



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 24TH APRIL 2018 AT 5.30PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillor W. David - Chair

Councillors:

C. Andrews, P.J. Bevan, A. Collis, S. Cook, D. Havard, Mrs B. Miles, Mrs T. Parry, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis and R. Whiting

Mrs P. Marsden (Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement)

Together with:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), S. Richards (Head of Strategy Service – Education, Planning and Strategy), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), B. Cox (Acting Principal Educational Psychologist), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), and C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer).

Mr C. Lewis (Assistant Head Teacher, Blackwood Comprehensive School) and Mrs V. Jenkins-Delf (Head Teacher, Bedwas Infants School)

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: Mr R. Morgan (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs P. Ireland (NUT) and Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, A. Farina-Childs, D.T. Hardacre, Mrs G. D. Oliver, Mr M. Barry (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs J. Havard (NUT) 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 – 26TH FEBRUARY 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 26th February 2018 (minute nos 1-11) 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. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

The Cabinet Member, Councillor Philippa Marsden referred the Committee to her newsletter, which was circulated earlier in the week.

Members were referred to the first edition of the newsletter and asked to note the contents, which included an update on E-Bugs Training Event, which was arranged by the Healthy Schools Team to promote Public Health Wales E-Bugs Resources and raise awareness for pupils around hygiene.

The Committee noted the successes of the Music Services as well as the World Down's Syndrome Day Celebrations, which was celebrated by staff and pupils at Islwyn High School in March. The newsletter referred to the work of the Crucial Crew event, which was held at Blackwood RFC to promote and deliver important life skills from Road Safety, South Wales Fire and Rescue, Dogs Trust, Recycling Department and the Food Standards Agency.

Details were provided on the list of achievements which included Caerphilly being on of 3 local authorities in Wales to have a Special School Achieve the National Quality Award for Healthy Schools, Caerphilly Library Services were ranked 4th out of 22 library services in Wales, following the achievement of the Core Entitlements and Caerphilly were recognised as the best performing authority for Adult Education within the Gwent Partnership. Members were also pleased to note the inclusion and format of school attendance and comparative data between Caerphilly and Wales since 2016/17.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for the Newsletter and commendations were made on the level of information and innovativeness of the document.

6. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Head of Democratic Services presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from April 2018 to July 2018.

Members were asked to note that there have been no changes to the Forward Work Programme; however, the Committee were reminded that a Workshop has been arranged for the 18th June 2018, at 5pm, in which Members will be afforded the opportunity to consider reports going forward.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the programme be approved and published.

7. 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.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION – THAT CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL INTRODUCE FEMALE HYGIENE SUPPORT FOR ALL YOUNG FEMALES WITHIN OUT SCHOOL SETTING

The report, which sought consideration of the Committee for the Notice of Motion that Caerphilly County Borough Council adds its support to introducing free female hygiene support for all young females within school settings, and make a recommendation to Cabinet.

A Notice of Motion was received from Councillor E. Forehead, with the support of Councillor J. Pritchard, which meets the criteria set out in the Council's Constitution and, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, was referred for consideration.

The Committee noted that it is widely accepted that women and girls in Wales cannot afford to buy essential feminine hygiene products when they need them. In March 2018, the Authority accepted a one off discretionary grant payment from Welsh Government of £41,657 to be spent in relation to the investment in the improvement of toilet facilities and feminine hygiene hardware in schools. In addition, Welsh Government has made available revenue grant funding of £13,206 for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years. This funding must be used to provide feminine hygiene products to those women and girls most in need in the Authority.

Members were asked to note that on the most recent pupil data, there are currently 4,774 girls in Secondary Schools (Years 7 to 11). On this data alone it is estimated that the cost to provide feminine hygiene products for all would be in the region of £100k. This is based on a monthly cost of £2 per pupil.

The Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider a recommendations to create a Task and Finish Working Group, which it is proposed will give consideration to the allocation of spend in relation to the Welsh Government Grant, along with options going forward.

Members considered the report in detail and sought clarification from Officers whether charities or support from Local Businesses had been considered to reduce the financial burden on the Authority. Officers explained that, since the writing of the report, it has been noted that there are Charitable Organisations providing similar support and there are some schemes operating within schools, however, it is unclear as to the sustainability of this provision and it is imperative that, whatever outcome is agreed, it must be both sustainable and consistent across the Authority. Members were reminded that a recommendation to establish a working group had been suggested within the report, the remit of which would be to consider all current services and financial options.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report the Notice of Motion be supported in principle and it be recommended to Cabinet that a Task and Finish Working Group be established.

9. SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The report provided Members with an update on the progress made in relation to the challenges faced by children and young people, and the developments for meeting children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health needs.

The Committee noted that wellbeing is a priority both nationally and locally and features as a priority within the directorate. Inclusions teams provide direct advice and support to schools, provide individual work to support children and young people and provide training and support to build capacity in schools and alternative provisions in relation to wellbeing.

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) are involved in strategic work to develop guidance and seek the views of children and young people. Data collection in relation to vulnerable groups is being developed further and a framework for wellbeing is being developed by the EPS.

It was noted that Officers are working with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and partners in relation to the wellbeing strategy. Development work is proposed to continue to support building capacity in schools and educational provision. Financial implications of which were detailed within the report.

The Committee welcomed Mr C. Lewis, Assistant Head Teacher – Blackwood Comprehensive School.

Mr Lewis provided the Committee with a presentation on the work undertaken at Blackwood Comprehensive School, in order to promote Wellbeing and Mental Health. It was noted that there are a number of issues impacting on the wellbeing and mental health of young people, which include Social Media and the focus on exams and results driven targets.

Blackwood Comprehensive School provide support for pupils through a Counsellor, however, with the increasing need for support, additional and alternative provisions are being considered.

The Committee noted that Mindfulness is aimed to afford the practice to focus the mind to the present through a practice of meditation. Some of the staff have taken part in Mindfulness Training, in order to equip them with the skills and knowledge to deliver the course to pupils within the school. However, it was noted that, following the training, there was evidence of improvement in mood, wellbeing and a reduction in levels of stress of those staff members undertaking the training.

Mr Lewis explained that there are 2 members of staff within the school that have been trained to deliver the course to young people. It is anticipated that Mindfulness will be timetabled at the beginning of the new Academic Year and work will be undertaken to identify pupils that would benefit from the training. It was acknowledged that, whilst this training will not be suitable for all pupils demonstrating issues with stress, anxiety and other mental health issues, it is one of the methods the school will be promoting in order to help mitigate the impact on pupils and improve the overall wellbeing of the school.

The Committee thanked Mr Lewis for the presentation and discussion ensued.

A Member queried how staff would identify the pupils to take part in the course. It was noted that often the pupils will identify themselves, due to their emotional needs, they may present to staff and seek help or there could be a noted change in their behaviour. Members were asked to note that Mindfulness would not be the solution for all pupils, and often there would be a requirement to meet with the pupil and parents and consider different avenues in order to provide the right support to the individual.

Members sought further information on the proposed timetabled Mindfulness course, in relation to capacity, length of the course and scheduling. It was noted that, depending on the number of staff trained to provide the course, each staff member could provide the course to no more than 20 pupils over an 8 week period. It is hoped that, with consideration for the staff's timetables, that the course can be delivered as part of the curriculum as opposed to an extra curricular activity.

The Committee thanked Mr Lewis for his presentation and welcomed Mrs V. Jenkins-Delf, Head Teacher – Bedwas Infants School to the Committee.

Mrs Jenkins-Delf explained that wellbeing of the staff and pupils within her school was paramount and the school had recently implemented the Thrive Programme, which is an evidence-based training programme that teaches people the skills and resources to overcome mental health issues and learn to thrive.

The programme was implemented as a result of some issues within the nursery in which children were presenting with some very challenging behaviours, such as expressions through anger and aggression and were close to exclusion. As a result of the Thrive Programme, practice within the school has changed and the staff were able to get through a challenging academic year.

The Committee noted that the programme was able to equip staff with the skills and resources to handle the situations in more positive ways and mitigate the impact on the pupils and school.

The Committee thanked the Head Teacher for the presentation and were pleased to note the proactive approaches being adopted by schools within Caerphilly County Borough Council.

A Member sought further information on the Thrive Programme and how it works. The Head teacher invited Members to visit the school to see the way in which the programme has been implemented. It was noted that the programme has enabled staff to respond to situations differently, to be more tolerant and mindful of each other and there is positive evidence of the implications and benefits to the families.

The Committee thanked the Head Teacher for her presentation.

Members discussed the report at length and were pleased to note the extensive work and support in place for schools around preventative and proactive interventions.

A Member sought further information around Restorative approached and it was noted that there are programmes in place in some schools, such as Thrive, which demonstrate positive impacts on the learning environment, wellbeing and a reduction in exclusions. Members were assured that each of the programmes are evidenced based and tried and tested before they are implemented within the schools.

The Committee thanked the Officers for the detailed reports and presentations and noted its content and the usage of sum previously agreed by Cabinet on 31st January 2018.

10. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHILDCARE OFFER FOR WALES

The report provided the Committee with an update on the first six months of implementation of the Childcare Offer in the first of the wellbeing community areas and plan towards full roll out across the borough from April 2018.

It was noted that the Welsh Government recognises that childcare is one of the biggest challenges facing working families in Wales and developing an enhanced childcare offer was a top priority. Supporting families with quality, flexible and affordable childcare supports

economic regeneration, can reduce pressures on family income and help parents to participate in work, thus reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the wellbeing of children through positive and rich childcare experiences.

The Welsh Government manifesto in 2016 launched a new Childcare Offer for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds in part time Foundation Phase Education. The Welsh Government intends to provide 30 hours of funded early education and childcare per week for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds in part time Foundation Phase provision, for 48 weeks per year by the end of their term in Government 2020/2021.

Caerphilly joined the Early Implementers for the Childcare Offer Phase 1 in March 2017 with implementation of the first funded childcare places in September 2017.

Mid Valleys East was the first area to begin the Childcare Offer which was rolled around to include Lower Sirhowy Valley and Caerphilly Basin in January 2018 and will now also include the final 2 areas at the start of the summer term 2018.

In the first term 98 applications were received for 95 approved eligible places, with 79 children from families taking up the funded provision. At 26th March 2018, 510 applications have been received in total with 468 approved and confirmed as eligible with the costs rising from £17,759.25 per month in September to £78,583.50 per month in February 2018. This funding is paid direct to the childcare sector which is primarily voluntary sector organisations to offset the costs of childcare to working families.

The Childcare Offer video clip has helped families to understand the process for applying for Childcare Offer funding and has been viewed many times on social media. It is used in conjunction with other leaflets and marketing materials to ensure as many eligible parents are reached as possible.

In Newline April 2018 a family explained the impact of the Childcare Offer on their personal circumstances.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Members noted the increase in applications and information was sought on how this is managed within the team. Officers explained that there are systems in place to process the applications within the required timescales and extensive work has been undertaken with Childcare providers in order to ensure that invoices etc. are provided in a timely manner.

A Member, in noting that the Childcare Offer aims to reduce poverty, queried the eligibility criteria in terms of earnings. Officers explained that the scheme is aimed at parents working 16+ hours per week and who are not earning above £100k. To date, applications have been received from the families the scheme has been targeted at; there have been no applications higher earning families.

Members discussed the allocation of Childcare and it was noted that there are a wide range of providers signed up to the scheme, including childminders who are able to cover some shift patterns, as well as private day nurseries. The funding is not tied to the provision itself, but to the child, therefore, should parents wish to utilise provision outside of the borough, this could be considered.

The Committee discussed the application process and it was noted that work is currently underway with procurement to source an online application system, and it is hoped that this would be in place for the September intake.

The Committee thanked the Officer for the detailed report and noted its content and implementation to date.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair, Councillor W. David announced that this would be his last meeting as Chair and thanked the Committee for their support, enthusiasm and excellent scrutiny during his term in the Chair.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2018 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR