



## EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH  
ON TUESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY 2019 AT 5.30PM.

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PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, A. Farina-Childs, D.T. Hardacre, M.P. James, B. Miles, Mrs T. Parry, J.E. Roberts and R. Saralis.

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

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager) C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer) and K. Houghton (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association) Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor), Mrs P.J. Ireland and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Collis, S. Cook, W. David, Mrs G.D. Oliver, J. Simmonds and R. Whiting and co-opted Members Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor).

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A. Farina-Child declared a personal and prejudicial interest on Item 10 – Education Capital 2019/20. Details are minuted with the respective item.

### 3. MINUTES – 17TH DECEMBER 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 17th December 2018 (minute nos 1- 4) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. MINUTES – 8TH JANUARY 2019**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 8th January 2019 (minute nos 1- 9) 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**

The Chair drew Members attention to the report previously circulated and it was noted without comment. Members were asked to provide any feedback directly to Councillor Marsden and the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her report.

#### **7. 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 February 2019 to June 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 the Federation of Schools be deferred from the 2nd April 2019 meeting to the 21st May 2019 meeting to allow for the completion of consultations with schools. It was also requested that the Categorisation of Schools be moved to the 2nd April meeting.

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 Scrutiny Officer for the presentation of the Forward Work Programme and Members comments were welcomed.

A Member requested that a report be brought forward detailing what the provision of service is to meet increased Additional Learning Needs requirement and the outcome of the ALN review. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services advised Members that there is a live consultation by Welsh Government (WG) underway in relation to new ALN legislation and the Caerphilly County Borough Council had submitted their comments. Once this consultation was finished then a report could be brought forward to the Committee. The Member agreed to meet with the Director outside of the meeting in order to ensure the report is aligned with what has been requested.

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.

## **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. WELSH EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN – PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2018**

The Early Years Manager introduced the report which presented Members with an annual update on the work completed under the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) in 2018.

She referred Members to the body of the report which provided details of the work carried out to date along with continuing and future work. She drew Members attention to the highlights of the WESP from 2018 in particular a number of successful capital project bids, the production of a leaflet promoting bilingualism, increased provision of Welsh medium childcare, The Parent Network developing bilingual children's books, increased collaborative working between Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and Coleg y Cymoedd to deliver a broader Welsh medium curriculum, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni working closely with feeder primary schools to improve the welsh medium provision for young people with ALN, Menter Iaith delivering the Road to Bilingualism scheme to English medium schools and the completion of the Parent Survey.

The Chair thanked the Early Years Manager for her report and questions from Members were welcomed.

A Member enquired as to how much evaluation had taken place on the work carried out. The Early Years Manager advised Members that a WESP consultation process was due to begin which has been proactively promoted in the region. This will set targets for the future in the context of switching to a 10 year plan. The County Borough is in a good position for meeting these targets as work towards them is already being undertaken.

It was noted by Members that the bilingual option for a Level 3 Health and Social Care course did not run due to low numbers and asked how participation in bilingual learning opportunities could be encouraged. The Early Years Manager assured Members that Coleg y Cymoedd and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni continued to work together to offer more vocational courses and are engaging with surrounding schools to generate learners.

A Member raised concerns that performance at Key Stage 2 had stagnated between 2017 and 2018. The Early Years Manager informed the Members that focus has been on the Foundation phase and there now needed to be a rebalance by focusing on Key Stage 2 but it should be noted that there had been an upturn in Level 5+ performance.

Members discussed raising aspirations in Welsh medium learning in deprived areas and whether the County Borough's aspirations could meet those of WG. The Early Year Manager responded that the WG wanted the County Borough to be as aspirational as possible with a focus on well-being, supporting ALN and vocational options. Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni is leading the way on these aspirations so the County Borough in a good position however the challenge of realising these aspirations has not been underestimated. In terms of uptake levels in welsh education; this is spread across the County Borough, regardless of economic and social background.

Members enquired as to the disparity between genders in terms of Welsh learners and how many employees of the Local Authority were fluent Welsh speakers or Welsh learners. The Early Years Manager highlighted to Members that the Council was encouraging Welsh learners and recruitment of Welsh speakers. In terms of the number of employees who are Welsh speakers or learning Welsh, the Equalities team monitored this and she would request that an email with these figures be sent to the Committee.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the professional development opportunities for both Welsh and English medium teachers in developing Welsh language skills including the Sabbatical Scheme training and the potential budgetary and resource constraints to this. Members also discussed teacher recruitment of fluent Welsh speakers in English medium schools and teachers for Welsh medium schools. The Early Years Manager advised Members that there had been a lot of change in the last 5-10 years in the way the Welsh language was taught in English medium schools and developing teachers skills in Welsh as a second language was being looked at particularly in terms of the delivery of training so impact on resources was reduced and opportunities maximised, whether this means developing more online learning options or taking other alternative approaches. In relation to the financial impact of delivering this training, she was unable to comment as the Education Achievement Service (EAS) were responsible for the delivery of this kind of training, but she would request that the EAS report these details to the Committee via e-mail. She briefed Members that recruitment of teachers for Welsh medium schools was difficult and work was being done to support learners transition between each stage of Welsh medium education particularly into post 16 education where potential Welsh medium teachers could be recruited.

A Member raised concerns that the focus on raising Welsh language education would be to the detriment of general education attainment levels. The Early Years Manager reassured Members that although the delivery of Welsh language in English medium schools was a focus it did not supersede the Authority's commitment to delivering high education attainment standards across the board. The EAS support Welsh language specialists within each school and this is an early stage move towards bilingual schools in the future.

A Member observed that the use of Welsh medium activity centres should be encouraged by both Welsh and English medium schools.

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.

## **10. EDUCATION CAPITAL 2019/20**

Councillor A. Farina-Childs declared a personal and prejudicial interest in that he is a Governor for Blackwood Comprehensive School and also a family member works at the school. He left the room when the report was presented and did not take part in the debate or vote.

The Head of Education Planning and Strategy introduced the report which informed Members on the 2019/20 Education Capital Programme, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

A Member enquired as to the tendering process for contractors on works under £10,000 and whether the process was competitive and value for money. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy advised that tenders went through the Schools Facilities team and she would request that they email the Member and provide information on the tendering process.

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.

**11. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LIBRARY SERVICES ANNUAL WELSH GOVERNMENT STANDARDS ASSESSMENTS 2017-18**

The Head of Education Planning and Strategy introduced the report that informed Members of the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 6th Framework of WG Public Library Standards, Core Entitlements and Qualitative Indicators, during 2017-18.

She highlighted to Members that out of the 12 Core Entitlements, the Library Service had meet 10 in full and 2 in part. The two Entitlements not fully meet were related to Wi-Fi coverage in Libraries, a matter which is already being addressed and the level of qualified staff in Libraries however it should be noted that this indicator was only fully meet by just two out of the 22 Welsh authorities.

Member were referred to Section 4.5.1 of the report which detailed the Service's successes and Section 4.5.2 which detailed the areas in need of improvement. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy informed Members that the outcome of the assessments was considered very successful with the library standard maintained to a high standard despite ongoing budgetary constraints.

A Member enquired as how the two Core Entitlements that the Library Service did not fully meet could be met. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy responded that the Wi-Fi entitlement had been addressed and is expected to be deemed fully met in the next assessments. The second Entitlement relating to qualified staff in libraries is harder to achieve and she reiterated that only two authorities out of 22 fully met it. She emphasised to Members that although this measure was only partly met, library staff are well trained and have a lot to offer the Service.

Members discussed at length the role of Libraries in engaging with local schools and their local communities. They enquired as to what provision was in place for schools that did not have easy access to a library and what alternative approaches could be used to ensure library services were accessible to all communities. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy advised Members that there were Community Libraries that engaged with schools and there was a School Engagement Strategy in place to enthuse readers in schools. An accelerated readers pilot scheme is being run at Idris Davies School with links to the local libraries. Libraries are also key to the Service Improvement Plan which will be looking to develop stronger links between the Library Service and schools. In addition the Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement emphasised the importance of enthusing readers and engagement with both schools and the communities needs to look at approaches such as co-location of services, including library services and creating community hubs in existing libraries or community centres.

The Chair thanked the Head of Education Planning and Strategy for her report and Members for their comments. It was noted that the Chair and Committee commended the excellent work of the Caerphilly County Borough Library Service.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the Officer's report and Appendix 2 be noted. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the Officer's report be noted.
- (ii) the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group Report of performance (Appendix 2) and the Authority's attainment of 10 Core

Entitlements in full and 2 in part, and 8 Quality Indicators in full, 2 partially that have targets assigned, be noted.

The meeting closed at 18:50pm

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.

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CHAIR