provided an overview of the performance and the main areas for development at a local authority level.

Risks to the delivery of the Business Plan were listed in section 4.26 of report and it was noted that uncertain financial projections made it difficult to fully cost the Business Plan at this stage. It was emphasised that the work of the EAS in improving outcomes for vulnerable

learners would remain slow unless there is a greater engagement with all key partners across local authorities to ensure effective joint targeting of resources. In terms of the financial implications the EAS over the past three financial years had been able to contribute to the efficiency savings of the Council by reducing the core funding commitment by 3%. The Company Board have agreed that it can offer a 2% efficiency saving on last year's core funding contribution for 2018/19 and an indicative 2% efficiency for the next 2 financial years.

The Chair thanked Ms Wood for the report and Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought with regard to 'more able pupils' as referenced within the plan and what was being done to support them. Ms K. Bevan (EAS), confirmed that there was a 'More Able' Strategy which would offer gifted pupils support in a wider range of subjects not just core subjects in order to compliment and nurture talents in whatever field, for example music and sport. Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer confirmed that there was a piece of work underway to ensure that talented pupils have access to those types of opportunities.

With regard to consultation on the plan, Members queried the involvement of young people and were advised that the Regional Youth Forum had been part of the consultation process.

Concerns were expressed that schools categorised as yellow and green, received a reduced amount of support and as a result were at risk of then slipping down the categorisation as seen at once school following a recent Estyn inspection. Ms Bevan acknowledged this as a risk and updated Members on possible interventions from a lessons learned perspective.

Given that the EAS had no natural service competitors; Members queried how they could be assured that they were receiving value for money. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that a report on Value for Money would be coming forward to scrutiny in due course. Ms Bevan confirmed that the EAS are inspected by Estyn who had found that they were providing a good service so Members can be assured that they were receiving value for money.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained within the Officer's report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that: -

- (i) the priorities contained within the Business Plan and the Annex and the impact of the plan for communities within its local authority area, be noted;
- (ii) the EAS Business Plan be endorsed prior to its submission to Welsh Government.

11. EDUCATIONAL CAPITAL 2018/19

Mrs Sue Richards, Interim Head of Service Education Planning and Strategy, introduced the report which identified proposals for the allocation of Education Capital Budget for the 2018/19 financial year in the context of the 3 year Capital Programme 2018/19 – 2020/21 prior to its consideration by Cabinet on the 14th March 2018.

Members were referred to section 4.3 and 4.4 of the report which outlined the current position of the budget allocated for electrical rewiring works in schools which was currently projecting an underspend of circa £500k. It was noted that Council's Health and Safety team are currently in the process of updating Fire Risk Assessments in School and as a result of the Grenfell disaster there has been a greater focus on the type of build and the requirement to ensure adequate compartmentalisation in buildings. Officer envisaged that this refocusing could have potential cost implications although at this stage the full impact on schools can not be gauged. Therefore it was recommended that Members consider reserving the projected

underspend for this purpose.

The additional accommodation allocation was outlined and due to the increasing demand for in-catchment places at Ystrad Mynach Primary School it is proposed that the £223k capital allocation for 2018/19 and 2019/20 be used to create a two storey classroom extension on the existing school site. It was noted that this proposal was fully supported by the School Governors.

Schemes proposed under the asset management, health and safety and school security allocations were noted and in regard to the schools boiler replacement allocation, Members noted a reduction from £218k to £153k due to urgent works undertaken in 2017/18 to replace boilers in 3 primary schools. The 3 priority schemes for 2018/19 and the 50/50 proposals were explained and the schemes to be supported outlined.

The Officer confirmed that the proposals presented would result in uncommitted sums of £29k against the Schools Security budget, £29k against the Health and Safety budget and £34k for the 50/50 projects and this would allow for any small project variations or urgent in year bids.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members questions were welcomed.

Members noted the various projects within the Capital Programme 2018/19 and the position of the underspend in the Schools Electrical Scheme budget. Members fully supported the proposal to reserve this underspend for possible structural fire safety works and welcomed the prioritisation of Health and Safety projects and the refocusing and updating of fire risk assessments in schools.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained within the Officer's report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that: -

- 1) Cabinet approve the proposals to utilise the Education Capital Budget for 2018/19;
- 2) Cabinet approve reserving the underspend on the School Electrical Scheme Project (Circa £500k) for the projected costs of structural fire safety works that may be required as a result of the updated Fire Risk Assessments currently being undertaken in schools, as outlined in section 4.5 of the report.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2018 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR