



SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY 7TH MARCH 2019 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 T. Parry, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds and R. Whiting.

P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) and 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 J. Havard (NUT) and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

J. Fabes (Review Lead – for sixth-form provision, single sex education and surplus places in secondary schools).

E. Pryce and J. Wood (Education Achievement Service – EAS).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Andrews (Vice-Chair) and Mrs G.D. Oliver.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR REVIEW OF POST 16 / SINGLE SEX AND SURPLUS PLACES

The Chair gave permission for this item to be brought forward on the agenda.

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services introduced the report and welcomed Mr J. Fabes, Review Lead for the review of post 16/single sex and surplus places. Mr Fabes summarised his career and experience gained to date and confirmed he is currently employed by Bridgend County Council. Caerphilly County Borough Council has engaged Mr Fabes' specialist service to deliver the review for Caerphilly and wishes to establish a Review Board to oversee developments.

The report sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft terms of reference for the review of post 16 provision, single sex education and surplus places across Caerphilly prior to its submission to Cabinet on the 13th March 2019.

Members were advised that the Council is seeking to deliver a sustainable strategy for post-16 education in Caerphilly that is underpinned by robust models and delivers the right education in the right place and with the best outcomes for learners. The continuation of single sex education at Lewis Girls School and Lewis School Pengam, as well as the challenge of reducing surplus places across Caerphilly's secondary school estate are separate but interlinked issues that also need to be addressed by this review.

The Scrutiny Committee were referred to appendix 1 that sets out the draft terms of reference for the Board and the Review. The Membership is a large and varied group that will consider the reporting arrangements and it was noted that they are not a decision making body. The function of decision making will remain with Cabinet and or Full Council.

Members discussed the report and the terms of reference. Clarification was sought as to the rationale for so many strands on the review board's membership and also why it proposes limited elected Member participation. Officers referred to previous experiences within other local authorities and advised that these are three sizeable reviews in their own right. The Board wants to ensure that everyone who has a stake will have an opportunity to take part in the process. Members were advised that they are able to amend or make further recommendations to Cabinet.

A Member sought clarification on the level of commitment required of Members of the board in terms of meetings etc. Mr Fabes referred to his experience at Bridgend and confirmed that during the initial stages the board met every 4 – 6 weeks. The frequency of meetings will depend on the preparation required between meetings and a structured schedule will be devised. He added, that this is a front loaded process and when the details are worked through the meetings are likely to reduce to once per term. In terms of the scope of the review, once established the board will prescribe the timescales. The board will be governed by Welsh Government legislation and guidance. Members noted that should Cabinet endorse the recommendations, the board will ensure the initial report is presented to Cabinet in an effective and timely manner.

Members emphasised the importance of the speed of the review being undertaken and that there should be no delay throughout the process. A Member proposed that the membership should be increased from two to four elected Members to sit on the board with two from the majority and two from the opposition group. Members nominated Councillors W. David and R. Saralis for the Labour Group and M. James and T. Parry for Plaid Cymru.

In terms of the outputs section within the terms of reference, the Scrutiny Committee felt that the last bullet point '*Evaluate the impact of post-16 plans for education*' should be removed.

The Chair thanked Mr Fabes for presenting the report and for responding to questions raised during the course of the debate.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to an amendment to paragraph 3.2 and the last bullet point on the outputs section of the terms of reference be removed, the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the foregoing:

- (i) the draft Terms of Reference for the Review of post 16 provision, single sex education and surplus places across Caerphilly be submitted to Cabinet;
- (ii) the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee nominated four of its members to sit on the Review Board, two from the majority group and two from the opposition group.

4. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN (2019-2021) AND LOCAL AUTHORITY ANNEX 2019-2020

Mr E. Pryce and Ms J. Wood from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) presented the report that sought Members' views on the EAS Business Plan 2019-2020 and the Local Authority Annex 2019-2020 prior to their presentation to Cabinet on the 13th March 2019.

The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan with accompanying annexes for each of the five Local Authorities (LAs). The Business Plan outlines the programme of work that is required to continue to accelerate outcomes and provision for children and young people in settings and schools in South East Wales. The plan focuses on the need to raise aspiration and accelerate improvement in pupil outcomes, improve the quality of teaching and leadership. It offers support for schools to realise the national reform agenda and to continue to build upon the self-improving system within and across schools and settings.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that this a one year plan that meets Welsh Government (WG) requirements. The priorities for the Business Plan have been derived from Local Authority Strategic Plans. The progress that has been made towards the previous Business Plan areas that have been identified as requiring improvements through internal self-evaluation processes, external research and feedback from Estyn. The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and trends within Caerphilly are met through bespoke work for individual school needs. It also takes account of what partners are saying. The Business Plan has been through a thorough consultation process (from January 18th 2019 until February 8th 2019). Members were referred to paragraph 5.6 in the report that listed the consultees and it was explained that the consultation responses have been reflected within the plan.

The Officer referred to paragraph 5.13 in the report that sets out the Caerphilly Strategic priorities for 2019/20. Each improvement strand within the plan now has a specific emphasis on the work of the EAS in promoting improved outcomes for vulnerable learners, in particular those in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM). Members noted the improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful.

Members noted that each LA Annex contains an overview of the performance and the main areas for development at a Local Authority level. It consists of a summary of the schools that

require the highest levels of support, inspection outcomes and an overview of categorisation for the LA. Pupil progress information is included for the first time. Members were assured that the EAS will work closely with all key partners to ensure the realisation of this Business Plan. The Officer referred to paragraph 5.15 that sets out how the EAS support schools to identify and address their school improvement priorities.

Members discussed the Business Plan and LA Annex appended to the report. Clarification was sought in respect of the EAS challenge advisors and in particular the numbers with experience of primary and secondary schools. Specific details would be distributed to Members following the meeting, however the EAS believe they have the appropriate balance of advisors employed. A Member queried if the same level of service can be expected from the EAS due to the reduction in staff since 2012. The Officer explained that The EAS continues to be hampered by short term grant awards from Welsh Government but working with Councils will continue to make the best use of funding. There has been a 10% reduction in finance and 44% reduction in staff and feel that their small core team working in partnership and collaboration has the capacity to provide the level of service required.

Discussions took place regarding improving Key Stage 4 performance, reducing the number of days lost to exclusions and improving attendance levels. Officers advised that a report covering attendance and exclusion levels will be brought to a future Scrutiny Committee. Officers clarified the Implementation date for the new educational curriculum is 2023. A Member queried if EAS is Value for money and Officers explained that a report provided previously was in a regional context, and a subsequent localised report was requested and is scheduled on the Forward Work Programme for a future meeting.

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 Local Authority Annex 2019-20 and EAS Business Plan 2019-20 be submitted to Cabinet, for endorsement.

5. EDUCATION ATTAINMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services presented the report that sought Members' views on the attainment strategy and associated action plan prior to its presentation to Cabinet on the 13th March 2019.

The Council's attainment strategy, 'Shared Ambitions' and the associated strategic action plan were appended to the report. The Director thanked Officers for their valued contribution and for the work undertaken with head teachers in producing the documents. The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the strategy sets out a proposed vision for improving attainment and achievement across Caerphilly's schools that is linked explicitly to the priorities identified within the Councils self-evaluation document and the systemic issues that emerged throughout the summit process that took place over the autumn. The strategy also includes a number of guiding principles and a narrative for #teamcaerphilly that enshrine the approaches and behaviours that will underpin the delivery of the strategy. The strategic action plan attached to the strategy sets out what the Local Education Authority, the Education Achievement Service and the Schools themselves will do to drive improvement across the school system in Caerphilly.

The Director had attended a meeting with the Education Advisory Board since the publication of the agenda pack and an additional sheet that provides further detail in respect of the key actions from the strategic plan had been distributed to the Committee ahead of the meeting.

Members discussed the two connected documents and clarification was sought as to the duration of the strategy. Officers advised that the strategy is likely to be in place for a 3 year

period and modified on an annual basis. Subject to any amendments the strategy will be translated in to the Welsh language. It was noted that paragraph 6 (Assumptions) of the Officers report had not been completed due to an administrative error and there were typographical errors contained within page 10 and 11 of the strategy. Members were advised that the report and supporting documents can be presented to Cabinet seeking endorsement subject to the amendments discussed. Members referred to the Caerphilly 2018 attainment datasheet on page 11 of the strategy. This sets out the Council and Wales Average performance across each of the key stages over the last four years and Members queried why tables had not been included for the other sections within the strategy. Officers confirmed that this information is available and can be provided to Members but due to the sheer volume of information had not been included in the strategy.

Following consideration and discussion and subject to the foregoing, 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 Education Attainment Strategy and the associated Strategic Action Plan be submitted to Cabinet for endorsement.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd April 2019 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR