

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

12 January 2018

Chairperson: Councillor A.L.Thomas

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

Co-opted Voting Members: M.Caddick and A. Amor

Co-opted Non Voting Members: A.Hughes

Officers In Attendance A.Thomas, R.Gordon, J.Merrifield and Miss.C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, D.W.Davies and D.Jones

1. **MEMBERS' DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

The following Members made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr. A.R.Lockyer Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools – Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is a school governor within the County Borough but has dispensation to speak and vote and also has grandchildren who attend schools within the County Borough.

- Cllr. P.A.Rees Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Strategic School Improvement Programme – Proposal to Establish Specialist Provision for Primary Age Pupils with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties as he is a governor at Crynallt Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools – Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is a school governor within the County Borough but has dispensation to speak and vote and also has grandchildren who attend schools within the County Borough.
- Cllr. H.N.James Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is a Govenor at Llansawel Primary, a Shadow Governor at Ysgol Newydd Carreg Hir and a Shadow Govenor at Ysgol Cymraeg Bro Dur but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr. R.L.Taylor Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as she is a governor at Eastern and groes Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote and also has a Relative working in Baglan Primary School.
- Cllr. M.Ellis Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is a Governor of Ysgol Newydd Margam but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr.J.D.Morgan Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing

the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is the Chair of Governors at Ysgol Gynradd Cymraeg Cwm-Nedd but has dispensation to speak and vote.

- Cllr. R.Mizen Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he has grandchildren who attend schools in the County Borough.
- M.Caddick Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as she has a Grandchild who attends schools in the County Borough
- Cllr.S.Miller Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as she is a School Governor of Melin Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote and also has Grandchildren in Melin Primary School.
- A.Amor Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is a Governor of YGG Rhosafan and YGG Ywern but has dispensation to speak and vote and also has a child in YGG Rhosofan.
- Cllr. S.Renkes Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as she is a School Governor but has dispensation to speak and vote
- Cllr. D.Whitelock Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is a Governor at Ysgol Newydd Margam but has dispensation to speak

and vote and has a Grandson at Sandfields Primary School.

Cllr. A.L.Thomas Re: Reports of the Head of Transformation on the Financing Schools - Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards as he is a Governor at Rhos Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.

2. **MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 24TH NOVEMBER 2017**

The Committee noted the minutes

3. **MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 7TH DECEMBER 2017**

The Committee noted that the Co-Opted Members did not appear on the minutes as attendees. The Democratic Services Officer apologised for the administration error and would rectify the minutes so that accurate attendance is portrayed.

With the above amendments the Committee noted the minutes.

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

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 **Education Lifelong learning Directorate Delivery Plan**

Members were provided with information on the business plan for the Directorate of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning 2017-20 as detailed in the circulated report.

Members asked how the number of Seven year old children were going to be encouraged to be educated through the Medium of Welsh. It was noted that it was a legal requirement

to teach children through the Medium of Welsh and one way of meeting this requirement was by providing free transport to a Welsh School through the Home 2 School transport. Officers highlighted that the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan is due to come to a future meeting which will make information more clear.

Members asked that Welsh Language Skills be included in the Adult Education targets.

Members queried about the provision of Nursery Education and to look to involve Flying Start when impacts are investigated in the School Improvement Programme. It was asked for the impact to be looked at when considering the Strategic School Improvement Programme. Officers confirmed that updates on Flying Start is scheduled in the Forward Work programme to be reported back to a future meeting and that the Strategic School Improvement Programme report is due to come to a future meeting and officers will consider the impact on flying start.

Members asked who is invited to attend the well-being conference. Officers confirmed that every head teacher is invited to attend.

Members were concerned that the performance measure on page 32 of the circulated report 'Improve the performance of boys in L2 by 2018 to 89%' had reduced to 58.3%.

Members highlighted that the surplus places in Ysgol Newydd Briton Ferry and Ysgol Newydd Maram were not totalling correctly. Officers highlighted that when a new school is planned the catchment area is what is considered as opposed to the number of pupils that go to that school. The Officer agreed to explore this further with the relevant member.

Members asked if officers were confident that the standards are being met with the budget pressures. Officers confirmed that they are confident, however, if pressures get difficult then officers would relook at the priorities and targets.

Members asked for the Participation and Sport target to be increased.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

5.2 Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish Specialist Provision for Primary Age Pupils with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Members received information on proposed specialist provision for primary age pupils with social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The specialist provisions are to be located at Coedffranc Primary School and at Crynallt Primary School as detailed in the circulated report.

Members highlighted that staff would need to be suitably skilled and that appropriate training would have to be anticipated and that the impact would need to be evaluated over a 5 to 10 year period.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

5.3 Financing Schools – Reviewing the Funding Formula to Raise Standards

(Cllr. P.A.Rees re-affirmed his interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

(Cllr.A.R.Lockyer re-affirmed his interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

(Cllr.S.Miller re-affirmed her interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

(Cllr.D.Whitelock re-affirmed his interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

(Cllr.R.L.Taylor re-affirmed her interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

(Cllr.R.Mizen re-affirmed his interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

(M.Caddick re-affirmed her interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

(A.Amor re-affirmed his interest at this point and withdrew for this item only)

Members received information on proposed changes to the formula for allocating funding to schools. It was highlighted to members that Option A was the preferred option following consultation, as detailed in the circulated report.

At the meeting, members received a paper copy of the funding formula options that were consulted upon.

Members queried how often the funding formula is reviewed. Officers reported that the requirement is to review the funding formula annually, however, it doesn't follow that there will be changes made to the formula at each annual review.

Members queried the longevity of the smaller Schools. Officers highlighted that maintaining standards at smaller Schools can be challenging, however, school organisation matters are considered on an area by area basis and sometimes a small School is the most appropriate option.

Members queried whether class size grants would be available within option A. Officers reported that head teachers proposed the removal of class size grants allocations in favour of a fairer way of distributing money. Officers also reported that under a Welsh Government initiative there is a small Rural School Grant available.

Members asked whether officers are comfortable with the detrimental impact of the proposed funding formula on some schools and whether support and help would be provided to those schools that need it. Officers confirmed that they are and that schools would be appropriately supported.

Members were concerned about the accumulation of reserves in some Schools and asked for specific plans for reclaiming money from excessive reserves held by schools. Officers highlighted legislative procedures that enable an Authority to challenge schools with reserves in excess of 50k in respect of Primary Schools and 100k for Secondary Schools. Officers will explore the potential for reclaiming excessive reserves and will report to members on this matter at a later date.

Members queried whether excessive reserves could be calculated as a percentage of a school's budget rather than a financial sum. Officers reported that, whereas percentages could be used in future proposals, to do so in this proposal could adversely affect the intended outcome.

Members asked whether the 75k threshold had been modelled. Although the Welsh Government has set a reserve guide of 50k for primary schools, officers consider 75k represents a reasonable threshold given that there are fewer small schools within the county borough than was the case when the Welsh Government figure was issued.

Members were disappointed with the 65% turn out on the consultation.

Members asked for a report to be brought back to a future meeting on a proposed mechanism for managing excessive school reserves.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that Cabinet Board be asked to consider the following recommendations:

Having given due regard to the impact assessment approval be granted for:

- a) Option A as detailed in the circulated report to be the basis for funding primary school budgets for the 2018/2019 financial year;
- b) the withholding of financial benefits resulting from Option A to schools with reserves above the £75K threshold as at 31 March 2017;
- c) the methodology in the circulated report for the redistribution of withheld funds to schools with a reduction in their budget share allocation of more than £20K;
- d) the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning (or his nominated representative) and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture be granted delegated authority to make alternative funding arrangements where, specifically in relation to the £75K reserve threshold, the financial circumstances of individual

schools warrant further consideration and that any use or refusal of an application be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

CHAIRPERSON