



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 8TH JANUARY 2019 AT 5.30PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D. Havard - Chair
Councillor C. Andrews - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

P.J. Bevan, A. Collis, S. Cook, W. David, A. Farina-Childs, Mrs T. Parry, J.E. Roberts, R. Saralis and J. Simmonds

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer) and K. Houghton (Committee Services Officer).

Also Present:

Co-opted Members: D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association), M. Barry and R. Morgan (Parent Governors), P.J. Ireland (NUT) and M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative)

E. Pryce (EAS), J. Wood (EAS), S.Davies (EAS) and J. Kendall (Headteacher – Risca Community Comprehensive School)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.T. Hardacre, M.P. James, B. Miles, Mrs G.D. Oliver and R. Whiting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 6TH NOVEMBER 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Tuesday the 6th November 2018 (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. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

The Chair drew Members attention to the report previously circulated and it was noted without comment. Members were asked to provide any feedback directly to Councillor and the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her report.

6. EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Scrutiny Officer presented the report which outlined the draft Education for Life Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme from January 2019 to June 2019. She outlined proposed changes to the FWP and Members were asked to consider the work programme and agree the proposed changes, make any amendments or propose any additional items to be included for future meetings.

A Member requested an update on progress made in the review of the following three areas; post-16 education, Single sex education and surplus places in schools. The Head of Education Planning and Strategy assured Members that the review was progressing and the name of who will be conducting the review will be released next week with the review anticipated to take 3-6months with the findings to be reported to Scrutiny during the summer term.

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 work programme appended to the report be approved.

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. DRAFT EDUCATION ATTAINMENT STRATEGY

The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services introduced the report which updated Members on the work being undertaken to develop the draft Attainment Strategy for Caerphilly. He shared the progress to date and sought their views on the draft strategy prior to presentation to Cabinet.

He informed Members that the draft Strategy was before them and the Action Plan detailing the delivery of the plan would be reported to the Committee on 19th February 2019. Members were advised that although the Strategy focuses on Key stages 4 and 5, it will impact across the whole education system.

He referred Members to the vision detailed in the draft Strategy and provided Members with an outline of the Strategy's corporate context in being part of the developing #TeamCaerphilly narrative and tied into the Welsh Government's vision for education locally, regionally and nationally.

Members attention was drawn to section 6 of the draft Attainment Strategy which detailed the findings produced from a series of summit meetings held with each secondary school in the County Borough. It was highlighted that these findings have been key to formulating the Strategy and Action Plan along with the recently conducted self-evaluation process. The following Action Plan would detail the key areas of activity undertaken by individual schools, the local authority and the EAS.

Members enquired as to what would be the reporting process on the progress of the Strategy. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services advised Members that this would be detailed in the Action Plan which will be presented to the Committee and reassured Members that the Education Directorate would continue to engage with the Scrutiny Committee throughout the Strategy's implementation.

A lengthy discussion was had regarding the 19 priorities as set out in the draft strategy. Members raised concerns that there were too many priorities to realistically address. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services informed Members that this was the initial stages of the Strategy and the Action Plan would refine these priorities. There would also be adjustments to the ranking of the priorities as the implementation of the Strategy develops. Officers also highlighted that the priorities emphasised the scale of change required and some had been progressed already. It was also stated that the priorities would have different emphasises in individual schools according to their differing pressures.

A Member noted that there did not seem much consideration of raising aspirations within the draft Strategy. The Strategic Lead for School Improvement advised Members that raising aspirations was an important element of school improvement and there are a variety of projects being run with the EAS such as STEM and the introduction of the new curriculum and therefore opportunities to support and raise aspirations continue to be provided.

Following discussion on the draft Attainment Strategy a further presentation was made by the head teacher for Risca Community Comprehensive School providing Members with an overview of the Caerphilly Learning Partnership's (CLP) role in forming the draft Strategy. Members were referred to Section 4 of the draft Attainment Strategy which details the guiding principles formed by a CLP working group. These guiding principles represented the underpinning values and vision of the CLP.

A Member enquired as to what work was currently being undertaken to encourage vocational training in the County Borough. The Head Teacher for Risca Community Comprehensive School responded that vocational training is playing an increasing role in the future vision for education in the County Borough. Education provider's accountability to WG is changing and moving away from being solely based on L2 English and Maths. The emphasise is shifting towards the offering of a wider range of courses in schools and colleges. The CLP is working in partnership with colleges to address this shift.

Members discussed whether there exists an unfair comparison between performance in secondary schools and performance in Primary schools. Officers responded that this was not necessarily the case but it was difficult to conduct Primary to Secondary school comparisons.

The Chair thanked Officers, the head teacher for Risca Community Comprehensive School and Members for their contributions to the discussion.

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

RESOLVED that the Cabinet consider the comments made by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee.

9. PERFORMANCE KEY STAGE 4 / KEY STAGE 5 – DECEMBER 2018

The Education Achievement Service (EAS) representatives introduced the report which presented Members with the final published 2018 performance data for Key Stages 4 and 5. He referred Members to the data contained within the report and highlighted to Members particular areas to note including data on L2 threshold, gender difference, Free School Meals (FSM) and individual school rankings. Members were asked to note that there would be a broader sweep of indicators next year which will better measure performance.

The Chair thanked the EAS representatives for their presentation and Members questions were welcomed.

Members expressed concerns regarding the performance of secondary schools in the County Borough. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services advised Members that performance at Key Stages 4 and 5 was based on fine margins with pupils that sit on the borderlines of achieving a D or C grade having a significant impact on the end performance data. This is where the focus needs to be directed in terms of raising those pupils in the upper margins of a D grade band in to the C grade band. The improved performance measures means that the data can be drilled down to individual pupil level in order to identify the best approaches and interventions to raise attainment particularly where pupils sit on the borderlines of grade boundaries. He stated that fine tuning improvement measures in this way would potentially have a significant impact on the final performance outcomes. The EAS representatives confirmed the complexity of the measures in place and that one small change can have a high impact on overall performance. They also emphasised to Members that this was the first year of data produced by these measures and so comparison with previous years is not necessarily valuable in assessing the current performance of secondary schools in the County Borough.

A Member enquired as to the timelines for improvements at Key Stages 4 and 5 as pupils continues to move through the system and whether this would be in time to have an impact on children entering into the secondary school system this year and onwards. An EAS representative advised Members that the rate of improvement can be dependent on individual schools and how they both build up their performance level and then importantly, how they sustain that level of performance overtime.

Further to the discussion on timelines of improvement and in reference to the draft attainment strategy, Members sought clarity on when measures would begin to produce data that would provide reassurance that the strategy is effective and having a positive impact on attainment. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services informed Members that the strategy was long term and interventions made at years 7 and 8 would take a few years to fully indicate the impact of the Strategy as pupils move through the system. Results are measured on a medium and long term basis. He anticipates it will become easier to provide assurances on the strategy's effectiveness as work on it progresses and the Committee will be engaged with throughout this time. He is also confident that the approach to forming the Strategy has resulted in the Authority having a clear set of actions for the first time and as various actions are tested in schools then provisions are in place to share best practices across the County Borough therefore any parts of the strategy that aren't working as well as others will be identified quickly and those that are working well will be shared across the system.

A Member questioned the difference between Primary and Secondary school overall performance and whether Primary schools were being overrated. An EAS representative advised Members that Primary schools were not overrated and that focus in previous years

has been on the Foundation through to Key Stage 3 phases and this is reflected in the performance data. There is still work to be done at Key Stage 3 but the focus has now shifted to Key Stages 4 and 5 however some focus also needs to be on sustaining the learning momentum gained at Primary school through to Secondary.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Achievement informed Members that the Strategy was focused on building sustained resilience for learners and although progress has been slow, she is confident in the measures in place to improve the learning experience for individual pupils.

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

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 18:55pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 19th February 2019 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR