



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 28TH MARCH 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor T. Parry - Chair

Councillors:

E. M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, A. Farina-Childs, A. Gair, C. Gordon, M.P. James, L. Phipps, M. Powell, J. Rao (Vice Chair), J. E. Roberts, J. Winslade and K. Woodland.

Cabinet Members:

Councillor C. Andrews (Education and Communities).

Together with:

Officers: S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), J. Southcombe (Finance Manager), E. Pryce (Assistant Director: Policy and Strategy, Education Achievement Service), J. Keohane (Assistant Director, Education Achievement Service), S. Speedy (School Improvement Partner, Education Achievement Service), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

Also present:

Co-opted Member: Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative).

Also in Attendance:

Mrs P. Ireland (NEU) and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting would be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items - [Click here to view](#). The Committee was advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B. Miles, together with Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative), Mr G. James (Parent Governor Representative), and Mrs J. Havard (NEU).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 14TH FEBRUARY 2023

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14th February 2023 be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 15 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14th February 2023 (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 Officer presented the report which outlined details of the Education Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the period March 2023 until June 2023 and included all reports that were identified at the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14th February 2023.

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, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms 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. SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES UNDER THE NEW COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (CIF) – JANUARY 2022 TO DECEMBER 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report which informed Members of the judgements made by Estyn inspections teams of Caerphilly schools from January 2022 – December 2023 (where published). Members were asked to consider the contents of the report and raise any questions or comments they may have of officers about the information contained within.

The Assistant Director, Policy and Strategy, Education Achievement Service, informed Members that the schools included in the report were inspected from January 2022 onwards and each of them were inspected under the arrangements for inspections that came into effect from 1st January 2022, with the first two terms being considered pilot arrangements. The report identified the schools and the dates on which the inspections took place, together with the follow up category.

Members were informed of the changes made to the 4-point judgement scale, which no longer gave a separate judgement on 'current performance' and 'prospects for improvement' and had been amended to focus on actions to be taken to support improvement (Excellent, Good, Adequate and needs improvement, and Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement). Members were also informed of the 3 follow-up categories of support, which included Estyn review, significant improvement, and special measures.

A Member queried how teachers are supported in relation to the key themes within the report, with the most frequent references referred to, and sought clarification on the level of Welsh being taught in Caerphilly schools. Members were advised that Estyn have returned to inspections after 2 years. The level of Welsh has been recognised and the provision of Welsh in schools is currently being considered by EAS to see where support needs to be targeted in schools. The Member noted that teachers could improve the teaching of Welsh by speaking Welsh more in school, and that if they lacked the confidence to do so, they could be offered more training. Members were advised that a separate report on Welsh provision in schools could be provided to Members at a future meeting.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee noted its contents.

8. EDUCATION ACHIEVMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2023-2025.

The Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2023-2025 was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee, which was introduced by the EAS Assistant Director (Policy and Strategy). Members heard how the current Business Plan spanned three years, 2022-2025, which was agreed in 2022. The document under discussion contained the next iteration of this three-year plan and covered the period from June 2023 to April 2025.

A Member queried if it would be possible to have training sessions for School Governors on interviewing candidates for positions at schools and for sitting on pupil exclusion panels. The EAS Assistant Director advised that he would liaise with Local Education Authority colleagues regarding future provision of such training. The Chief Education Officer also provided further details of the current training programme and outlined how Member involvement in shaping content was being sought.

The Chair sought clarification on the impact on the County Borough of reducing operational costs and restructuring EAS staff as highlighted in paragraph 8.3 of the report. The EAS Assistant Director provided assurances that they would be seeking to minimise any impact on the support received by schools and that service models would be realigned rather than reduced. The Chair then questioned the impact of the possible circa 10% reduction in EAS funding from the Gwent Local Authorities. The EAS Assistant Director recognised that there was uncertainty around the funding model but assured Members that EAS and the Local

Authorities were working together to minimise any impact on the support provided by EAS.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee provided comments as part of the consultation process.

9. SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS.

The Assistant Director, Education Achievement Service introduced the report which informed Members of the school improvement work undertaken in Caerphilly schools from September 2022 – December 2023. The purpose of the report was to seek Members' views on the school improvement work. Members were advised that the Education Achievement Service (EAS) provides school improvement support, on behalf of Caerphilly Local Authority and the report outlined the key aspects of the EAS work, along with key actions and responsibilities of the Local Authority to support schools in Caerphilly.

Members were provided with information on the 'professional discussions' that had taken place between the schools, the Local Authority and the EAS, which focus on school priorities for improvement and the progress the school is making towards them. Members were advised that 19 professional discussions had taken place since September 2022.

Members were also informed of the School Improvement Partners (SIPs), who provide commentary for all schools, on a termly basis, on the progress they are making towards their school development plan priorities. Information was also provided on the EAS supported self-evaluation activity (SSE), the celebrate, share, support, refine (CSSR) teaching approach, and the team around the school meetings (TAS).

Members were advised that the EAS had commissioned Professor Mick Waters for the Curriculum for Wales Cluster Working, who would work alongside clusters to complete an action research project focussing on securing a shared understanding of learner progress on a cluster basis. Members were informed that 6 clusters were already working on this, and 1 school had opted out as they had found their own professional learning.

A Member queried how schools are encouraged to participate in the CSSR teaching approach. Members were advised that schools would be shown the positive results from other schools that had already taken part.

A Member noted that 13 schools had taken part in the TAS meetings and queried how other schools could be identified if they needed the same support. Members were advised that all schools are encouraged to request this type of support, which can cover specific items ranging from attendance to staffing issues.

A Member queried whether there had been any feedback from the schools that were working with Professor Mick Waters. Members were advised that feedback had been received which was positive, and this information could be circulated to Members after the meeting.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee noted its contents.

10. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT DELEGATION.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the progress of the Local Authority in relation to the delegation of additional support to schools.

The Chair queried why an Integrated Impact Assessment had not been carried out at this stage and yet one would be included for Cabinet consideration when the work was completed. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN advised that as work was still ongoing an Integrated Impact

Assessment was not deemed appropriate for this report but that one would be included in a future report when a proper assessment could be made upon completion of the work under discussion. The Chief Education Officer reiterated that once a model had been adopted a full Integrated Impact Assessment would be carried out.

One Member highlighted the importance of individual needs at schools and sought clarification on the criteria for ALN support. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN outlined how the work being carried out sought to address any current inequalities in the system and advised the Member that if a future ALN report in May did not provide clarity further information would be provided for him.

A Member raised an issue outlined in paragraph 5.5 and enquired why it was that under different formulas there were always some schools that appear to have less funding than allocated through the present funding system and some that will have more. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN highlighted the work being done by the delegation of additional support group on identifying the differences in terms of distribution and how plans are made to address these variations. The Member also asked why the options listed in paragraph 5.12 were all based on pupil population across the school. The Lead for Inclusion and ALN outlined how it was a more equitable way of identifying funding and stressed that this was not the only resource to support children with additional learning needs. The Chief Education Officer added that the ambition was to empower schools to be able to train staff to match the needs of pupils.

The Chair asked about the funding for schools with high levels of deprivation. The Chief Education Officer advised that the delegation of additional support group was made up of headteachers from a wide range of schools from all areas.

One Member asked about future plans if the trend for cutting the budget for additional learning needs continued. The Chief Education Officer highlighted the challenges of forecasting what future funding would be and highlighted the importance of empowering schools to be able to provide quality training with the support of partners. The Finance Manger highlighted that the associated budget had grown by an additional £1.5M and that schools were allocated funds at an earlier stage to help with their internal planning. The Finance Manager was also able to share some indicative grant funding information for ALN from the Welsh Government which was an uplift of £5M across Wales. So, there would be some additional funding for local authorities but at this stage specific information was not available.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet: -

1. To support the LA's intended approach to the delegation of additional support funding to schools.

The meeting closed at 7.11 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2023, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR