



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 11TH JANUARY 2021 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E. M. Aldworth, A. Collis, C. Cuss, A. Farina-Childs, Ms J. Gale, D. Havard, B. Miles and J. Simmonds.

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), A. West (21st Century Schools Manager), Clare Jones (Youth Forum Co-ordinator), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Also present:

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative), Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs P. Ireland (NEU) and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

Also in Attendance:

Two Youth Forum representatives.

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairperson reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded and would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click here to view.](#)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. J. Bevan, W. David, D. T. Hardacre, M. P. James, Mrs G. D. Oliver, J. E. Roberts and R. Whiting (Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 26TH NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday the 26th November 2020 (minute numbers 1- 7) 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 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Cath Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) presented the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the period January 2021 to May 2021 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 26th November 2020. Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme, alongside the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, prior to publication on the Council's website.

The Scrutiny Manager outlined proposed changes to the Forward Work Programme. It was proposed that the Exclusions Strategy report scheduled for the 22nd February 2021 be moved to the meeting scheduled for 17th May 2021 to allow Officers more time to consult with schools. It was also proposed that the WESP update scheduled for the meeting to be held on 17th May 2021 be brought forward to the next meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee as an information item.

Following consideration of the report, and subject to the changes proposed, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of a roll call voting process this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be published on the Councils' website.

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. JUNIOR & YOUTH FORUM PRIORITIES

Members received a report on the Junior and Youth Forum Priorities to inform them of the 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.

Two Youth Forum representatives delivered a presentation which outlined the Junior and Youth Forum issues for 2020 and gave an overview of the projects activity for 2020, including any plans to address the issues during 2021.

The Education Scrutiny Committee was informed that following the Youth Forum Conference in January 2020 and the Junior Forum meeting in November 2019, children and young people have identified issues important to them and have voted on Priority Issues for 2020. The Junior and Youth Forum issues were structured around five themes: Prosperous Caerphilly, Safer Caerphilly, Learning Caerphilly, Healthier Caerphilly and Greener Caerphilly.

The Youth Forum overall priority was voted for by 3310 young people representing the Youth Service, Schools and Youth Support Services. Members were informed that the overall priority issue for this year is under the theme of Safer Caerphilly with 26% of the vote and the issue is raising awareness of emergency services, where young people have said they need to be educated more on what to do in an emergency situation. The Junior Forum identified a priority within each area Forum theme, raised via consultation and then voted for the overall priority issue. Members were informed that the overall priority issue for this year is under the theme of Safer Caerphilly with 25% of the vote and the issue is speeding cars can injure or kill people.

Members discussed the issues raised by children and young people via the Youth Service's Junior and Youth Forums and considered how to support the Junior and Youth Forum in addressing their priority issues.

Members and Officers acknowledged the hard work undertaken by the Junior and Youth Forum and thanked the representatives of the Youth Forum for their presentation.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By way of a roll call voting process this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Supported the presentation of Junior and Youth Forum issues to Cabinet by young people.
- (ii) Considered how to support the Youth Forum in addressing their Priority Issue - raising awareness of emergency services and educating young people of what to do in an emergency.
- (iii) Considered how to support the Junior Forum in addressing their Priority Issue - speeding cars.
- (iv) Had due regard to issues raised within the report by Children and Young People when making decisions which impact upon their lives.

8. BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21 (PERIOD 7)

Jane Southcombe (Finance Manager) presented the report which informed Members of the projected 2020-21 outturn position for the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning (LL) based on the most recent information available.

Members were informed that the current projected outturn position for Education and Lifelong Learning is an underspend of £341k. The projected outturn position for Corporate Services is an underspend of £1,191k, consequently overall the projected outturn position for Education and Corporate Services is an underspend of £1,532k.

The Education Scrutiny Committee was provided with an overview of the significant variances within Education which feed into the underspend position. Members were advised that work is going on with schools and the Directorate with regards to the Welsh Government Covid Hardship Fund and to date the Directorate has secured over £700k in grants to support additional expenditure and lost income costs.

A Member referred to the underspend on the Home to School/College Transport budget and sought clarification and further information on the contract values being supported to the level of 75% (April to August). Members were informed that early on in the pandemic it was agreed across Wales that transport contract values would be supported to the level of 75%, with a real concern that operators would go out of business without support and not be available when school and colleges return. Assurances were given that a lot of discussions would have taken place between Welsh Government and the Local Authorities.

Having fully considered the report, the Education Scrutiny Committee noted the contents.

9. MANAGING SCHOOL PLACES - FAITH MEDIUM

A. West (21st Century Schools Manager) presented the report which informed Members on how the demand for Faith Medium Education provision is being met within the County Borough. The Education Scrutiny Committee was informed that there is only one voluntary aided faith school within the Authority, namely St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School. Of the cohort, 72.4% of the pupils attending are of the Catholic Faith with the remaining 27.6% from non-Catholic backgrounds. Members were notified that the information given in this report was obtained directly from the school.

Members were advised that currently St Helen's Roman Catholic School has an overall capacity of 210 (plus nursery) with a published admission number of 30. It was pointed out that St Helen's Roman Catholic School is their own admissions authority and therefore responsible for admitting the pupils and dealing with appeals. At present there are currently 213 pupils on roll of which 163 are of the Catholic Faith (excluding nursery). Members were asked to note that the additional 3 pupils were admitted via an appeals process.

The Scrutiny Committee was advised that St Helen's is the only Roman Catholic School in the authority and currently caters for the whole of Caerphilly County Borough Council. Members were made aware that the general expectation is for the pupils currently attending St Helen's to transfer at Year 7 into Cardinal Newman Secondary School (RCT), subject to parental preference. In relation to demand for Faith Medium Education hosted outside of county, it was confirmed that prior to the Covid outbreak in March 2020, the Authority was transporting 357 pupils out of the authority in order to meet parental preference.

Members were informed that in 2018 Caerphilly and other authorities developed a co-ordinated approach and devised a questionnaire to verify demand for places going forward. The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish parental demand, in particular for Welsh Medium Education but also incorporated a question to indicate demand for Faith Medium Education. It was highlighted that last year, from the 1,959 returns for Caerphilly, 2.06% of parents surveyed stated that they would opt for Faith Medium Education for their children, which is substantially lower than those of neighbouring authorities. Members were advised that the information provided does demonstrate that there is currently sufficient provision in place to meet demand for pupils from a Faith background within the County Borough.

Mr M. Western drew particular attention to the consultees for the report and asked if any other Faith organisations throughout the valley, other than St Helen's Roman Catholic School, were consulted in relation to drawing up the report. Concerns were raised regarding having one single Faith school in the county borough and it was considered that if there was another Faith school at the north end of the valley the demand would be there, but without addressing other Faith leaders the authority would not know. The Officer confirmed that the information contained

in the report was provided by St Helen's Roman Catholic School. It was highlighted that the School Admission Forum, which provides a vehicle for admission authorities and other key interested parties to discuss the effectiveness of local admission arrangements, would provide a vehicle whereby discussions could take place if there was further demand. Members were advised that as part of the Authority's process in managing and planning the provision of school places, the delivery of Faith Medium is continually monitored and there has never been any issues raised or any indication that demand is not being met. It was also reiterated that from the questionnaire returns for Caerphilly only 2.06% of parents stated that they would opt for their children to be educated through the medium of Faith.

A query was raised in relation to the general expectation for pupils currently attending St Helen's to transfer at Year 7 into Cardinal Newman Secondary School. The Officer explained that based on the numbers currently being transported out of the authority, at this present time there is not adequate demand to justify a secondary provision through the medium of Faith. The general expectation is subject to parental demand, an assumption cannot be made that there is natural progression to Cardinal Newman Secondary School.

The Education Scrutiny Committee noted the information contained in the report.

10. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LIBRARY SERVICE ANNUAL WELSH GOVERNMENT STANDARDS ASSESSMENT 2018-19

S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy) presented the report to inform the Education Scrutiny Committee of the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 6th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, Core Entitlements, and Qualitative Indicators, during 2018-19. This is the 2nd year of the Welsh Government Framework entitled, 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries 2017-2020.' It was highlighted that the Welsh Government Ranking Table, comparing each Local Authority's standards, ranks Caerphilly as number 5 of 22.

Members were informed that Caerphilly County Borough Library Service was assessed as meeting all 12 of the Welsh Government Core Entitlements. Members were also informed that Caerphilly County Borough Library Service was assessed as meeting, in full, 8 of the 10 Quality Indicators for Wales that have assigned targets and 2 in part with no indicators failed in their totality.

The areas of particular strength in the Authority's performance identified by the Welsh Government Standards Reference Group on assessing Caerphilly County Borough Library Service's submission for 2018-19 were highlighted. Other areas of performance that were below the average for Wales and that require further attention by the Council in maintaining its capability to deliver a strong performing service in the future were also highlighted.

Points of clarification were requested on various aspects of the report and Officers responded to the points raised. A Member sought clarification and further information in relation to the Quality Indicators that have been partially met. In relation to Q19 'Up-to-Date and Appropriate Reading Material', Members were advised that changes to the recording method implemented by the Welsh Government Assessment Reference Group, part-way through the year, impacted Caerphilly's performance. In relation to Q13 'Staffing Levels and Qualifications', Members were assured that qualified leadership is in place and staff development is supported. It was highlighted that in the 2018-19 Assessment, only 6 of the 22 Local Authorities met the professional staffing complement (Q13) and 5 of the 22 met the criteria for the acquisitions to stock (Q19).

The Head of Planning and Strategy emphasised that despite budget cuts, during 2018/19, the Library Service has maintained all 18 library service points and its accompanying level of provision.

The Education Scrutiny Committee noted the information contained in the report.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March 2021 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR