



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David – Chair
Councillor J. Pritchard – Vice Chair

Councillors:

C. Durham, C. Gordon, D. Havard, G. Johnston, Mrs G.D. Oliver, D.W.R. Preece and Mrs M. Sargent.

Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning - Mrs R. Passmore

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), L. Bosanko-Williams (Children and Young People's Coordinator), K. Cole (Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), R. Clarke (Communities First Programme Development Officer), T. Cunnick (Manager - Community, Youth Service & Adult), A. Davies (Advisor – ALN), L. Davies (Hub Team Coordinator), J. Elias Service Manager - ALN), Sarah Mutch (Early Years Manager), E. Pryce (EAS), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

Co-opted Members: Mr A. Farina-Childs and Mrs A. Goss (Parent Governors)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, H.R. Davies, D.M. Gray, M.P. James, J.E. Roberts and R. Saralis. Apologies were also received from Mrs P. Ireland and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 8TH JULY 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held on 8th July 2014 (minute no. 1 – 12) be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

4. CALL - IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Councillor Mrs R. Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, provided Members with a verbal update on Adult Community Learning Results from 13/14 Academic Year. Members noted that the Gwent 5 County Welsh for Adults Partnership achieved very good accreditation outcomes last academic year, with Caerphilly providing the top percentage in all three recorded areas of retention, attainment and successful completion. In addition, the ACL Service won the 'Tutor of the Year' award and one of the 'Learner of the Year' awards at the 'Caerphilly Festival Planning Group Celebration of Achievement' event on the 16th September 2014.

In relation to the launch of Risca Integrated Children's Centre Unit (ICC), Members noted the official opening date of Risca ICC as 29th September 2014. The project was developed using Welsh Government Flying Start capital funding during the expansion of the Flying Start programme for the Ty Sign area (Wave 2). The ICC will host a multi agency team of health visitors; nursery nurses, family support workers and childcare, as well as enable partners to use the hot desk facility. The ICC also has a multi use community room with an attached crèche room and separate childcare space.

The ICC is set to bring a range of provision to the local area such as parent and toddler groups and a range of Communities First and Families First groups.

The Cabinet Member updated Members on an exciting initiative taking place in Phillipstown, which has resulted in Phillipstown Primary School winning the 'Caerphilly Learner of the Year' Award. Members noted that, in July 2013, the Staff at Phillipstown Primary School and the Connecting Community Officer organised a community fete, which was supported by Communities First Funding and a wide range of Community Partners and Council Departments. The fete was a huge success; many parents engaged in the Family Engagement project and a group of seven parents began to attend a wide range of courses and consequently formed a very active PTA, which they felt has helped them gain confidence and knowledge to support their children in their learning.

The Cabinet Member added that the project would be forwarded as a case study to Cast Cymru for possible inclusion in promotional literature and website.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for the update and were pleased to note the positive impacts of the initiatives.

A Member sought further information on the anticipated outcomes, as a result of opening the Risca ICC. Officers explained that the ICC is an expansion of the Flying Start Programme, which extends provision to the Ty Sign Area. The aim of the programme is to reduce the impacts of poverty and provide long-term benefits to children and parents in less affluent areas. The impact of the additional support would be monitored through both the health and education systems involved with the children and families.

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. MEASURING THE PROGRESS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS OF LEARNERS AND HOW SERVICES WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES

Councillor Gary Johnston requested that all presentations, including those accompanying a report, be sent to Members prior to the Committee. Officers agreed that this would be actioned for future meetings.

Sandra Aspinall, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, provided Members with an introduction and overview of the report, which demonstrated the impact of collaborative work being delivered throughout the borough to improve the lives for children, young people, families and communities, highlighting good practice.

Officers from Families First Programmes, Flying Start, Communities First, Youth Service and EAS provided presentations, which demonstrated how the strength of current strategies being implemented lies in the effective collaborative approach between key partners. Strong working relationships result in streamlining services and more targeted support, which ultimately work towards achieving the Directorate's goal, that every child should have the best start in life, and the opportunity to achieve success as a young person and adult.

Ed Pryce, EAS, highlighted that national and global research demonstrates that there is a significant link between socio-economic background and educational performance, this was further demonstrated through detailed performance data of the schools within the Caerphilly Borough in comparison to All Wales. It was added that a further report would be provided to the Committee at the meeting on 4th November 2014.

Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager, provided the Committee with an overview of the work of the Flying Start Programme. It was noted that Flying Start is a child focused, tackling poverty, intervention programme for 0-3 year olds delivered in 19 areas currently and expanding to a further 6 areas in 2015/16. Case Studies were provided to the Committee, in order to further demonstrate the work of the Flying Start Programme on local users and the impact it has had on their well-being.

Andrea Davies, Advisor- ALN, provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the Intervention Programme and the impacts on vulnerable learners. Members noted the data demonstrating the progress made, which is also used for the identification and tracking of pupil groups in order to evaluate and adjust programmes for most impact. It was added that, through collaborative working with EAS, schools are being challenged to raise their expectations, particularly in relation to vulnerable pupils and a mapping exercise is planned to be conducted to establish the impact of support on these particular learners.

Lynne Bosanko-Williams, Children and Young People's Coordinator, informed the Scrutiny Committee that Families First is dedicated to taking the whole family approach in order to improve the lives of children. It focuses on preventative work and early intervention throughout the borough. The aim is to empower families to become more resilient and to give them the support they need at the time when they need it. The packages of support provided are bespoke to individual family needs and range from providing basic literacy and numeracy in the home to build confidence to progress, to receiving a coordinated family package of services and support through the Team Around the Family Model, known as the Supporting Family Change project. Case Studies were provided in order to demonstrate to the Committee, real life examples of the support provided to families in receipt of service and their needs.

Tanis Cunnick, (Manager - Community, Youth Service & Adult), Lisa Davies (Hub Team Coordinator) and Rachel Clarke (Communities First Programme Development Officer) provided the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the collaborative work of the Youth Service and Communities First to deliver projects such as Youth Crime Prevention Project, Family Engagement Project and Pupil Deprivation Grant Project, along with case studies demonstrating how each of the projects have had an impact on the lives of young people and their families, in order to assist them to create a better future.

Members thanked the Officers for the detailed report and presentations, but added that due to the complexity of the subject matter, it may have been more beneficial to separate the presentations.

Detailed discussions ensued and Councillor Denver Preece requested further information on the number of children being supported through the intervention programmes of Catch Up, in both English and Welsh Medium Schools, and the Specialist Teacher Team. Officers agreed to email the details.

A Member queried the EAS Performance data and sought further information on the level of performance at KS3, compared to that of KS2 and Foundation Phase. It was added that, although there has been an increase in performance, it is still below the Welsh Average. Officers confirmed that there has been progress made in performance of pupils at KS3, and work is underway to continue improving the performance of pupils, at all levels.

Members discussed the intervention programmes and the strategies in place within schools to encourage a change in culture and improvement in attainment and performance data. It was noted that best practice sharing is a key element to success and many teachers within the borough are involved in best practice sharing. Members were asked to note however, that performance data does not necessarily reflect on the quality of teaching in schools.

Members raised concerns about the funding routes of many of the projects that were presented to the Committee. Due to the cuts experienced across the board, concerns were raised about the future of the projects and the potential impact on the Service Users. It was noted that funding has been secured for the Flying Start Programme, which is undergoing expansion works across the borough, however some projects are facing uncertainty and possible cuts during the year. Members noted however that the services provided are key, therefore different approaches are being explored in order to provide services with the resources available.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers for the detailed reports and presentations and noted the report.

8. ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) REVIEW

Jacquelyn Elias (Service Manager - ALN) and Andrea Davies (Advisor – ALN) provided the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee with an update on the progress Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Review.

The aim of the ALN review is to identify strengths and areas for development of the current services and to provide options for the delivery of services for children and young people with additional learning needs.

Officers highlighted that a recommendation from the review was that a more in-depth review of behaviour provision and intervention is necessary; planning for which has begun and the review will be conducted in the Autumn.

Members noted that a recommendation of the review was to develop a specialist resource base class, therefore, following consultation with Governing Bodies of Trinity Fields and Cwm

If for Primary School, it was agreed that a specialist resource base class, as a satellite class of Trinity Fields be developed. The class will be open early autumn term 2014 and supports the Local Authority's commitment to extend opportunities for inclusion for all pupils across and within a variety of settings. In addition, it was identified.

Officers highlighted that the report demonstrated recommendations for a way forward with regard to funding models and the rationalisation and re-designation of Specialist Resources Base (SRB) provision.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the officers for the report and detailed overview and debate ensued. Members discussed the various options within the report, and it was noted that, on consultation, teachers expressed a preference to Option 3. Members discussed the levels of flexibility within the options and the financial implications of each. Officers assured Members that the process was not intended to be a cost cutting exercise and the needs of the users are paramount. Further review is required, however, officers highlighted that there was no rationale in the previous funding methods.

A Member queried the curriculum and whether design and technology would be an option. Members noted that the full curriculum is offered, which includes design and technology. Trinity Fields has been well adapted to accommodate children with different needs and abilities and there is budget available for specific tools and equipment in order to integrate pupils into the curriculum.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers for the report and noted the proposals.

9. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE PLACED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

Members were reminded that a consultation is currently taking place around the Forward Work Programmes; Members were invited to feed directly into this with any requests for reports.

1. Members asked for a progress report on Schools Challenge Cymru.

10. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. They were not brought forward for review.

1. Caerphilly Youth Service Strategy 2014-2019;
2. 21st Century Schools: Gateway Review;
3. Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme;
4. Summary of Members Attendance- Quarter 1- 8th May 2014 to 30th June 2014.

The meeting closed at 8:09pm.

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 4th November 2014, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIRMAN