



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs E. M. Aldworth, P. J. Bevan, A. Collis, A. Farina-Childs, B. Miles and J. E. Roberts.

Cabinet Member: Councillor R. Whiting (Learning and Leisure).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), A. West (21st Century Schools Manager), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), L. Thomas (21st Century Schools - Principal Officer), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also present:

Co-opted Members: Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative) and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

Also in Attendance:

R. Owen (Head Teacher, Idris Davies 3-18 School) and N. Davies (Head Teacher, Nant y Parc Primary School and Tynewydd Primary School).

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 W. David, Ms J. Gale, D. T. Hardacre, D. Havard, M. P. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, Mrs G. D. Oliver and J. Simmonds. Apologies for absence were also received from Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative) and Mrs P. Ireland (NEU).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 29TH JUNE 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 29th June 2021 (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 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the period September 2021 to March 2022 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29th June 2021. Members were asked to consider the Forward Work Programme, alongside the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, prior to publication on the Council's website.

Following consideration of the report, and subject to the changes proposed, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms voting this was agreed by the majority.

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. RETURN TO SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 2021 – PRESENTATION

The Chairperson welcomed R. Owen (Head Teacher, Idris Davies 3-18 School) and N. Davies (Head Teacher, Nant y Parc Primary School and Tynewydd Primary School) to the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting and offered congratulations to N. Davies who was awarded an MBE earlier this year for services to Education.

The Chief Education Officer delivered a presentation on returning to school in September

2021. How schools responded to the Covid-19 pandemic was outlined, which put into context the constant challenges that schools have faced over that period. The Chief Education Officer highlighted the most challenging aspects and successes of 2020-2021 and explained what is going to be different from September 2021 onwards.

The Head Teacher of Idris Davies 3-18 School and the Head Teacher of Nant y Parc Primary School and Tynewydd Primary School addressed the Scrutiny Committee and gave their opinions on what has been the most challenging aspects for schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Head Teacher of Idris Davies 3-18 School highlighted a number of challenging areas and advised the Scrutiny Committee that one of the big challenges from a secondary school point of view was the impact on key stage 4 and key stage 5 learners and in providing some clarity to pupils and parents as to what was needed. The Head Teacher of Nant y Parc Primary School and Tynewydd Primary School also highlighted a number of challenging areas including managing the anxieties of not only members of the school community but also the wider school community.

A Member commented on the recent rise in the number of cases of coronavirus and questioned whether there are any plans to re-impose some of the restrictions. In response, the Chief Education Officer provided an explanation on the decision-making framework and risk assessment level. The Head Teacher of Idris Davies 3-18 School also provided the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the control measures in place at Idris Davies 3-18 School.

In response to a Members question regarding accelerated learning funding, the Finance Manager informed the Scrutiny Committee that all schools have received a notification of their allocation from Welsh Government for the current academic year. Reference was made to the Headteachers Helpline and in response to a Members query the Head Teacher of Idris Davies 3-18 School and the Head Teacher of Nant y Parc Primary School and Tynewydd Primary School highlighted the excellent support and guidance they have received from the Chief Education Officer and other officers in the authority during the Covid-19 pandemic.

8. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES BAND B PROGRAMME – UPDATE ON PHASE 2

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services presented the report to update Members on the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Phase 2 programme and to seek Members' endorsement of a recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to consultation in respect of the phase 2 projects which includes the amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior and Llanfabon Infants School, a new replacement Plasfelin Primary School and the establishment of a new Centre for Vulnerable Learners (Pupil Referral Unit).

Members received an overview on the progression of the Band B Phase 2 proposals from the 21st Century Schools Manager which included the proposal to amalgamate Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School, a new replacement Plasfelin Primary School and the creation of a Centre for Vulnerable Learners in Pontllanfraith. The Outline Business Cases submitted to Welsh Government have gained Ministerial Approval and it was explained that endorsement is now being sought on the recommendation to proceed all 3 schemes concurrently to consultation, in addition to the funding outlined in the report. It was also explained that only 1 of the 3 proposals was subject to the requirements to consult under the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018, however, to enable open and transparent decision making, the same consultation process will be carried out for all 3 proposals, with a view to undertaking the consultation period towards the end of October, subject to Cabinet approval.

Members sought information on future 21st Century Schools proposals in relation to plans for Welsh Medium Schools. Officers reminded Members that Phase 1 of the Band B proposals included Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Gwyddon, which had been agreed by Scrutiny and Cabinet

previously and was currently progressing through the planning application process. Subject to planning approval a full business case would be submitted to Welsh Government, with an anticipated completion date and site occupation by September 2023. The Officer highlighted that the Band B Programme was being progressed in 'bite-sized' chunks, and that future phases would consider both Welsh and English Medium provision within the agreed funding envelope.

Members sought clarification as to whether the placement of pupils at the Centre for Vulnerable Learners (CVL) at Pontllanfraith would be a full-time provision and if additional staff would be employed. Members were advised that the site would look to accommodate between 80 - 120 pupils and that additional staff would need to be employed as this is an expansion to the current provision for learners requiring this type of provision within the Authority. It is envisaged that places will be based on the individual needs of pupils. It is anticipated that the majority of pupils would attend on a full-time basis, however, the aim will be to provide support to enable pupils to reintegrate back into mainstream schools. Members were also advised that the aspiration for the facilities on the CVL site should be seen as a 'Centre of Excellence' and they will be available for community use outside of school hours as this is a pre-requisite embedded into all Band B schemes.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms voting this was unanimously agreed.

The Education Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report. Prior to a report being presented to Cabinet it was resolved that the Education Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Endorsed the recommendation to proceed to consultation on the proposal for the amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.
- (ii) Endorsed the recommendation to proceed to consultation via the process outlined in 5.4.3 and 5.5.4 in respect of Plasyfelin Primary School and the Centre for Vulnerable Learners that are not subject to the Statutory requirements of the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018.
- (iii) Endorsed a recommendation that £4.716m is set aside from the Authority's Place-Shaping Reserve in respect of the Authority's financial contribution to Phase 2 of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B programme.

9. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure presented the report to update the Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Local Authority (LA) in relation to the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018). Members were informed the purpose of the Act is to create the legislative framework to improve the planning and delivery of additional learning provision for children and young people. It focuses on identifying needs early, putting in place effective support and monitoring, and adapting interventions to ensure they deliver desired outcomes. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure thanked the Lead for Inclusion and ALN, her team and all partners for the huge amount of work that has gone into this so far and all in the interest of many of our most vulnerable learners.

The Lead for Inclusion and ALN responded to a query regarding funding for the additional learning centre at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and advised the Member that further discussions can be held with the Governing Body and the teacher regarding how that provision develops across the school.

Clarification was sought on a number of issues including the introduction of one page profiles for children with additional learning needs and it was confirmed that all staff are clear about the expectation of one page profiles and that they are in place for children. In response to a Member's query, the Lead for Inclusion and ALN provided further information in relation to developing and delivering the early year's training package for all childminders. The Officer also highlighted the importance in that all adults who support children are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the ALN Act.

Members noted the contents of the report and supported the LA's practice in embedding the ALN Act.

10. DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT YEAR END REPORT 2020/21

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure introduced the report to present the Scrutiny Committee with the year-end Education Services Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) which is part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. Members were informed that the DPA forms part of the Council's overall self-assessment activity and provides information and analysis for the year ending 2020/21. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services provided Members with a summary of the Directorates progress and priorities.

Members reviewed the Education Services Directorate Performance Assessment and discussed, challenged, and scrutinised the information contained within.

The meeting closed at 6.51 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2021 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR