



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 2ND APRIL 2019 AT 5.30PM.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

A. Collis, S. Cook, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, B. Miles, 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), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), P. O'Neil (Senior Youth Service Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

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

E. Pryce and S. Jones (Education Achievement Service).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: P.J. Bevan, D.T. Hardacre, M.P. James, Mrs G.D. Oliver and Mrs T. Parry and Mr M. Barry (Co-opted Member).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 19TH FEBRUARY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 19th February 2019 (minute nos. 1- 11) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MINUTES – 7TH MARCH 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 7th March 2019 (minute nos. 1-5) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

A Member referred to item 4 within the minutes - Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan (2019-2021) and Local Authority Annex 2019-2020 and stated that a breakdown of figures in relation to Primary and Secondary EAS Challenge Advisors had not been received. Mr E. Pryce (EAS) provided a verbal update and confirmed that in respect of Regional figures there are 48 Primary Head teachers (35 of whom are Partner Challenge Advisors) and 15 Former Secondary School head teachers (2 of whom are Partner Challenge Advisors). In relation to the Caerphilly Borough, there are 11 Primary Head teachers and 4 Former Secondary School Head teachers.

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 Scrutiny Committee had received Councillor P. Marsden's Cabinet Member Statement which had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. The statement provided an update of the events that she had recently attended and been involved with in relation to her portfolio. A Member referenced the UK Music Teacher Award for Excellence and sought clarification on what the next steps will be. Lewis School Pengam and Caerphilly County Borough Council's Arts Development Team have received a top prize of 'Outstanding Rock, Pop or Production' at the Music Teacher Awards for Excellence for their innovative 'Young Vision' song writing project. Officers advised that the project has given pupils aspiration and success in following a career in music and their triumph demonstrates that the pupils are able to develop and work as a team successfully. 'Young Vision' has been used as best practice by ESTYN school inspection and discussions for it to be used as a blueprint for possible National Pop and Rock programmes for Wales in 2019. Officers are currently reviewing the management structure within the music service to increase capacity in this area and want to explore in depth opportunities moving forward. The Shared Ambitions section of the new attainment strategy was also discussed. This document sets out how the council will work with schools and the Education Achievement Services (EAS) to deliver a clear vision for improving attainment and achievement.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her report.

7. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Head of Democratic Services advised that Members and Officers of the Scrutiny Committee had attended a Forward Work Programme Workshop prior to this meeting. The purpose of the workshop was to schedule reports for the next 12 months. The draft Forward Work Programme would be distributed to the Committee following this meeting and subject to approval, will be formally presented at the next Scrutiny Committee scheduled on the 21st May 2019. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be distributed to the Committee following the meeting and subject to approval, be formally presented to the next meeting scheduled on the 21st May 2019.

8. CABINET REPORT

The third report listed on agenda item 8 - Terms of Reference for Review of Post 16/ Single Sex and Surplus Places had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement advised Members that this report had been presented to Cabinet on the 13th March 2019. Cabinet fully supported the recommendations agreed by the Education for life Scrutiny Committee held on the 7th March 2019, including the number of nominated Members to sit on the Review Board be increased from 2 to 4 representatives. In addition, Cabinet recommended the Scrutiny Committee reconsider the nominations presented to ensure a Borough wide geographical spread.

The Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendation and the Chair advised that Councillor W. David and R. Saralis would represent the Labour Group. Councillor J. Roberts would be the first representative for the Plaid Cymru Group and the second representative would be confirmed following discussions after this meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

9. JUNIOR AND YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that it was with sadness that the young people who were due to present at the meeting had attended a friend's funeral earlier in the day and had extended their disappointed at being unable to deliver their presentation. The Chair requested that the Scrutiny Committees' sympathy be sent to the young people on this sad occasion.

The Senior Youth Service Manager introduced the report that informed Members of issues raised by Children and Young People via the Youth Service's Junior and Youth Forums. The report sought the views of Members prior to its presentation to Cabinet on the 24th April 2019. The Junior and Youth Fora are structured and organised around five themes: Prosperous Caerphilly; Safer Caerphilly; Learning Caerphilly; Healthier Caerphilly; Greener Caerphilly, enabling children and young people to have a voice on issues that affect them. Junior Forum Representatives are aged 7-11 years and Youth Forum Representatives are aged 11-25 years. At the Annual Youth Forum Conference young people are provided with the opportunity to explore issues previously raised via borough wide consultation. Young people attending the conference present their views on each of the themes and engage in a dialogue with relevant Officers and Cabinet members. From exploring all themes within the context of young people's lives, young people identify and agree on a priority issue for each theme. Following the Conference, an overall priority was voted on by 2656 young people representing the Youth Service, Schools and Youth Support Services.

Members noted the priorities voted on that were set out in paragraph 5.2 and 5.3 in the report. It was confirmed that the overall priority issue for the Youth Forum is 'Mental Health' - Services should be improved with young people's help and young people should receive mental health first aid education. The Junior Forum's overall priority issue is 'more awareness of support for drugs and alcohol support'. The process that follows the identification of issues was set out in paragraph 2.2 in the report.

A Member referred to the Youth Forum Conference that he attended and was impressed with the discussions that took place, with particular reference to the issue of mental health. The Cabinet Member had also attended the Conference and was equally impressed with the maturity of responses provided. She added that young people stated that issues of mental health are all around them and also how social media can impact negatively on their mental

health. Officers confirmed that all secondary schools have Counsellors that provide support. Funding has been secured for this that will not be affected by any savings proposals. There is an increase in need for support and the CAMHS Service is flooded with referrals. There is also a need to invest in Elsa and Thrive training to support children and young people.

Reference was made to the previous priorities presented to and supported by the Scrutiny Committee and a Member queried why feedback in terms of progress is not brought back to the Committee. It was suggested that the Youth Forum be invited to attend the next meeting scheduled on the 21st May 2019 to provide an update on the priority issues and this was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report:

- (i) the Junior and Youth Forum issues be supported and presented to Cabinet;
- (ii) the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue of Mental Health, be supported;
- (iii) the Junior Forum in addressing their Priority Issue of raising awareness of Drug and Alcohol Support, be supported,
- (iv) issues raised by Children and Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives, be supported.

10. NATIONAL SCHOOL CATEGORISATION 2018-19

Mr E. Pryce and Ms S. Jones (EAS) introduced the report that presented Members with information outlining the National Categorisation System and how schools in Caerphilly have been categorised for support this year.

Members were advised that the Minister for Education and Skills announced the introduction of the National School Categorisation System in September 2014. The system, which covers both primary schools and secondary schools, has evolved over subsequent years. From 2017-2018, Welsh Government removed the data-driven judgement that placed schools into a standards group as part of Step 1. Discussion around the school's self-evaluation and school development planning has become the central feature of the model. The school's data remains as a starting point for discussions within the school, and with the Challenge Advisor, about their capacity to improve in relation to leadership, teaching and learning.

The outcomes of each step of the categorisation process were discussed and the circumstances which may affect the school's support category and the elements of assessing schools' performance was explained. An overview was provided in respect of the Peer Review, Regional Standardisation and Moderation Process and National Verification Process that was undertaken.

Members were referred to paragraph 5.14 and 5.15 in the report that sets out the Primary and Secondary School Categories for 2018/19. In terms of Primary Schools, it was explained that there are no national averages readily available for Step 1 and Step 2 data, and no Step 1 data is used for categorisation this year. During the past three years, the proportion of schools in the green category has increased for Step 2, and is now 55%. At Step 3, the proportion of schools in the green category is above both the regional and the national average, and the proportion in the red category is in line with the regional average, but above the national average. In relation to Secondary Schools, during the past three years, there

were no schools that were categorised green for Step 2. For Step 3, there are no secondary schools in the green category however, the proportion of schools in the red category is smaller than both the regional and national average.

A Member queried how the number of days of Challenge Advisor's time is allocated to each school. The Officer advised that the time was determined by Welsh Government (WG) in 2014 as part of the re-categorisation process and in terms of grant funding this is agreed on a regional basis. A Member referenced moderating challenge outcomes and it was explained that this process is undertaken by an independent Challenge Advisor and their role is to consider the original evidence and then agree or disagree with the original decision. That decision is then taken to the Regional Moderation Board (RGM).

Members questioned if schools are generally happier to remain in the yellow category with support rather than progress to green category. Officers clarified that support doesn't have to disappear if they are placed in the green category as this can still be offered if required as part of the improvement journey. This is more about distribution of leadership quality across the organisation. Schools and head teachers need to be open and honest with the Local Authority (LA). The LA will focus support on leadership and this is monitored by accurate and honest self-evaluation reports and work will also be undertaken with senior and middle Leaders. The information is used to focus across the school and developing the leadership capacity by working collaboratively in key areas. Officers emphasised the importance of avoiding duplication of work with EAS and the LA, the need to streamline support and embrace the change of culture. The LA has recommended coaching sessions for Head teachers that will feature 6 days of a development training programme that will supplement the support provided by EAS.

A Member expressed concerns of an imbalance between Primary/Secondary Head teacher Challenge Advisors. Officers confirmed that the key point is about progress seen across the region and Caerphilly has seen significant improvement in Primary Schools. It is important that good working relationships between Challenge Advisors, Head teachers and schools are maintained. Having the right skillset and brokering the best support with Head teachers and middle Leaders who are currently in the system (as they are facing the same experiences and challenges) is essential. Officers emphasised that categorisations are about increasing the level of support provided to schools and not a judgement and should not be viewed as a major criticism. Members expressed concerns that the categorisations are perceived negatively and this is radically wrong and this message needs to be taken back to Welsh Government.

The Chair thanked colleagues from EAS for their report and for responding to questions raised during the course of the debate.

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 contents of the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2019 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR