

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

7 December 2017

Chairperson: Councillor A.L.Thomas

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, S.Harris, N.T.Hunt, H.N.James, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, M.Protheroe, R.L.Taylor and D.Whitelock

Officers In Attendance A.Thomas, J.Haeney, Ms.A.Harris, H.Lewis, A.Spooner-Cleverly, Williams and Mrs.J.Woodman-Ralph

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.R.Lockyer and P.A.Rees

1. **MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER, 2017.**

The Committee noted the minutes subject to the following amendment:

Page 9 last paragraph should have read "Cymer Afan was ranked 6th of the top 10 schools in Wales" and not as stated in the minutes of the last meeting.

2. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

3. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

3.1 **Internal arrangements for Families First Funded Services**

Members received an overview of the Internal arrangements for Families First Funded Services as detailed in the circulated report.

It was highlighted that following the Welsh Governments publication of the new Families First guidance in April 2017, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has developed specifications for a number of new services with the intention to continue the arrangement to deliver some of these in-house. The services to be delivered in-house are the Youth Services, Parenting Support and the Team Around the Family with the addition of services for young carers, which is currently delivered by an external provider, be brought in-house and integrated into the Youth Services which would have a benefit for the young carer through greater support and access to additional services from the wider youth service.

- Members were pleased to see services being provided internally and that as a result Young Carers would benefit from an improved service and that any savings would be invested in the delivery of other services. It was queried what ranking was Neath Port Talbot in regard to the number of Young Carers?

Officers explained that Neath Port Talbot had the highest number of young carers in Wales and in the United Kingdom.

- Members were also pleased that staff effected by transferring the service in-house would be transferred under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employees Regulations).

Officers explained that at present only one member of staff has been identified.

- Members asked would the monitoring of an internal service be as rigorous as an external service?

Officers explained that all providers whether internal or external have to meet the expectations contained within the Service Level Agreement and monitoring officers exercise the same rigorous inspection whether internal or external.

- Members asked what is the timescale for the new contracts?

Officers explained that the new contracts will be active from the 1st April 2018 and an update report would be brought back to a future meeting of Education, Skills and Culture.

- Members asked was the savings of £50,000 achievable?

Officers explained that the savings were achievable and would be reinvested back into other services.

- Members asked in the report it states that a benefit would be greater support and access to additional services from the wider youth service – what would these be?

Officers explained that being part of the Youth Service young carers could access support services that are already available through the Youth Service and the partners they work with. In addition, due to the links with schools it would mean easier identification of young carers and the ability to have more contact with them and to ensure they receive the support they need. Also, 3 coordinators would be employed to work in the Youth Service to ensure that the links are made for young carers to receive the support they need.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposals to be considered at Cabinet Board.

3.2 Admission to Community Schools:2019/2020

Members received an overview of the Admission to Community Schools 2019/2020 as detailed in the circulated report. In addition, Officers highlighted an error on Page 25 of the circulated report 1st paragraph should have read:

To obtain Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board approval to consult and not as stated in the circulated report.

Officers confirmed that the consultation document is the same as previous documents and has been subject to legal advice.

- Members asked how many instances of oversubscription had been received previously?

Officers said that only recently appeals had been received because previously schools had a large number of surplus places but as part of the Strategic Schools Improvement Programme the numbers of surplus places had been reduced which is part of the aim of the improvement work. Also, all of the appeals who were not successful with their first choice did receive their second preference of school. In addition, all children in school catchment areas were allocated places in those schools.

Following Scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals being considered by Cabinet Board.

3.3 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2017-2018 Quarter 2 Performance (1st April 2017 – 30 September 2017)

Members received an overview of the Quarter 2 Performance Management Data 2017-2018 as detailed in the circulated report.

- Members asked what was the reason for Neath Port Talbot being ranked 22 in Key Stage 2 and 3 and what mitigating measures were being put in place to rectify this. Also, was the teachers assessment that ranks out children at Key Stage 2 and 3 more rigorous than other local authorities.

Officers explained that teachers assessments within Neath Port Talbot are very accurate and give an accurate position of a child Educational needs entering Key Stage 4 with 47% at the expected level. Also investment has been made in providing additional primary and nursery school places which has a positive outcome on a child's educational outcomes throughout school. It was also highlighted that the Welsh Government are developing a new system for measuring teacher assessment to ensure consistency across all local authorities. Welsh Government are looking at moving away from data analysis and looking at pupil skills and as part of new system will be asking pupils how they find their educational experience.

- Members asked whether Estyn verify Key Stage 2 and 3?

Officers explained that this forms part of the self evaluation that is undertaken by schools and as part of that self evaluation teachers and children are asked how they rate their education experience.

Members asked that a report outlining the new Estyn Framework/criteria for undertaking inspections would be brought to a future for Members to gain a better understanding of the changes.

- Members queried whether there was any data available on the impact of children who attend a Flying Start provision prior to attending mainstream school.

Officers confirmed that the feedback from Headteachers was that children who attended a Flying Start provision are far better prepared for school, have better speech and language skills compared to children who do not. This is also reflected in All Wales data.

Officers confirmed that a report regarding Flying Start is scheduled to be considered by Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board in February 2018 and Officers will include comparison data in that report highlighting children's performance from Flying Start areas compared to non Flying Start areas.

- Members asked whether Officers had seen an increase in the numbers of children with additional learning support?

Officers explained that more than 50% of children are not where they should be educationally and those children need to be in a school setting as soon as possible where they can access early interventions for example literacy interventions. It was highlighted that the Head of Children and Young Peoples Services was looking at the impacts of poverty on children and developing a multi-agency approach based on the needs of the child.

Members asked that a report on the pilot scheme “Combating Poverty” would be brought for Members consideration to a future meeting.

- It was queried why was there a delay in issuing educational statements?

Officers explained that it can take up to 45 weeks to issue statements and the Welsh Government would only accept certain health criteria to have issue an educational statement. In addition, parents have to agree with the health advice before it can be issued and most prefer to wait until confirmation is received which is based on the child’s needs.

- It was asked why was there a decrease in the numbers of people using Libraries?

Officers explained that the member of staff who organised all the activities held in Libraries was absent due to illness which resulted in reduced numbers attending the library. Numbers had now increased with the return of the member of staff who has organised events in the libraries and there had been no further staff absences. In addition, some issues had arisen with the internet connection in one of the libraries which resulted in errors on the system.

- Members asked if Officers could investigate if any fines had been incurred by users of the library as a result of the technical problems with the I.T. system.
- It was also queried why there was a dip in pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A+ to C and what mitigating measures are being put in place?

Officers explained that there had been a dip across Wales but because of the economic deprivation in Neath Port Talbot County Borough the impact was greater on the authority. It was highlighted that the lack of information to schools on the grade boundaries and the new curriculum had a negative effect on the results. Education through regional working had undertaken an analysis and put in additional support where needed going forward. Also,

noted was that Neath Port Talbot schools had an excellent track record of preparing children for their GCSEs.

- Members asked whether different indicators would be put in place in terms of the changes by Estyn?

Officers explained that Estyn are looking at a broader range of teaching skills and will be asking pupils how they felt their educational experience was. Estyn will also be looking for more evidence based information. In addition, Welsh Government are looking at developing new indicators to support these changes.

- Members asked if arrangements could be made for them to visit schools on an informal basis starting with Ysgol Bae Baglan.

Officers highlighted that the Cabinet Member and Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning regularly visit schools and discuss with pupils their learning experience.

- It was asked what would the implications of the Donaldson report have on Education?

Officers explained that the Donaldson's report would have a major impact on education but that its implementation has been delayed until 2022.

- Cabinet Member for Education asked all Members to keep highlighting the importance of school attendance in their role as school governors.

Following Scrutiny, the report be noted.

3.4 Ongoing delivery of the UK Governments Work Programme

Members received an overview of the current Work Programme Performance funded by UK Government as detailed in the circulated report.

Following Scrutiny, the report be noted.

3.5 Annual Report on NEETs 2017

Members received an overview of the outcomes and progress made with young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or those young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and how new development may affect this area of work as detailed in the circulated report.

It was highlighted that the annual NEETs figure based on destinations of year 11 leavers for 2016 was ranked as the worst in Wales ranked at 22. But with improved collaboration between the Youth Service, Careers Wales, Schools and multi-agency working the aim is for the figure to reduce. This improved figure will not be available until April 2018.

- Members asked if there were any opportunities for early intervention at school to try to prevent children reaching this stage?

Officers explained that the difficulty has been in identifying the young people at an early stage. Youth Workers are based in schools on a 2 day a week basis who work with young people and their families. If young people continue to need support post 16 they are referred to the Post 16 Team.

- Members asked what the impact would be as a result of the withdrawal of the Communities First funding?

Officers explained that it is an ongoing challenge but cost efficiencies have been made in the service which has enabled the service to go forward. In addition, the Legacy Fund would replace some of the funding from Communities First which would enable additional Youth Workers to be employed on a 2 year basis. A further report would be brought for Members information on the Legacy Fund.

- Members also asked if there were any other funding streams available?

Officers explained that they consistently look for additional funding but that short term funding does not give consistency to staff or the service when planning for future development. Views had been given to the Welsh

Government on the need to have funding over a longer period. It was highlighted that the Legacy Fund does allocate funding over a 2 year period.

Following Scrutiny, the report be noted.

3.6 Skills and Training Update

Members received an overview of the progress of Skills and Training in Neath Port Talbot as detailed in the circulated report.

It was highlighted that the Skills and Training delivers Welsh Government funded specialist programmes of learning and training offering Work-Based Learning opportunities and bespoke commercial training to meet the needs of local residents, employers and their employees. Funding has been secured from the Welsh Government until March 2019.

- Members asked that their appreciation of all the work undertaken by the team is cascaded to all the staff and requested that arrangements be made at a future date to visit the different schemes. It was also suggested that a prospectus of the different schemes be developed and circulated to secondary schools for them to be made aware of what is available for young people.

Following Scrutiny, the report be noted.

3.7 Youth Service Update 2017

Members received an update on the work carried out by Neath Port Talbot Youth Service as detailed in the circulated report.

- Members asked if the Youth Service has seen an increase in take-up in regard to the Duke of Edinburgh Awards?

Officers explained that across Wales numbers have remained static. One of the difficulties was that young participants who achieve Gold in the past have continue to teach new participants but now they go straight to University so they no longer are available to cascade their

learning to others. Officers are looking at how schools could help to take this forward in future.

- Members queried whether there were any options to extend the Youth Service to work in areas that are affected by the withdrawal of Communities First Funding? Also, are there any arrangements being made to replace the Youth Service provision in the areas where schools have been closed?

Officers explained that resources are limited but that a mapping exercise of what provision is available needs to be undertaken to identify the gaps in the service and what measures can be put in place to assist in those areas. Also, the Legacy Fund would provide monies to assist support the Youth Service. Officers confirmed that they would be happy to discuss with Members the needs in their wards.

- Members confirmed that a mapping exercise should take place and that Members were happy to identify what is available in their individual wards and if there are any partner organisations that could assist the Youth Service.

4. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

RESOLVED: that pursuant to Section 10A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

5.1 Proposed Renewal of the Lease and Service Level Agreement to the Field Studies Council at Margam Discovery Centre and to agree variations to the current lease

Members received an overview of the private item in regard to the Proposed Renewal of the Lease and Service Level

Agreement to the Field Studies Council at Margam Discovery Centre and to agree variations to the current lease as detailed in the private circulated report.

Following Scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON