

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

17 January 2019

Chairperson:	Councillor A.L.Thomas
Councillors:	S. ap Dafydd, H.N.James, J.Jones, S.Miller, R.Mizen, M.Protheroe, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards, D.Whitelock and R.Phillips
Co-opted Voting Members:	M.Caddick, A. Amor and L.Newman
Officers In Attendance	C.Millis J.Burge, H.Lervy, S.James, Z.Ashton, C.Davies and J.Woodman-Ralph
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors A.R.Lockyer and P.A.Rees

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

Councillor. M. Protheroe	Re:	Report of the Head of Transformation on the Provision of Pupil Attendance Update as he is a Governor of Melin Primary School.
Councillor. S. Miller	Re:	Report of the Head of Participation on the Mapping of Current Youth Service Provision and Information on School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) as she is the Chair of Governor of Melin Primary School

Co-opted Member - A.Amore Re: Report of the Head of Participation on the Mapping of Current Youth Service Provision and Information on School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) as he is a Company Director that the youth service had previously been a client of.

Councillor D. Whitelock Re: Report of the Head of Participation on the Mapping of Current Youth Service Provision and Information on School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) as he is a volunteer at Cwmavon Community Centre and his wife is a Managing Director there.

2. **TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE LEISURE AND CULTURE SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee noted the Minutes of the Leisure and Culture Sub Committee that was held on 23 January 2018, 15 February 2018, 24 April 2018 and 26 June 2018.

3. **MAPPING OF CURRENT YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION AND INFORMATION ON SCHOOL HOLIDAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME (SHEP)**

(Members agreed to discuss Agenda Item 3 of the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee, in line with Agenda Item 4 of the Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board)

Members were provided with an update on the Mapping of Current Youth Service Provision and information on the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) Programme. Members were also updated on the Local Authority Youth Service.

Members asked what the criteria was for choosing the locations for the Community Based Youth Clubs within Neath Port Talbot. Officers explained that areas were chosen on population and what facilities

are available. Officers added that liaisons take place with the Community Safety Partnership and the Police to ensure that areas of anti-social behaviour issues were considered. Members noted that due to the budget restraints the numbers of youth clubs had decreased.

Members queried whether in the event that a youth club had low attendance could the club be relocated to an area with more demand. Officers explained that a recent survey of young people had identified their preference for youth cafes, as a result a pilot was being undertaken in Bryn and Cwmavon Wards which had the highest attendance at youth clubs. Monitoring of the current provision would take place to ensure that youth clubs were utilised to their full potential, but due to the budget restraints there was no funding available to provide additional youth clubs.

Members highlighted that on page 26 of the report the table did not include any information on the number of staff in the youth clubs. Officers informed the Committee that the information would be circulated to them.

Members asked whether the Youth Clubs were managed by a Youth Leader. Officers confirmed that they were managed by qualified Youth Leaders

Members asked whether youth clubs took place during term time. Officers confirmed that youth clubs only took place during term time; however Officers did search for funding to provide youth clubs outside of term time.

Members highlighted additional activities that took place within the Aberavon Ward such as Kidzsport and Bulldogs Boxing Club. Members asked if there was an opportunity to arrange transport for youth clubs to be accessed by areas that did not have any provision. Discussion took place on the need for either a one day inquiry or a Member Task and Finish Group to look at Transport options. Officers explained that transport was provided previously but was very staff intensive so was not cost effective.

Members also queried whether other transport options could be considered, for example using school buses. It was also suggested whether there was an opportunity to use community transport. Officers agreed to investigate other options and bring a report back to Members for consideration at a future date.

Discussion took place on the opportunities that partners could offer in joint working by running a youth club by sharing staff resources.

Members asked whether grant funding from Welsh Government would continue. Officers explained that they were still awaiting confirmation. Welsh Government had indicated that funding would be allocated, but would have to meet certain criteria, for example the monies would have to support homeless young people and young people with mental health issues. Officers added that European funding would be available until 2020; however officers were looking to extend that funding until 2022.

Discussions took place regarding the financial implications in increasing the youth service provision, which was not possible in the current economic climate. Members were advised that the only option would be to relocate the current levels of youth provision or to change what provision was provided as previously discussed in relation to the Youth Cafes.

Members requested that a report be brought back on the outcome of the pilot being undertaken in Cwmavon and Bryn. Thereafter, Members to consider how they want to proceed with this information.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

4. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:-

Cabinet Board Proposals

4.1 Childcare Facilities within Schools in Neath Port Talbot

Members were updated on the current situation with regard to childcare facilities located on school sites. Members were also provided with a list of childcare provisions currently occupying surplus space within schools throughout the County Borough within appendix A to the circulated report.

Member's queried how many children attended the services provided at each school. Officers explained that the information wasn't available as the information was not collected; however

officers provided information on the number of children that were registered.

Members complimented officers on their hard work within the department.

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

4.2 Pupil Attendance

Members were provided with information and data in relation to Neath Port Talbot pupil attendance and persistent absenteeism.

Members asked whether there was any data on unauthorised absences relating to non-attendance due to holidays. Officers highlighted that this had been a theme for many years. It was noted that data did not exist on this as schools' only recorded authorised and unauthorised holidays. It was highlighted that this had previously been reported to the Committee.

Members asked whether they could do anything to help increase attendance. Officers explained that schools were very firm and refused requests for holidays during term time. In addition, the Director of Education had sent a letter to every family in Neath Port Talbot, explaining the importance of attendance at school which had made a positive impact.

The Chair informed the committee that a letter had been received from a Member of Neath Port Talbot Council highlighting that the authority had the joint-second lowest attendance figures compared with other Welsh authorities. The Committee was asked to consider having information on the comparative figures, to see if there were problems in particular schools and or areas which could be addressed. It was noted that it would be appropriate to raise this concern under this item and to allow Members an opportunity if they wished to take this concern further.

Officers explained that there would be absenteeism in all schools due to illness and that the Authority was proactive in improving attendance. It was noted that Neath Port Talbot were ranked at 19th Place last year; however 15th place was less than a third of a single percentage point. It was highlighted to

Members that data could be perceived in many different ways. Officers also explained that the authority was doing excellent in concentrating on persistent absentees. Following this information, Members felt that they did not want to take further action in relation to the concern raised regarding attendance at schools.

Members asked if there was a school closure and children were moved to a different school as a result, would this affect their attendance. Officers confirmed that school closures did not go against pupil attendance figures.

Members asked would a child's attendance rate be affected if they were to enter an external competition which had not been organised through the school. Officers informed Members that a report had previously been put before Members on this topic and in that instance the absence would be authorised. However, it was noted that each child's attendance was monitored and if that child's attendance was low then it would be at the discretion of the head teacher.

Members queried whether attendance would get worse if children were going on up to three holidays a year. Officers explained that prosecution rates were at an all-time high. It was noted that the Authority tracked all prosecutions and in two thirds of those prosecuted attendance of children improved.

Members asked whether schools looked at the experiences that the children may have during these holidays. Officers explained that each case is judged on its own merits. Members were reassured that there were no prosecutions for a child that had been on one holiday, it was for those that had been on numerous holidays.

The Cabinet Member thanked the head teachers for their efforts in aiming to improve pupil attendance and highlighted the importance continuing to improve attendance.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

4.3 Additional Learning Needs Statutory Processes

Members were provided with information in relation to Additional Learning Needs Reform (ALNET) and information

and progress in relation to the LA Local ALNET Implementation Plan (LIP).

It was noted that a consultation was currently being undertaken on the Draft Additional Learning Needs Code until 22nd March, 2019. It was noted that this would result in timescales changing and would cause pressure on the Schools.

Members asked whether this would be cost neutral and highlighted that there would need to be teacher training, to help teachers identify whether a child had a condition at an early stage. Officers explained that it was not cost neutral and were in agreement with staff training being provided to teachers where extra support was required.

Members asked whether officers were confident at hitting the 2019 target. Officers confirmed that they were confident; however it would be a challenge for the Schools.

Members asked what the timescale would be. Officer confirmed that it was currently in transformation and would be rolled out in 2023. Therefore, for approximately three years there would be two different systems running at the same time.

Members asked whether there was ongoing work to train the Authority's Legal Team. Officers explained that the Legal Department were looking at an easy read guide to help with this concern.

The Cabinet Member highlighted his concern in relation to the legal responsibility and cost implications.

It was asked that the easy read on the Draft Additional Learning Needs code Consultation Document be circulated to Members to allow Members to provide a response to be fed in to the consultation.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

5. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

Members asked for information on Staff Training prior to the inclusion of a report on the Forward Work Programme.

CHAIRPERSON