

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

23 January 2020

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.Mizen

Councillors: M.Crowley, S.apDafydd, S.Harris, J.Jones, J.D.Morgan, M.Protheroe, D.Whitelock and J.Hale

Officers In Attendance C.Millis and A.Thomas, J.Burge, J.Haeney, C.L.Davies, C.Plowman and J.Woodman-Ralph

Co-opted Members: M.Caddick

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

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following members made declarations of interest at the start of the meeting.

Councillor C.M.Crowley Re: School Attendance Report as he is a governor at Twyn and Awel y Mor Primary School and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor S.Harris Re: School Attendance Report as she is a governor at Crynant Primary School and confirmed her dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor D.Whitelock Re: School Attendance Report as he is a governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil and confirmed his dispensation to speak and vote.

- Councillor S. Ap Dafydd Re: School Attendance Report as he is a governor at St. Joseph's School and sixth form centre and at Ysgol Bae Baglan and confirmed his dispensation to speak and vote.
- Councillor M.Protheroe Re: School Attendance Report as he is a governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive and Melin Primary School and confirmed his dispensation to speak and vote.
- Councillor R. Mizen Re: School Attendance Report as he is a governor at Cwmafan Primary School and Ysgol Cwm Brombil and confirmed his dispensation to speak and vote.
- He also has grandchildren who attend Neath Port Talbot schools.
- Councillor S. Reynolds Re: School Attendance Report as she is a governor at Ysgol Gwaun Gae Gurwen and confirmed her dispensation to speak and vote.
- Councillor J.D.Morgan Re: School Attendance Report as he is chair of governors at YGG Cwm-Nedd and confirmed his dispensation to speak and vote.
- Councillor J.Jones Re: School Attendance Report as she is a school governor at the Afan Valley Federation of Schools and confirmed her dispensation to speak and vote.
- M.Caddick Re: School Attendance Report as she is a school governor and confirmed her dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor A.R.Lockyer Re: School Attendance Report as he is chair of governors at Gnoll Primary School and governor at YGG Castell Need and confirmed his dispensation to speak and vote.

He also has grandchildren who attend school in Neath Port Talbot and a relative who works within those schools.

Councillor P.A.Rees Re: School Attendance Report as he is a governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive and at Crynallt Primary School and confirmed his dispensation to speak and vote.

He also has grandchildren who attend schools in Neath Port Talbot.

2. **UPDATE ON PUPIL VOICE/ YOUTH COUNCIL**

Members received an update on Pupil Voice which was included in the Youth Service Update as detailed in the circulated report.

The committee was pleased with the success of the Duke of Edinburgh and Open Gold Award Scheme with over 400 young people gaining the award and asked that their appreciation be cascaded to staff who support the young people undertaking the award.

Discussion took place on the increase in attendance at Youth Clubs and asked if the latest data on these numbers could be circulated to the committee.

Clarification was given that the format of the data contained within the report was compiled and submitted as a requirement of the Welsh Government and that the data was not used to compare performance year on year.

It was highlighted that the current youth club provision was based on need and established in areas of deprivation but historically some

clubs had been established in areas that would not meet the current criteria but those clubs would continue.

In addition, surveys/mapping take place every 3 years and takes into account groups that are arranged by voluntary organisations and the council works in partnership with those groups to support them, to try to increase the current provision.

Confirmation was received that any new youth clubs could only be arranged at the expense of losing an existing provision, as there was no additional funding available to increase the current council provision. Funding was always a concern especially in regard to the format of the grant provision from Welsh Government being based on an annual basis. This results in long term planning being difficult as the criteria for each funding stream can change and cease in some cases. The committee reiterated the importance of this vital service continuing.

Further data was requested on the provision for young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training). Officers explained that the youth service aims to work with the young people who not engaging with services.

Officers in future reports to consider identifying the reason why there was no impact on the valleys.

At members request consideration be given to inviting a young person to become a scrutiny member of this committee.

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

3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The committee chose to scrutinise the following cabinet board items:

School Attendance

Members received information and data in relation to Neath Port Talbot pupil attendance and persistent absenteeism as detailed in the circulated report.

Discussion took place on decrease in attendance compared to the same period last year and asked if the impact was mainly on schools

in deprived areas. Officers explained that in the latter part of 2019 a number of schools were affected by the Norovirus which impacted on both children and staff but no schools within Neath Port Talbot closed. Also, schools not in deprived areas can have a higher level of unauthorised school absence due to the increased number of holidays taken. At the request of Members in future, data would include the area and reason for absence.

Further discussion took place on the importance of members who were school governors to keep raising attendance at governing body meetings so that it was constantly on school agendas.

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

Longlands Lane Playing Fields and Changing Rooms

The committee received information on the proposal to declare the playing fields and changing rooms at Longlands Lane, Margam, Port Talbot, as being surplus to the ongoing strategic and operational requirements of the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Service as detailed in the circulated report.

Discussion took place on the lack of sports facilities in the area and asked that this be a consideration during future proposals for the use of the site. Officers explained that any decision on the future use of the site would fall under the remit of Regeneration and Sustainable Cabinet Board.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet board.

4. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

Confirmation was given that the site visit to schools would take place on the 3 February and not the 27 January 2020 as stated in the Forward Work Programme.

CHAIRPERSON