



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 5.30PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Havard - Chair

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, A. Collis, S. Cook, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, D.T. Hardacre, M.P. James, B. Miles, Mrs G.D. Oliver, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis and J. Simmonds

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), Jane Southcombe (Financial Services Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer) and K. Houghton (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governors) and Mrs P.J. Ireland (NEU)

E. Pryce (EAS), J. Wood (EAS) and N. Thain (Headteacher for Graig-Y-Racca Primary and Nursery Community School)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement), C. Andrews (Vice-Chair), Mrs T. Parry and R. Whiting. Also, Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor Representative), Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), Mrs J. Havard (NEU) and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 3RD JULY 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday 3rd July 2018 (minute no. 1-8) 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. Members were asked to provide any feedback directly to Councillor Marsden via email.

The Chair read out a short statement on her behalf and thanked the Cabinet Member for her report.

6. 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 September 2018 to April 2019.

Members were advised that since the publication of the report there had been a number of proposed changes to the Programme for their consideration. Officers have requested that Members consider moving the 21st Century Schools Programme report scheduled for 6th November 2018 to a date to be confirmed to allow additional information not available within that timeframe to be incorporated. The report entitled Pontllanfraith Primary SRB also scheduled for the 6th November committee will now also include Idris Davies School. Members were also asked to consider receiving the Flexibility Funding report for the 8th January 2019 as an information item and an additional report had been suggested for the 19th February 2019 meeting on Library Standards.

Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme and the proposed changes and make any amendments or propose any additional items to be included for future meetings.

The Chair thanked the Interim Head of Democratic Services for the presentation of the Forward Work Programme and Members comments were welcomed.

Members queried the progress of the report requested on plans for improving Key Stage 4 attainment. The Chief Education Officer advised Members that meetings were taking place with all of the Secondary Schools in the County Borough. These meetings will be completed before the October 2018 half-term at which point a view will be formed and reported to the 8th January 2019 Committee at the earliest in order to tie in with Key Stage 4 and 5 performance reporting. Members raised concerns with the timeframes for the reporting considering the need for a plan following this year's examination results and Estyn assessments for secondary schools in the area. The Chief Education Officer agreed that improvement in this area needed to be accelerated however as this required a strategic approach it was vital that all secondary schools be included in the preparative work so a balanced and informed view

could be formed across all the schools.

Members asked for an update on the reporting of the Additional Learning Needs Review outcomes. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that this was an ongoing review over several years and that three reports would be added to the Forward Work Programme in due course. Members were informed that there was further work to be done on the review, with three more visits to schools to be made and personnel implications to fully consider.

Members requested a brief overview of the status of the 21st Century Schools Programme Band B Proposals prior to its reporting at the 6th November 2018 Committee. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy informed the Committee that they were waiting to secure an agreement for funding streams to be confirmed before November 2018 and were also awaiting a progress update on the delivery of a review on provision of services in the County Borough. She expected the report to come before Scrutiny, prior to Cabinet, during the late spring term 2019.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report and the changes proposed by the Officer be approved. By a show of hands this was agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the aforementioned changes, the Forward Work Programme appended to the report be approved.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. PUPIL ATTAINMENT AT FOUNDATION PHASE, KET STAGE 2 AND KEY STAGE 3 – 2017

The Chair welcomed Mrs. N. Thain, Headteacher of Graig-y-Racca Primary and Nursery Community School to the meeting.

Mrs Thain gave a presentation detailing the school's performance at Foundation Phase and provided examples of best practice initiatives used at the school. In particular the Headteacher outlined the challenges facing a school in an area of severe economic and social deprivation and highlighted the school's use of a variety of approaches to reach performance objectives. These included the use of indoor/outdoor learning environments, enriching learning environments for literacy and numeracy, different techniques for developing independent confident and curious learners and parental and community engagement.

Members asked a number of questions relating to parental involvement, liaison with the Flying-Start programme in the area and attendance levels. The Headteacher confirmed that a lot of the school's work has been focussed on fostering positive and inclusive relationships with parents and the community. This had involved meet and greets with the Headteacher, parental involvement in thematic learning days, homework club for pupils and parents and exploring a multitude of approaches to provide support to parents. This focus in reaching out to the community has also involved engagement with the Flying Start programme, with staff from both the school and the Programme sharing good practice and Flying Start events taking place in the school. The Headteacher advised Members that attendance levels were a work in progress with a multi-agency approach being taken to support parents particularly in the area of routine and structure setting in the home.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for Graig-Y-Racca Primary and Nursery Community School and congratulated her on behalf of the Committee for the good work being carried out at the school.

The Chief Education Officer then introduced the report which informed members of pupils' attainment in teacher assessments at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in 2017. She advised the Members that reporting arrangements had changed as teacher assessments in local authorities would no longer be publically available in the form of league tables, this is to allow schools more freedom to adapt to the new Welsh curriculum, the assessment of which has not yet been determined. The data will still be available internally for local authorities to use however Benchmarks 1, 2, 3 and 4 will not be set as there will be no comparable data with other local authorities. Members were reminded that there would be a workshop detailing these changes on Thursday 27th September 2018 and were asked to make every effort to attend.

Members raised concerns that there appeared to be a reduction of comparative data available to inform the Committee's scrutiny of school performance and that comparisons could now only be drawn with national averages and not with similar local authorities. The representatives from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) agreed with the concerns raised however the changes represented a shift away from hard quantitative data and a move to softer qualitative data focusing on leadership, quality of teaching, well-being and differing learning needs. It was highlighted by the EAS representatives that the categorisation of schools would be indicative of their improvement path.

Members queried the performance gap between girls and boys and requested further information on how this was being addressed. The representatives from the EAS advised that work was being undertaken with schools to provide them with the strategies and tools to identify issues and ways to gather better data on the gap and its reasons. Members were informed that some schools had successfully addressed the gender gap issue and were sharing good practices across the Schools Network. Members were also advised that new professional standards for teaching and leadership were focussing on authentic learning experiences which in turn are geared toward addressing the gender gap and enhance the performance of boys at primary and secondary level. The Officers highlighted that comparatively the County Borough did not stand out as an area with a particularly large gender gap.

A Member asked for clarification on the STEM clusters and the monitoring of their work to ensure they are effective. The EAS representatives explained that there is a core EAS member in each cluster who engages with them and monitors grants and the suitability of their activity. In addition every Cluster is linked with a pioneer school where the Cluster representative can roll out good practices.

Members asked how the changes in performance reporting would affect the EAS and the services they provide to the region. The EAS representative informed the Members that there was still a role for them to play and the EAS would be producing a 3 year Forward Business Plan and a 1 year detailed Business Plan in due course. Members were advised that the EAS would also be introducing peer review into schools with even closer working between school and challenge advisors. In addition to this, the EAS will be working with Welsh Government and the Local Authority to predict and prepare for potential changes in the Education Service.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding performance data and accurate target setting, this led to discussion regarding cuts to budgets including cuts to behavioural support services and Members queried the impact of such cuts on managing challenging behaviour within school settings. The Chief Education Officer advised Members that alternative approaches and new methods of delivery were being developed, this included enhanced training for Teaching Assistants and developing routines and practices within the schools to deal with challenging behaviour.

In relation to EOTAS she informed the Committee that a report will be brought forward looking at all aspects of education other than at school including provisions for challenging behaviour where learning needs can't be met within the school setting. Members raised questions regarding the number of children within the County Borough who were educated outside of

the school setting, including at home or sent outside of the Borough to specialist settings. The Chief Education Officer confirmed there were currently approximately 300 registered and explained that children were educated outside of the school setting for a number of reasons, not just behavioural but also based on medical need including mental health issues, and it was worth keeping in mind that these were some of the Boroughs most vulnerable young people with complex and wide ranging issues. It was noted that provisions had also been put in place to support children where the parental choice is for them to be educated at home. Further to this the Officer reminded Members that the level and length of support provided would be tailored to meet the individual pupil need with the ideal goal being the reintroduction into the main stream school setting.

A further discussion was had regarding the terminology used in the reporting regarding Welsh language, Members felt it was difficult to distinguish between whether the data was referring to learning the Welsh language or language taught through the medium of Welsh. Members were advised this was national terminology but could be changed for greater clarity.

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

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

8. BUDGET MONITORING 2018/19

The Finance Services Manager introduced the report which outlined the projected 2018-19 outturn position for the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning based on the most recent information available. She highlighted to Members that there was a current projected overspend of £438,000 within the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate and an underspend of £1.475 million in the Corporate Services Directorate overall. She advised Members of relevant points to note as detailed in the Officer's report, asking Members to take particular regard of the timing of the report, being the first quarter of the financial year and therefore there would be a level of uncertainty in the figures.

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

Members discussed at length the cost of additional support provision for children unable to be educated within mainstream school, including home education and out of area placements. Concerns were raised regarding the level of funding required and Members queried whether these services could be provided in-house. The Chief Education Officer confirmed that costs in this area had increased but assured Members that those cases where alternative provision is used were extreme and complex and in the best interest of the individual. Members were advised that work is being undertaken to develop in house provision by offering professional development opportunities for teachers to train as experts in challenging behaviour. Members were advised of plans to develop a centre of excellence for educating children with challenging behaviour, it was envisioned that this would run alongside an outreach programme to enable schools to share best practice. A further question was raised by a Member regarding the current costs associated with sending children out of the County Borough in order to meet specific learning needs. The Chief Education Officer informed the Member that there were many reasons why a child cannot be educated within a school setting or within the County Borough. Although there is a lot of work being undertaken to improve the availability and quality of additional education support provision 'in-house', there will always be a proportion of children who will have to go out of area for their specific learning needs to be met at a cost to the Council. She assured Members that there will be additional reporting to the Committee on this subject in due course.

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

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and its accompanying Appendix be noted.

The meeting closed at 19:30pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 6th November 2018 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR