



## **EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH  
ON TUESDAY, 22ND MAY 2018 AT 5.30PM.**

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PRESENT:

Councillor D. Havard - Chair  
Councillor C. Andrews - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Service – Education, Planning and Strategy) T. Rawson (Solicitor) and E. Sullivan (Senior 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) and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative)

Ms. N. Dargie (Head Teacher St James Primary School), E. Pryce (EAS), G. Wellington (EAS) and Ms J. Wood (EAS)

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.P James, Mrs G. Oliver and Mrs T. Parry.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **3. MINUTES – SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 19TH APRIL 2018**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 19th April 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4. MINUTES – EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24TH APRIL 2018**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 24th April 2018 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) presented her spring 2018 Cabinet Member Statement and drew Members attention to the data relating to pupil exclusions and its upward trend over the last few years as a way of highlighting the role CCBC need to play in challenging schools via governing bodies and other mechanisms. The Cabinet Member also referenced the progress made in relation to bids for the Welsh Medium Capital Grant.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her report.

**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 Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from May 2018 to July 2018.

Members were asked to consider the work programme and make any amendments or propose any additional items to be included for future meetings.

Clarification was sought in relation to the 21st Century Schools Band B proposals and the scheduling of the next report following the close of the consultation process. The Officer confirmed that this would one of the proposal for discussion at the committee's forward work programme workshop in July. The Officer also requested that Members consider any additions that they would like to make and bring them to the workshop for consideration.

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**

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.

### **10. PRESENTATION FROM ST. JAMES PRIMARY SCHOOL – SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN**

With the agreement of the Chair and approval of the Committee it was agreed that this item be brought forward on the agenda.

Ms Nikki Dargie, Head Teacher, St James Primary School gave a presentation outlining the interventions and process she championed since her appointment in order to secure progress and sustainable improvement at the school.

Ms Dargie detailed the priorities areas for improvements which included raising standards in reading and writing at Key Stage 2, improving attendance and punctuality, developing curriculum planning, refining self-evaluation and improving planning process and developing the Governor's role in providing challenge to the school. She outlined the systems that were put in place and detailed the improvement achieved and the interventions used. The importance of accurate target setting was emphasised as was the help provided by the allocation of the EAS Challenge Advisor. It was noted that monthly intervention planning meetings, additional intervention from Behaviour Support and the placement of EWO had also contributed to the schools successes.

In terms of parent involvement Members were advised that the school championed the 'Best I can be for me' programme and awarded Argos Vouchers to parents as a reward for the families of children that a 98% attendance rate or above by way of a prize draw. Support from the Chair of Governors was recognised and their role in driving change was noted. Ms Dargie placed on record her thanks to staff who had put in an immense amount of work and felt that the setting of clear measureable milestones and response times in terms of the action required had been invaluable. Clear communication and openness and transparency with all stakeholders being the key to success.

In concluding her presentation it was noted that St James Primary School moved out of ESTYN Review last Thursday and all those present congratulated Ms Dargie on this achievement.

The Chair thanked Ms Dargie for her presentation and Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought with regard to the EAS Challenge Advisors and their relationship with the School. Ms Dargie confirmed that the school had 3 different challenge advisors but this had not affected the progress made and advised that she had received more than adequate support from the EAS.

Further clarification was sought with regard to the tracking system used and it was noted the original system had not been fit for purpose but since moving to the SIMS model consistent data had been generated and this methodology was being shared as a model of good practice.

The Education for Life Scrutiny Committee thanked Ms Dargie for her attendance and wished her and St James Primary School every future success.

### **11. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) VALUE FOR MONEY 2017/2018**

Mr Geraint Wellington, Company Secretary for the EAS introduced the report which presented the externally commissioned EAS regional value for money position for 2017/2018.

Members were advised that the report did not break down the information to specific Caerphilly County Borough detail but rather focused entirely on the regional service set against a number of measureable outcomes.

It was noted that value for money had been measured by considering three specific areas: Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness and in the case of the EAS two further dimensions had been incorporated into the analysis namely Equity and Sustainability. Members were referred to section 4.3.1 of the report which detailed the conclusions of the external consultant. He had found that the EAS is providing good value for money because overall outcomes are improving from a reduced level of spending as a result of resources being used efficiently, fairly and in a sustainable way, with consequent benefits for schools and pupils across the region. Section 4.3.2 of the report detailed how this conclusion had been formulated and Members were then referred to Appendix 1 of the report which contained the evidence that underpinned that statement.

The financial position of the EAS was detailed and the reduction in core funding and grant funding was noted. As a result the total amount of resource available to spend in 2017-18 was 7% less than in 2016-17 and it was anticipated that 2018-19 would be 12% less than in 2016-17. Reference was made to the increases in the rate of delegation to schools and the impact that this had on residual income. Mr Wellington referred pages 37 and 38 of the report and the tables contained therein which illustrated improved school categorisation at primary and secondary school levels together with ESTYN inspection outcomes. The impact of poverty on performance was outlined and it was noted that the gap between FSM and Non-FSM pupils had narrowed at all levels although KS4 had remained fairly static.

With regard to spending for the long term, Mr Wellington confirmed that projections here had been hampered by the capacity and timeliness of Welsh Government grant funding which had not been received until late into the financial year.

In conclusion Members were advised improvements in attainment were not solely the responsibility of the EAS, School Leaders and Governing Bodies also had a vital role to play and must be fully engaged in order for the programme of improvement to move at pace. Value for money is an on-going process which is centred on a robust financial strategy and the EAS were working well with other consortia in this regard.

The Chair thanked Mr Wellington for his report and Members questions were welcomed.

Members expressed concern that progress at a secondary level was still too slow and too variable. Mr E. Pryce confirmed that the EAS recognised the variability at this key stage and the work to be done in order to ensure the resilience of schools at GCSE level. Further concerns were expressed in relation to the dip in performance from Primary to Secondary given the excellent performance at foundation phase and KS2.

The multiple factors affecting improvement were explained and were noted to be difficult to predict but Members were still of the opinion that improvement was not at a fast enough pace and where achieved did not seem to be sustainable.

Clarification was sought in relation to reduced staffing levels and what impact this was having of the services being provided primarily in terms of challenge advisors. Members expressed their frustration that no Caerphilly specific data had been included within the report.

In terms of staff levels the nature of full-time equivalency posts was explained and Members were advised that as the EAS was a regional organisation its value for money position had been evaluated on a regional basis and was therefore presented as a region portrait for Members consideration.

Members queried if any schools had decided not to take up EAS support and what support they could expect if not via EAS. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that where this has

happened meetings would be held with the school in order to find out the detail of the decision and the Governing Body would be advised.

Members expressed concern that they could not make a specific judgement with regard to value for money as the EAS had no market competitor from which a comparison could be drawn and again expressed concern at the lack of Caerphilly specific data.

It was explained that a service breakdown would be a hard task to complete as the EAS operated on a regional footprint and therefore analysed its outcomes regionally. Mr Wellington referenced the lack of response from Members with regard to the Business Plan and reminded the committee that they were working in partnership with the local authority.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved subject to the inclusion of Members concerns regarding the lack of progress at secondary level.

An amendment was then moved and seconded that without Caerphilly specific data, Members were unable to determine that value for money had been achieved and that this data should be included within future reports. By a show of hands and in noting there was 1 abstention this was agreed by the majority present and the amendment was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee could not determine if VFM had been achieved without Caerphilly specific data and requested that this be included in any future VFM reports.

## **12. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN PROTOCOL AND RISK REGISTER**

Mr Ed Pryce presented the report which advised Members of the agreed SEWC Schools Causing Concerns Protocol and the supporting Risk Register Process.

The SEWC Schools Causing Concern Protocol is based on guidance and reflects the National Model for School Improvement. It provides a consistent approach to ensure that appropriate support and challenge has been provided to secure the necessary pace of improvement. The methodology for establishing and maintain a risk register was outlined and the formal process for the protocol was explained. It was noted that should a school be placed on the register the Headteacher and Governing Body are notified in writing, this letter notes the reasons for inclusion and the support and intervention plan that will be initiated in order to drive performance forward. The local authority in partnership with the EAS will then work together to set a timetable for the review and evaluation and the subsequent school activity required in full consultation with the school.

The register is then reviewed on a termly basis by Senior Officers and progress would also be discussed at meetings with the Cabinet Member for Education and Education Improvement Board. Mr Pryce emphasised that progress made by schools cannot be attributed solely to the work of the EAS other partners play an important role, in particular the school leaders and governing bodies who are a key factor in securing school improvement.

Members were referred to the table in section 4.10 of the report which detailed the risk register as presented to the last meeting of LA Senior Officers and EAS. It was noted that the new Idris Davies School had been placed in the Amber category simply to ensure they was adequate support in place during the transition process. Members were then referred to the tables at Page 50 of the pack which illustrated the position of primary and secondary schools in relation to one key headline indicator on performance on one on attendance for each of the last 3 years.

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

Members referenced the inclusion of the Idris Davies School within the risk register and sought clarification as to whether a separate indicator could be used for new schools rather than placing them within an amber indicator. Ms Julie Wood, Principal Challenge Advisor-Caerphilly explained that this was a national categorisation system and was not a label of success or failure but rather an identifier of the level of support required and there was an individual story behind the data indicators. She confirmed that the EAS, LA and school would have agreed the level of support required in order to make progress.

Mr Price assured Members that this was just to ensure that the new school had adequate support to take it through the transition process, an after care package of sorts during the early stages of the development and integration of a new school. Challenge Advisors and Mentors would form part of the support package placed around new schools.

Members queried if it would be possible to secure some kind of feedback from new schools in terms of lessons learned from Cwm Rhymini, Islwyn High and Idris Davies.

The Chief Education Officer urged Members to retain a sense of proportionality around the indicators and emphasised that only 2 schools were in red categorisation but agreed that progress at secondary level was not moving at a fast enough pace. Within these indicators were good signs of how improvement can be achieved when all parties worked together.

Concerns were expressed in relation to Headteacher recruitment particularly when leadership played such an important part of improving and sustaining progress.

It was confirmed that Leader Development opportunities were being explored and a professional learning model was being looked at in order to develop and sustain future leadership potential. Reference was also made to a Nation Qualification for Headship and the importance of contingency planning was accepted.

Having fully considered the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the report and Members comments on the report be noted;
- (ii) Members noted the main strengths and areas for development within Caerphilly schools.

### **13. THE DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING PRIORITIES FOR 2018 TO 2023**

Mrs S. Richards, Head of Service, Education Planning and Strategy present the report which detailed the Directorate of Education priorities for 2018 to 2023.

It was noted that the directorate had identified 6 priorities which were outlined in section 4.3 of the report, these were noted to include: raising standards, delivering the 21st Century Schools programme, EOTAS, raising attendance, inclusion and additional learning needs and reducing the impact of poverty. Out of which 8 service priorities were proposed and Members were referred to section 4.5 of the report and the chart at Appendix B. The core priorities that will underpin the successful work of the Directorate were noted as safeguarding, medium term financial planning and workforce well-being and continuous professional development.

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

A Member reference the possibility of links between transport and attendance and whether a transport policy would assist in this area. Officers agreed to take this forward to Highways Engineering Manager with regard to public transport links. I was noted that ESTYN did not accept transport as an excuse for poor attendance levels. Members were assumed that in terms of improving attendance every avenue was explored by schools including working with families and children. For example working with children to remove the fear of arriving late and agreed there would always be something new to try.

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 Director of Education and Lifelong Learning Priorities for 2018 to 2023 be agreed.

The meeting closed at 7:40pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2018 they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIR