



## ***EDUCATION, SKILLS AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE***

***2.00 PM THURSDAY, 13 APRIL 2023***

***PORT TALBOT CIVIC CENTRE / REMOTELY - HYBRID***

**All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting**

This meeting will be recorded for broadcast via the Council's Internet Site. By participating you are consenting to being filmed and the possible use of those images and sound recordings for training purposes.

### **PART 1**

1. Chair's Announcements
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 3 - 16*)
  - 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022
  - 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022
  - 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023
4. Pre-Decision Scrutiny  
To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board agenda for Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports included for Scrutiny Members)
5. Forward Work Programme 2022/23 (*Pages 17 - 18*)
6. Urgent Items  
Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to

Section 100BA(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**K.Jones**  
**Chief Executive**

**Civic Centre**  
**Port Talbot**

**Wednesday, 5 April 2023**

**Committee Membership:**

**Chairperson:**                   **Councillor R.Phillips**

**Vice Chairperson:**       **Councillor D.Thomas**

**Councillors:**                   W.Carpenter, M.Crowley, N.Goldup-John,  
J.Henton, J.Jones, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees,  
S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds and D.Whitelock

**\*Co-opted**                           A. Amor, M.Caddick and L.Newman  
**Voting Members**

**\*Co-opted Non**                   R.De Benedictis  
**Voting Members**

**Notes:**

- (1) *If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

## Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

24 November 2022

Port Talbot Civic Centre / Remotely - Hybrid

<b>Chairperson:</b>	<b>Councillor J.Henton</b>
<b>Councillors:</b>	W.Carpenter, M.Crowley, N.Goldup-John, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, D.Whitelock, S.Harris and S.K.Hunt
<b>Co-opted Voting Members:</b>	M.Caddick
<b>Officers In Attendance</b>	H.Lervy, C.Millis, Thomas, A.Thomas, P.Walker, R.Crowhurst and W.John and A.Thomas
<b>Cabinet Invitees:</b>	Councillors J.Hurley and N.Jenkins

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### 1. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, it was agreed that Cllr Henton chair the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was confirmed that the committee would be scrutinising Cabinet Board Agenda Items 7, 8 and 9.

### 2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were received from:

Cllr M Crowley      Item 7 (Cabinet Board), Personal, Non-Prejudicial

Marie Caddick      Item 7(Cabinet Board), Personal, Prejudicial.

Cllr S. Hunt      Item 8 (Cabinet Board), Personal, Non-Prejudicial

### 3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

#### **Band C Schools**

Officers confirmed that the report outlines and recommends the next tranche of schools that require significant capital investment. There is no requirement to consult at this stage. The report hopes to secure outline investment from the Welsh Government Capital Funding Programme. However, it was noted that if this is approved, an outline business case will need to be presented to Welsh Government to for each proposal, in order to secure funding.

Members asked if officers could provide clarity on the criteria for the selection of schools and what weighting is given to certain aspects i.e. pupil numbers, welsh language etc. in order for members to be informed of the process.

Officers confirmed that the Welsh Government Capital Programme is aimed at reducing building maintenance backlog over a period of time. Officers outlined how the Education and Environment directorates work together to identify schools which may present challenging future business continuity issues and how they are prioritised. There is no specific priority given to Welsh medium schools. However, Welsh language has been taken into consideration in the recently approved WESP and if this is to be delivered successfully it will require significant capital funding to deliver its ambitions.

Members queried if officers anticipate any impact on funding discussion with Welsh Government regarding the possibility of delays or decision on using current Welsh Government funds for the new school, pool and additional learning needs unit in the Swansea Valley?

Officers confirmed that the amount of money currently secured for reinvestment in the Swansea Valleys £22.5million, and that money is secured for a specific project. If the project does not go ahead, then the money can't be drawn down. There is a general concern in terms of the cost of construction and the general ability for the local authority to fund in terms of its budget position. It was noted that it is likely that Welsh Government may consider funding fewer schemes, due to the increased construction costs. Officers advised that schemes going forward would need to have a strong economic argument in order to have the best possible chance of securing funding.

Members specifically raised concerns in relation to the number of additional learning needs for Llangatwg School and if the number of places is sufficient for future planning? Concerns were also raised about the outline proposals to demolish the 1929 built part of the school and the possible loss of the swimming pool, which is used by the community.

Officers confirmed that there are additional learning needs places in several of the proposals. Further, that there will be a report on this item when considering

next year's budget. In relation to the specifics of any proposals, the relevant communities will be consulted and consideration will be given as to how to best deliver the proposals within the community. There are no firm proposals for development at this time.

Following scrutiny, Members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered by Cabinet Board.

### **Cefn Coed Options Appraisal Report**

The local member for the area provided a brief overview of the history of the colliery and some information with regards to what the museum holds.

Members were informed that an updated strategy would be brought before the committee in Spring.

Members noted the expenditure outlined in the 2019 masterplan of £5.2m and a grant was offered of £2.7m. Members queried what evidence there was or a strategy to support the difference in funding. Officers advised that Heritage Lottery Funding would be the starting point with further sources of funding also to be considered. If the report is approved, a consultant would be worked with to consider this in detail.

Following scrutiny, Members were supportive of the recommendations to be considered by Cabinet.

### **Creation of a Regional Partnership for Sport and Physical Activity in West Wales**

Officers advised that a joined up regional approach to sport and physical activity is being strongly encouraged by Welsh Government.

Officers noted that a further report would be brought forward outlining how the company would be legally and financially operating and that the Sports Council are satisfied with the approach.

Members sought assurances that grass roots sports would be included as part of the partnership approach. Officers confirmed that the partnership would provide assistance to develop at grass roots level.

With regards to the financing of the partnership, the Sports Council have offered assurance that the appointment of a senior officer for the partnership and an administrative support, will be fully funded by Sports Wales and will not be deducted from any grant money received by NPTCBC.

Members asked to be kept up to date with regards to how sporting clubs can make links and get involved with the partnership once it has been formed.

Following scrutiny, Members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered by Cabinet.

4. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

Members noted this item for information.

5. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

**Councillor J.Henton**

**Chairperson**

## Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

8 December 2022

Port Talbot Civic Centre / Remotely - Hybrid

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<b>Chairperson:</b>	<b>Councillor R.Phillips</b>
<b>Councillors:</b>	W.Carpenter, M.Crowley, N.Goldup-John, J.Henton, J.Jones, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds and D.Whitelock
<b>Co-opted Voting Members:</b>	M.Caddick and L.Newman
<b>Officers In Attendance</b>	I.Guy, H.Lervy, C.Millis, A.Thomas, P.Walker, R.Crowhurst, W.John, J.Burge, S.Jones, H.Thomas, S.McCluskie and A.Thomas.
<b>Cabinet Invitees:</b>	Councillors N. Jenkins and J. Hurley

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### 1. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr R Mizen.

The Chair confirmed, Members of the Committee would be scrutinising items 7, 9 and 10 of the Cabinet Board.

### 2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr S. Reynolds made a declaration of interest against item 7 of the Cabinet Board Agenda.

### 3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the previous Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, held on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022, were approved as an accurate record.

4. **COVID-19 UPDATE (VERBAL)**

The Scrutiny Committee were provided with a verbal update to Agenda item 4. It was noted, the impact of Covid contributed to the decrease in pupil attendance, primarily affecting individual mental health and wellbeing. Members were informed, learning experiences in terms of literacy and numeracy faced an ongoing deficit. Staff were continuing to support pupils and families on this.

Policy restrictions, parental guidance and media coverage continued to be a challenge. Benefits were highlighted for technology development, particularly with synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms. Staggered changes to structures were now being seen within schools, an example being reduction of breaks times.

Officers advised, since July 2022 Covid absences were no longer recorded as a specific reasoning to pupil non-attendance.

5. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

Members queried an update of a request made on the scrutiny forward work programme relating to the cost of living crisis. Members advised a report would be due at a future Committee, scheduled and this is scheduled within the Forward Work Programme.

Members made a request for an update surrounding Language Welsh within Schools following the outcome of the census programme.

Members also made a request that Officers fully inform the Scrutiny Committee of reports expected at Cabinet Board meetings so that due process had been followed in terms of Scrutiny processes.

6. **PRE DECISION SCRUTINY**

**Quarter 2 Performance**

Members reviewed the Quarter 2 Performance report, and asked Officers to explain the outcome of PI.2.4, linked to Well-being Objective 4. Members queried the low figure of 22, against the target figure of 45.



Officers give an overview of the challenges faced, especially in terms of funding. A reduction in European funding along with the shared prosperity fund was discussed. Members were also informed of the difficulties in engagement processes with families post pandemic. Members were advised, Officers were keen to explore an avenue of alternative tactics in combating the ongoing issues.

Members gave thanks to the continuing efforts and progress Officers had in raising money within communities and an increase to income generation for ongoing events at specific locations, including Margam Orangery and the continuation of Weddings.

The agenda item is a matter for monitoring and will be noted.

### **Education Safeguarding**

Members were presented with the report which contained an update on the safeguarding of Children within Schools across the County Borough.

Officers received questions relating to a training event, which took place in November 2022. The Co-opted member asked Officers to confirm that the event went ahead and requested some feedback in terms of positives and any negatives faced during the event.

Officer's confirmed the event went ahead on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022, and was well attended stating the event had been just short of 50 attendees. Members were advised, following the event schools had requested a train the trainer session in the hope of bringing the virtual training forward. Officers also confirmed funding had been secured to run the train the trainer event.

The report is a matter for monitoring and is noted.

### **Pupil Attendance**

Members were provided with an update on pupil attendance within Neath Port Talbot Schools, and particular issues relating to this context.

Members stated the report to be interesting, but highlighted the challenges going forward in terms of parents opting to home school children. Members raised concerns to the quality of home schooling and the impact to the registration of children.

A home schooling bill of a mandatory attendance register proposed within English schools was tabled. Members queried if this approach had been considered for schools in NPT.

Officers provided Members with an explanation, stating a report would follow later in the year as part of the forward work programme. The report would contain details of elective home schooling. Officers went on to confirm, schools had seen an increase in the number of pupils being home schooled. Members were updated on the new guidance currently in draft format, and Officers divulged pupil attendance registers were being considered, along with forms to capture details how home schooling is being delivered and what improvements can be made.

Members questioned penalties notices parents faced for lack of pupil attendance, and what if any considerations were given during ongoing tough times, especially in terms of the cost of living crisis. Members were informed, schools had issued warning letters of fixed penalty charges but this had been considered a last resort. Schools were mindful, children and parents needed to adapt after the pandemic and the additional blended learning programmes. Officers further elaborated the benefit of issuing fixed penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and court proceedings. Again this option was outlined to be a last resort measure.

Officers further informed Members of the collaboration work being undertaken in conjunction with departments of the Social Services Directorate.

7. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were none.

**Councillor R.Phillips**

**Chairperson**

## Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

25 January 2023

Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams

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<b>Chairperson:</b>	<b>Councillor R.Phillips</b>
<b>Councillors:</b>	W.Carpenter, M.Crowley, J.Henton, J.Jones, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds and D.Whitelock
<b>Co-opted Voting Members:</b>	M.Caddick, L.Newman
<b>Officers In Attendance</b>	I.Guy, H.Lervy, C.Millis, Thomas, A.Thomas, P.Walker, R.Crowhurst, W.John and J.Burge, S.Griffiths, M.Daley, E.Dennis, A.Spooner-Cleverly, H.Jones, N.Blackmore, Z.Ashton, L.Clement-Jones, D.Lewis, S.McCluskie and A.Thomas
<b>Cabinet Invitees:</b>	Councillors N.Jenkins and J.Hurley

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### 1. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr. N. Gold-Up John and Cllr D. Thomas.

The Chair confirmed, Members of the Committee would scrutinise all items on the Cabinet Agenda.

### 2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were received from Cllr. D Whitelock, Cllr R. Mizen, Cllr. J.Jones, Cllr. P. Rees and Cllr. W. Carpenter who declared they were Members of the SACRE Committee.

Cllr. S. Reynolds made a declaration of interest against agenda item 14 of the Cabinet Board Agenda.

### 3. **CONSULTATION ON 2023/24 BUDGET PROPOSALS**

Members were presented with the consultation on 2023/24 Budget Proposals, as outlined and contained within the report circulated. Members were reminded the report was presented in it's full entirety and were to focus on the information relating to this specific Committee.

Members were requested to table any income generation suggestions along with potential savings opportunities.

Members of the scrutiny committee raised questions relating to the funding of schools and the support of pay awards to school staff for the year 2023/24.

Officers were able to clarify Schools would see a figure of 8.6% in terms of funding, currently over and above the current rate of 7.1%. Officers also outlined funding provided by Welsh Government during the Covid recovery process, and Officers confirmed schools were in receipt of all the funding, of which, assisted against the reserves budgets.

Officers highlighted the forthcoming industrial strike action, but at present due to the uncertainty of the outcome and potential implications, should the pay award go above the funding already available were unable to clarify the situation to members.

Members next raised a query surrounding the home to school Transport and the proposed 9% figure. Officers were asked if there were any contingency plans available should the figure increase due to the ongoing cost of living crisis and secondly if inflation rates should also remain at a high.

Officers confirmed the 9% increase was noted to consider the current inflation costs with an additional budget pressure of £1.276 million for school transport. Officers outlined; the costs were proposed to

support current rates in the hope inflation would see a reduction over subsequent years with contracts proposed to increase by 5%. Members were given a brief update in terms of a contingency plan, with Officers stating that following a scoping exercise and that fact budgets were at present balanced it was not viable to proceed any further. Schemes to reduce travel costs and demands were outlined to Members, in particular those for Children transitioning into adulthood.

Members queried the insourcing of Leisure Services and the impact this would have on the budget. Officers confirmed the implementation had been proposed to delay this for a further twelve months. The costs however are reflected within the medium term budget plan. A reduction of energy costs in terms of solar panels and proposed schemes was discussed with Members informed, Officers were currently assessing buildings surrounding this topic.

#### 4. **POST COVID UPDATE**

Members were presented with an overview to the report by Officers. Members noted the positive effects of recent appointments made in terms of child psychology officers. Officers also outlined members the opportunity of appointing speech and language therapists. This as prioritised post pandemic and , done via funding granting sources.

Members highlighted the difficulties of children in terms of transition periods returning to school following the pandemic. Officers were pleased to inform Members of appointments made in terms of child psychologists, re-engaging with children and families, assisting with mental health issues raised due to the effect of the pandemic. Members were informed a report would be expected in the near future in conjunction with Social Services.

Officers went on to state a Covid-19 forward action plan, was to continue as an ongoing document, and Members would be updated with future information reports.

The report is for information purposes, therefore the report was noted.

## 5. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

### **Agenda item 7 – Participation and Engagement Strategy**

Members were informed the Strategy had involved many stakeholders within the engagement process. Particular responses were seen from children and young people. Officers were keen to highlight the importance of involving these specific stakeholders in the development stages.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

### **Agenda item 8 – The Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics in Neath Port Talbot Schools.**

The recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

### **Agenda item 9 – School Improvement Team**

Members raised a question in terms of schools within Neath Port Talbot of special measures and improvements. Officers were able to clarify, there were currently none requiring these. Officers confirmed investigations of this nature would be formally carried out by Estyn.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

### **Agenda item 10 – Employability and Skills Update report**

Officers were able to clarify to Officers that the Communities plu, would be replaced by the new Welsh Government funded programme as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023, covering young people from ages 16 above.

Members were updated on ongoing collaborations between departments in Directorates in terms of providing information to young people of available programmes.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

### **Agenda item 11 – Margam Castle Cadw Grant Funding.**

Members were provided with an overview of the grant funding in terms of emergency works to repairs to the fabric of the building. Officers went on to explain, the works once complete were anticipated to allow public access which was at present unavailable.

Officers further updated Members to a 5-year ongoing project fully funded by Heritage Lottery, that would see the project in receipt of £10k.

Members congratulated officers on the successful funding.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

### **Agenda item 12 – Leisure Services Report**

Members were provided with an update on the report. Members were informed due to financial constraints, the initial timeline date had been delayed by twelve months, and was now proposed to be 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024, as opposed to 2023.

Members queried financial details of insourcing Leisure Services and the effect on the budget gap.

Officers responded that Members would be able to source information from the devised Business plan, which would be circulated following the meeting. Members were informed of potential income generation and energy efficiency saving measures.

Members were given a brief overview of the Council's expectations once the service had fully been established back into the Authority.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

### **Agenda item 14 – Supplementary report – Expansion of Flying Start Childcare – Phase 2.**

Members made enquiries on the capital bill situated at Cwmavon, and asked Officers for an update to this. Officers confirmed all surveys were now complete and the proposed completion date of March 2024 was on track.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to Cabinet Board.

6. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

That the Forward Work Programme 2033/23 for Education, Skills and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

7. **URGENT ITEMS**

No urgent items were received.

**Councillor R.Phillips**

**Chairperson**



## Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

(All starting 2pm unless otherwise stated)

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Contact Officer
<b>2022</b>		
7 <sup>th</sup> July	Training Session	
15 <sup>th</sup> Sept		
27 <sup>th</sup> Oct		
24 <sup>th</sup> November		
8 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Post COVID update (verbal)	Rhiannon Crowhurst/Hayley Lervy/Chris Millis
<b>2023</b>		
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Post COVID update	Rhiannon Crowhurst/Hayley Lervy/Chris Millis
	Consultation on 23/24 Budget Proposals.	Huw/ Nicole
16 <sup>th</sup> March	Cost of Living Support in Schools	Chris Millis
13 <sup>th</sup> April		
25 <sup>th</sup> May	Update on school attendance	Chris Millis

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