

Minutes of the Education Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee

19 November 2020

Via Microsoft Teams

Chairperson:	Councillor S.H.Reynolds
Vice Chairperson:	Councillor R.Mizen
Councillors:	M.Crowley, J.Jones, D.Keogh, S.Miller, J.D.Morgan, R.Phillips, A.J.Richards, D.Whitelock, R.W.Wood and J.Hale
Co-opted Voting Members:	M.Caddick
Officers In Attendance	A.Evans, A.Thomas, C.Millis, J.Burge, M.Daley, H.Lervy, P.Walker, E.Dennis and C.Davies
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors A.R.Lockyer and P.A.Rees

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Cllr.S.H.Reynolds -	Report of The Head of Participation – Item 4 Neath Port Talbot Youth Service Summer Support Programme – as she is a Trustee of Canolfan Meardy.
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2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the following meetings of the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee were approved:

- 24 October 2019
- 18 December 2019

- 16 January 2020
- 23 January 2020
- 23 July 2020

3. **BLENDED LEARNING IN KEY STAGE 4 AND EXAMINATIONS FOR 2021**

Members received an update in relation to Blended Learning in Key Stage 4 and examinations for 2021.

Officers and Members provided praise to the Schools, Parents, Guardians and Pupils within Neath Port Talbot for their efforts in adapting to this new blended learning approach.

It was noted that Schools had been adapting to a blended learning approach which consists of distance learning, live streaming, recorded lessons and face to face meetings. Members appreciated the work that had been put in to facilitating this and requested that the Committee be continually updated on this subject.

Discussions around examinations took place, it was discussed that Schools would be utilising assessments to predict a pupil's grade rather than an exam. It was asked whether there had been feedback from teachers on this process. It was noted that there had been feedback from teachers and discussions were continually taking place on how this process would work.

The Head of Transformation provided a verbal update in relation to the IT Grant for Blended Learning. It was noted that the Hub Grant is a partnership within the Local Authority. It is to ensure that no child is disadvantaged for their geographical area in terms of their connectivity and devices. Due to Covid-19 it was important that pupils had access to an IT Device to work from home. Due to the increase in purchasing of devices across all Local Authorities, there had been a shortage in devices, resulting in a delay in orders. The Digital Services Team have ensured that those pupils without a device or connectivity have been provided with refurbished laptops and 'MiFi'.

Members highlighted a quote which was detailed within the report 'It's the quality of teaching, rather than how the lessons are delivered'. Members commended this approach.

Members requested that feedback be provided on how blended learning was working in Colleges. Officers confirmed they would raise this with the Colleges.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

4. **NEATH PORT TALBOT YOUTH SERVICE - SUMMER SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

Members received an update on the Summer Support Programme that the Youth Service had provided. It was noted that funding was provided 3 weeks prior to the summer holidays giving limited time for the Youth service to plan a way forward. It was noted that within the report it details the support that the Youth Service provided to vulnerable pupils and childcare placements along with partners that also offered support.

Members commended the team for their efforts on providing the Summer Support Programme considering there was a short turnaround. Members also highlighted that the feedback from pupils and parents was excellent.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

5. **INCLUSION SERVICE REPORT ON OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS**

Members were provided with an update on the Inclusion service report, providing an overview of support for children and Young People with Additional Needs. It was noted that any discussions relating to the Case Studies would be required in private session.

Members shared their concerns in relation to the risks that Covid-19 had caused on pupils attendance. Officers highlighted that the Education Welfare Officers continued to engage with pupils during the pandemic ensuring that they maximise their attendance during these unprecedented times.

Members noted that parents/guardians who were entitled to Free School Meals were instead receiving direct payment due to covid-19.

Discussions took place around the monitoring of the utilisation of the direct payment to ensure the correct foods were being purchased.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

6. **VERBAL UPDATE ON THE IMPACT FROM COVID-19 ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND DISENGAGEMENT - YOUTH HUB WORK**

Members were provided with a brief update on the Youth Hub Work. It was noted that discussions had taken place with the Department of Working Pensions (DWP), to look at developing a physical Youth Hub in Port Talbot and Neath. However, due to recent circumstances resulting from Covid-19, it was decided that a virtual provision would be a safer option with the hope of transpiring to a physical version in due course.

Members noted that we currently have 2,500 young people who are universal credit claimants and 1,100 young people who are actively seeking work within the Local Authority. The DWP are in the process of developing a 13 week youth journey, with the purpose of providing young people with work experience, mock interviews, CV and job application writing support and many other skills. This is to ensure young people are supported in seeking out work opportunities in line with their aspirations.

It was highlighted that a Mapping exercise would be completed by the end of 2020 focusing on two key areas, providing support on employment and support for the emotional health and wellbeing of young people. This mapping exercise would provide a clear view on a way forward in the New Year.

The local Authority would also be engaging with the Kick-start Programme, Which would allow the Council to employ apprentices providing further experiences.

Members queried whether the Local Authority was considering providing a gateway for small businesses that were looking to employ apprentices. Officers confirmed that there was a certain threshold that businesses have to meet to secure this and the Local Authority would be working with them to facilitate this.

Discussions took place around the vulnerability of the young people and to ensure that they are provided with the support they require.

Members queried whether the figures of the amount of young people seeking support is correct, as it was assumed these figures may have increased. Officers explained that these figures were accurate, however, would check to ensure they hadn't changed.

Following Scrutiny, the verbal update was noted.

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

Members noted the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

8. **URGENT ITEMS**

Because of the need to deal now with the matters contained in Minute No. 8 below, the Chairperson agreed that these could be raised at today's meeting as urgent items pursuant to Statutory Instrument No.2290 (as amended).

Reason for Urgency:

Due to the time element.

9. **CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet Forward Work Programme was provided to Members information purposes; the Forward Work Programme was noted.

10. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

RESOLVED: that pursuant to Section 100A(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 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

11. **INCLUSION SERVICE REPORT ON OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS - APPENDIX 1 (EXEMPT UNDER PARAGRAPH 13)**

Members received an update in relation to the private Appendix of the Inclusion Service Report, providing an Overview of the support provided for Children and Young People with Additional learning Needs.

The main discussion took place in item 5 above in public session. However, members were updated in private session in relation to the Case studies which were included in Appendix 1 to the private circulated report.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Chairperson