



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 29TH JUNE 2021 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

E. M. Aldworth, P. J. Bevan, A. Collis, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, Ms J. Gale, B. Miles, J. Roberts and J. Simmonds.

R. Whiting (Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure).

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), 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), J. Kent (Education Achievement Service), E. Pryce (Education Achievement Service), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also present:

Co-opted Members: Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative) and Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative).

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 D. T. Hardacre, D. Havard, M. P. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, Mrs G. D. Oliver 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 – 17TH MAY 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17th May 2021 (minute nos 1- 8) 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

Consideration was given to the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the period June 2021 to March 2022 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Monday 17th May 2021. Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme, alongside the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, prior to publication on the Council's website.

It was proposed that the following two items be added to the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme:

- (i) A report on the response rate from schools when asked for reports to be presented to Foster Panels.
- (ii) A regular update report on the New Curriculum for Wales. A request for also made for Headteachers to be invited to give evidence to the Scrutiny Committee.

Following consideration of the report, and subject to the additional reports proposed, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms voting 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. INCLUSION COMPENDIUM

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to consult with Members on the new Inclusion Compendium and seek their views prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Members were advised that the report is about the Inclusion Compendium, which altogether includes the Inclusion Strategy in addition to a range of stand-alone guidance and

documentation which underpins the strategy and is to be used by schools, parents, Governors, Councillors and partners to help implement and understand it.

Members were made aware that previously the Inclusion Strategy was going to be an 'Exclusion Strategy', however it was felt that focussing on 'exclusions' was the wrong emphasis. That is why this strategy has a focus on inclusion, it is about ensuring that as much as possible is done to ensure young people remain in education, and only to use exclusions where absolutely necessary. Members were informed that the Strategy involves building relationships with partners such as schools, the Youth Service, EAS, Education Welfare Services, Social Services, and others to ensure any issues that might develop are identified early, and support provided. It was highlighted that monitoring and self-evaluation is built into the Strategy and the Compendium to ensure data can be gathered and evaluated. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure expressed thanks to the Lead for School Improvement and her team. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN shared a presentation with the Scrutiny Committee on the Inclusion Compendium.

A Member welcomed the Strategy but outlined concerns regarding the way schools manage children with challenging behaviours. It was felt that their challenges can have a disruptive impact on other children who are learning in the same environment. The Member stressed the importance of having adequate financial support for schools in order to implement the Inclusion Strategy. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN advised that there was no quick fix. Members heard how a cultural change was necessary and how an emphasis was placed on early intervention and engagement with partners. One Member, who is a School Governor, highlighted the good work being done at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymini in the area of inclusion.

The Education Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and provided their views as part of the consultation process.

8. NEETS STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to consult with Members on the new Engagement and Progression (NEETs - Not in Education, Employment or Training) Strategy and associated matters, and seek their views prior to the consideration by Cabinet.

Members were informed that the Engagement and Progression, or NEETS, Strategy aims to set out the Council's arrangements and intentions to ensure that young people are able to positively progress into education, employment or training post-16. It was highlighted that this strategy involves aligning the Council's strategy with other local and national guidance, including the six priorities contained in the Welsh Government's National Engagement and Progression Framework which can be found under section 5.4 of the report. Members were advised that altogether it involves a collective approach across the various relevant partner organisations to develop a keen understanding of why young people are or may become NEET, and the consequences. It sets out the varying roles and responsibilities of stakeholders inside and outside of the Local Authority, and an emphasis on collaboration and partnership working. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure expressed thanks to the Strategic Lead for School Improvement and the Youth Service Manager.

The Strategic Lead for School Improvement highlighted that the document recognises a range of vulnerabilities that can contribute to a pupil becoming at risk of NEET and goes at length to talk about a flexible approach to making sure that securing the pathway to success is right.

A question was asked as to whether or not more behavioural problems were discovered on transition to Comprehensive Schools. The Strategic Lead for School Improvement outlined how transition can be a challenging time for pupils. Members heard how there was a role for schools in terms of offering support in this area and ensuring that the correct skills are developed to avoid pupils becoming at risk of NEET.

The Education Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report and provided their views as part of the consultation process.

9. SLA AGREEMENTS

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to provide Members with an overview of the SLAs (Service Level Agreements) available to schools and details with regards to the level of purchase for the Authority's internal services, following Members request for this information.

It was highlighted that there are a wide range of services available to schools via an SLA arrangement which are detailed under section 5.1 of the report and also included in the appendices. Members were advised that every financial year schools decide whether they want to purchase. In this process, they can raise queries and review their arrangements. Members were informed that in 2020/2021 schools paid £2.4 million for the support provided in some of these SLAs, and in many cases the level of purchase is 100%, and reference was made to the breakdown of this under appendix 4 of the report. Members were advised that this level of purchase is excellent and, together with the regular opportunities for schools to review and feedback on services, suggests that they are successful. Agreements are issued on an annual basis and service areas must continue to respond to meet the needs of schools to ensure that this level of support for our internal services continues.

In response to a query regarding the Covid-19 hardship fund, the Finance Manager informed Members that the announcement from Welsh Government is that it will continue to the end of September and there is further discussion going on with local authorities and treasurers, but there is a level of uncertainty post September.

The Education Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the report.

10. NEW CURRICULUM FOR WALES IMPLEMENTATION

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report and handed over to the Assistant Director of EAS to provide Members with an update on Curriculum for Wales Implementation, within the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The design of the Curriculum for Wales Framework was explained to the Scrutiny Committee. Progression and assessment in the Curriculum for Wales Framework and assessment as part of evaluation and improvement was outlined to Members.

A Member raised concerns regarding the Welsh language provision if the new framework provides schools with greater autonomy and flexibility in terms of the curriculum. The Assistant Director of EAS advised Members that Welsh was a mandatory element under the curriculum framework and was therefore seen as strengthening the language in schools.

Clarification and further information were sought in terms of assessment and evaluation. It was highlighted that learner assessment information would not be used for accountability purposes and a question was raised as to how the local authority will assess whether pupils are progressing and what information should be used to evaluate schools performance. The EAS Assistant Director (Policy & Strategy) outlined how this would be a challenge collectively for all partners and explained how it was the intention for more softer qualitative data to be used. Members heard how quality of school leadership was of paramount importance in this regard.

In response to a question as to whether ESTYN would be taking a more prominent role in the future, the EAS Assistant Director (Policy & Strategy) advised that the ESTYN Framework had not changed at the moment. Members heard how under previous frameworks hard data and

standards were principally used but under the current framework assessment was based more on the quality of work in pupil's books and the progress shown on their journey.

The meeting closed at 6.39 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 September 2021 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR