



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 5.30PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor T. Parry - Chair
Councillor C. Andrews – Vice Chair

Councillors:

A. Collis, A. Farina-Childs, D. Havard, B. Miles, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds and R. Whiting.

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education, Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor).

E. Pryce (Education Achievement Service) and R. Simms (Education Achievement Service).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. J. Bevan, S. Cook, W. David, D.T. Hardacre, M. James and Mrs G. Oliver, P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement) and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs J. Havard (NEU), Mrs P. Ireland (NEU) and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 2ND JULY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on

Tuesday the 2nd July 2019 (minute nos. 1- 10) 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. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the draft Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from September 2019 to May 2020.

The Committee were asked to note that since the publishing of the report, it has been requested that the EAS Business Plan, originally scheduled for 13th January 2020 be moved to the February meeting, as it is anticipated this will not be ready.

Members discussed the Forward Work Programme and noted the number of blank spaces. Officers explained that work is underway to get these areas completed in readiness for the next meeting.

The Committee were asked whether there were any items to be included in future meetings, and it was requested that a report be presented on the level of Vocational Education being conducted within Secondary Schools.

Following consideration, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report and the changes proposed by the Officer be approved.

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

6. 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.

7. FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) STRATEGY.

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with an outline of the education strategy that aims to further improve the attainment of pupils in receipt of free school meals (FSM).

The report provided a summary of the revised strategy to improve the attainment of this group of pupils. The Strategy recognised the need to accelerate improvement, taking account of local and national data. The document included the following areas:

- Effective use of grant funding;
- The role of schools in raising attainment;

- The role of the Local Authority in raising attainment;
- The role of parents/carers;
- The role of other partners.

The strategy also recognised that some pupils, in receipt of free school meals, attain in line or above the expected level at all stages of education from Early Years to end of Key Stage 5. However, the document aimed to ensure that all pupils, regardless of prior attainment, make very good progress throughout their school education. In addition to sharpening accountability processes in place to monitor, track and evaluate the progress of this group of learners, the document identified the establishment of a new 'Pupil Aspiration Board' which aims to specify and share the very best practice taking place across Caerphilly Schools.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

In noting the contents of the report, a Member raised queries on the contents page and sought further information on the date of the Strategy, querying how long the Strategy would be in place. Officers explained that the Strategy is a working document and under constant development, however noted the comments and would make this clear in future publications.

Discussions took place around the Pupil Aspirations Board (detailed at page 59 of the report), and further information was sought around the implementation of the cultural change, accountability and measuring the impact of the change. It was noted that the Pupil Aspirations Board has only recently been introduced and is therefore a work in progress, however there are members on the board with extensive expertise, all of which aim to share best practice and provide consistency across all schools. Work will be undertaken with Head Teachers to identify their schools individual needs and criteria in order to measure successes. Members were assured that further reports on progress would be provided to the Committee at a later date.

A Member queried whether there are any representations from Governors on the Board. Officers noted that this is something that can be implemented, however Members were assured that there are a wide number of stakeholders on the Board, but welcome any further suggestions.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report, the Education Scrutiny Committee note the report.

8. END OF FOUNDATION PHASE, KEY STAGE 2 AND KEY STAGE 3

The report informed Members of Welsh Government Policy changes regarding the use of teacher assessment performance data at the end of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and provided Members with an overview of Caerphilly Schools' performance, within the revised framework.

Members were asked to note that the report is very different to former Performance reports because different measures have to be reported and individuals cannot be identifiable. Also, data cannot be represented at a Local Authority level. Therefore, the report outlined the current arrangements in regard to Teacher Assessment and provided an anonymised overview of Caerphilly Schools' performance in relation to the other schools in the region.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised of the arrangements that will remain, including National Reading and Numeracy Tests and Teacher Assessments for individual learners; Headteacher Performance Report for parents; and Governing Bodies are still required to report school performance to parents and adult learners each year. However, changes include the loss of comparative information about teacher assessments and tests in relation to other schools

within the local authority; and Welsh Government will no longer produce or publish School Comparative Reports and All Wales Core Data Sets for schools and local authorities in respect of teacher assessment data.

The report provided the Committee with an anonymised overview of data submitted by schools as part of the National Data Collection Process in June 2019, and Members were provided with a detailed explanation of the graphs and tables and data therein. Members were asked to note that there was an error in the data at page 78 of the report (Percentage of Pupils achieving Level 5+) and as a result Officers agreed to circulate a corrected version of the chart.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member queried whether Caerphilly specific data could be provided in later reports, to demonstrate progress. Officers explained that this could be done, however the principle has been agreed. Ideally all Wales data would be available.

Concerns were raised that Teacher Assessment data and National Reading and Numeracy Test data at school, local authority and consortia level would no longer be published, and sought further information on future monitoring of standards. Officers explained that there is support available to schools in the form of Challenge Advisers, who meet regularly with schools and provide support where needed. However, there is further development required around feeding back monitoring information to Scrutiny. Members noted that this is a regional issue in which delivery could be problematic due to the change from targets and numbers.

Discussions took place around future inspections. It was noted that Governors play a key role in schools, in particular around performance and scrutiny; however there will be changes around the reporting of data, with less focus on numerical data. Members were assured that now that the process is in place training sessions can be provided.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report the Education Scrutiny Committee note content of the report.

9. SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE EDUCATION DIRECTORATE'S SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The report informed Members of the process of self-evaluation and its impact on the Education Directorate's Service Improvement Plan (SIP), and provided a summary of key strengths and priorities for improvement that are identified as a result of the self-evaluation process.

The self-evaluation process is an integral part of the overall cycle of service improvement. It is fundamental in ensuring the directorate secures ongoing improvements that positively contribute to the objectives in the Caerphilly Local Authority Service Improvement Plan and Corporate Plan. Over the last twelve months, strategies have been embedded to ensure that process is increasingly robust, leading to an increasingly accurate list of strengths and priorities for improvement.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member, in acknowledging the strengths identified in the report, queried how the improvements identified are prioritised and responsibility for completion allocated. Officers explained that there are clear lines of responsibility for each of the areas of improvement,

however the Officer identified that the SIP has overall responsibility for the Plan. There are a number of Officers involved at various points within the Plan, for the delivery of service as well as Stakeholders, all contributing to the overall requirements of the Plan.

In addition, it was noted that there will shortly be an Estyn Inspection undertaken on the Local Authority, and as a result, preparations are underway to evidence Plans and their outcomes and demonstrate how Plans fit together. The SIP is an overarching plan in which a number of other plans underpin the delivery of service. It was agreed that the meeting in December would provide the story so far in respect of performance and meeting the requirements of the Plan. Members thanked the Officer for the explanation and it was agreed that the Service Improvement Plan be shared with the Committee.

In discussing the 26 priorities identified within the Plan, a Member sought further information on how these are prioritised and deadlines for completion. Officers explained that there are 7 priorities identified within the SIP which link to the Well Being Objectives (WBO), under which there are specific actions to be undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the WBO.

Discussions took place around the Main priorities/actions for improvement and a Member sought clarification on the priority to Reduce the number of secondary schools requiring the highest level of support (amber and red) and Reduce the number of secondary schools identified as 'Estyn Review' following statutory inspection. Officers explained that the aim for these priorities is to continue to provide support where needed but to reduce the number of schools in need of support.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report the Education Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.

10. SAFEGUARDING

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with an update around Safeguarding developments in 2018/19.

It was noted that Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and is embodied in the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The Local Authority (LA) has clear policies and procedures linked to safeguarding children in education services. Safeguarding underpins priorities within the Directorate Plan (2018 – 2023) and all related plans.

The report outlined that the LA works in partnership with Children's Services, education providers, parents, The South East Wales Consortium (SEWC), the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and other partners to ensure that there is a robust approach towards safeguarding arrangements. In addition, it was noted that the LA has a pivotal role in safeguarding activities at a national, regional and local level, for example the National Safeguarding in Education Group (SEG), and the regional South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) SEG. This ensures that policy and practice are well informed.

The LA has a clear system of self evaluation in relation to safeguarding (linked to ESTYN guidance and broader self evaluation processes), which informs developments in processes and practice. The LA provides robust advice and support and there are effective processes in place in relation to school audits, the monitoring of child protection referrals and professional concerns.

The LA has a revised model of training for schools and is reviewing practitioner forums.

There are robust monitoring arrangements in place with regard to the scrutiny of physical intervention forms, which ensure that the LA exercises its duty of care in relation to pupils and staff members.

The Committee were assured that robust systems are in place regarding the recording and monitoring of discriminatory incidents. Guidance is updated to reflect any new categories as they are defined. The LA has been recognised by Stonewall as developing good practice in this area.

The Officer informed Members that interviews are being conducted shortly for the Safeguarding Coordinator and will be shortlisting for the LAC Coordinator.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Committee Member raised concerns that due to Welsh Government changes in process, there could be a reduction in Looked After Children support, and sought reassurance that this would not be the case in the Authority. Officers assured Members that the role is vital with ever increasing responsibility, and as such Caerphilly CBC will continue to support Looked After Children. In addition, it was noted that the work undertaken to reshape the roles within Social Services and Education is to ensure that there is effective support services in place for Looked After and Vulnerable Children, which is a crucial part of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report:

- i) It is recommended that an annual report be presented to Scrutiny Committee;
- ii) Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 7:05pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2019 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR