



EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.00 PM WEDNESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2022

REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting

PART 1

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Chairs Announcements
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 3 - 8*)
5. Pre-Decision Scrutiny
 - i. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (Cabinet Boards reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
6. Forward Work Programme 2020/21 (*Pages 9 - 12*)
7. Urgent Items
Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972

K.Jones

Chief Executive

**Civic Centre
Port Talbot**

Thursday, 13 January 2022

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.Mizen

Councillors: M.Crowley, S.Harris, J.Jones, D.Keogh, S.Miller, R.Phillips, M.Protheroe, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards, M.Spooner, D.Whitelock, R.W.Wood and J.Hale

***Co-opted
Voting Members** M.Caddick, A. Amor and L.Newman

***Co-opted Non
Voting Members** R.De Benedictis

Notes:

- (1) *If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

Education Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee

(Remotely via Teams)

Members Present:

25 November 2021

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.Mizen

Councillors: M.Crowley, S.Harris, D.Keogh, S.Miller,
M.Protheroe, S.Renkes, M.Spooner,
D.Whitelock, R.W.Wood and J.Hale

Officers In Attendance H.Lewis, I.Guy, T.Davies, J.Burge,
R.Crowhurst, M.Daley, C.Glover, A.Harris,
K.Jones, A.Spooner-Cleverly and C.Plowman

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

1. **Declarations of Interest**

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

Cllr S Reynolds Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as she is a Governor at YGG Gawun-Cae-Gurwen but has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr R Mizen Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at Cwmafan Primary School and Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr M Crowley Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at Awel y Môr Primary School and Tywyn Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.

- Cllr S Harris Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as she is a Governor at Creunant Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote
- Cllr D Keogh Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr S Miller Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as she is a Governor at Melin Primary School and Gnoll Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr M Spooner Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as she is a Governor at Rhos Primary but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr M Protheroe Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School and Melin Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr S Renkes Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as she is a Governor at Baglan Primary School and Blaenbaglan Primary School but has dispensation to speak and vote
- Cllr D Whitelock Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil but has dispensation to speak and vote.
- Cllr R Wood Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at

	Ysgol Bae Baglan but has dispensation to speak and vote.
M Caddick	Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as she is a Governor at St. Joseph's Primary School, Neath but has dispensation to speak and vote
Cllr A Lockyer	Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at Gnoll Primary and YGG Castell Nedd but has dispensation to speak and vote.
Cllr P Rees	Re: Admissions/Capacity in Schools as he is a Governor at Crynallt Primary School and Cefn Saeson Comprehensive but has dispensation to speak and vote.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of previous meetings held on 14 October 2021 and 1 November 2021, were approved.

3. **Admission/Capacity in Schools**

The Committee was provided with a follow-up report on the matter of admission/capacity in schools; Members had requested further data in regards capacity numbers and placements to Neath Port Talbot schools.

Concerns were raised in regards to the class sizes in some of the primary schools; the circulated report detailed that some classes had over 30 pupils in one class, which could become unmanageable in some cases. Officers noted that schools aim for up to 30 pupils in a class, however this was not a mandatory figure for junior aged pupils and over; Local Authorities weren't involved in setting the class sizes, this was determined and set by individual schools. It was added that Local Authorities could support and advise schools on the numbers; however, the final decision was made by the schools.

In terms of the capacity figures, it was highlighted that these change on a daily basis; as of now there was capacity in the majority of schools, excluding three schools which exceed capacity. Members were informed that once a capacity limit was reached, and before completing a regular admission, Officers would liaise with the schools to identify if the school could accommodate additional pupils in any way; for example by changing class room set ups. It was mentioned that in each case where a school was nearing capacity, the Head Teacher had agreed to further admissions; the Council does not enforce this, however Officers would approach the school to ask them to consider it.

Members expressed their concerns in regards to the future capacity of schools; in particular those which were already at full capacity, and taking into consideration new housing developments which would generate more children into the area. It was asked if there was solution to this problem. Officers stated that it was very difficult to predict and identify growth in the community, and in which locations this will occur; and further to this, the capacity levels in which schools should be built at. It was mentioned that there were many issues with building new schools that were larger than the numbers in current schools. However, Members were assured that Officers had regular meetings with developers and planners, and were involved in the work of the new Local Development Plan (LDP); this meant that Officers were aware of the locations in which new housing developments would be built. It was noted that a calculation was used to try and predict how many children would be generated from specific housing estates, and it was surprising how small of a number that could often be.

Further to this, it was explained that Officers meet on a regular basis with the Councils Admissions Team; whenever new schools proposals were being considered, there were various Officers that were involved to inform the process.

It was explained that Officers re-visit the capacity levels once they had been established to identify if the capacity calculations meet what was needed in the area.

Members were informed that the Council was also currently consulting on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP), which was looking at introducing three new Welsh Medium schools into the area.

Officers assured Members that they were monitoring the situation very closely.

It was noted that children care providers in the local area had increased, or were in the process of increasing, their registration for under two year olds; Officers were asked if they had taken this into consideration for future plans, as it will affect schools further down the line. It was confirmed that Officers were aware of this matter and work closely with child care colleagues to monitor their capacity levels.

Officers were thanked for the detail included in the report; and Members requested to receive updates on this information, as and when appropriate, in order to monitor the figures.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

4. **Forward Work Programme**

The Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Forward Work Programme was noted.

CHAIRPERSON

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Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee – Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Contact Officer
2021		
18 th March	Update Report on Libraries	Andrew Thomas
	Report on the work of Cynnydd and the Wellbeing Service	Andrew Thomas
29 th April	Meeting cancelled	
10 th June – postponed to 28 th June	<p>An update on the impact Covid-19 has had on Education and Leisure services;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the return to schools been, any issues etc, overcome or still challenging, • Assessment in lieu of exams, how is it going/gone • Staff morale in Council, classroom and wider provision, • New curriculum prep. Simple quick rendering of what was said at school standards. • Adult Education activities 	Andrew Thomas/ Chris Millis

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare - as furlough ends after summer what will be the issues for providers / do we know? How many operating 	
22 nd July	Please see Cabinet Board FWP for items	
2 nd September	Update on capacity at Schools – First and Second Choice	Andrew Thomas / Helen
14 th October Page 10	Update on Youth and Community Activity (included on Cabinet Board)	Jason Heaney/ Angeline Spooner-Cleverly
	Curriculum Reform Update	Chis Millis and Mike Daley
1 st November	WESP (on cabinet papers	
25 th November	Report on school capacity including nursery and special unit figures	John Burge
2022		
19 th January (moved from 6 jan to fit in with WESP timescales)		

17 th February	Childcare Capacity in the County Borough following the effect of the pandemic	Hayley Lervy
Pre-election period		
31 st March	Consider the impacts that the pandemic has had on Schools.	Andrew Thomas

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