

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Civic Centre, Port Talbot)

Members Present:

31st July, 2014

Chairman: Councillor Mrs.D.Jones

Councillors: A.Carter, Mrs. J.Dudley, R.G.Jones, J.D.Morgan,
Mrs.S.Paddison, Mrs.K.Pearson, M.Protheroe,
A.L.Thomas and Mrs.L.G.Williams.

**Co-opted Non-Voting
Members:** A.Hughes

Officers in Attendance: A.Evans, A.Jarrett, I.Guy, H.Roberts, J.Burge and
C.Gadd

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and E.V.Latham

1. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Members made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

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| Councillor P.A.Rees | - Report of the Head of Resources and Commissioning Re: Establishment of a temporary governing body for the new single special school replacing Velindre Community School, Ysgol Hendre Special School and Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit, as he is Chairman of Governors at Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit. |
| Councillor Mrs.D.Jones | - Report of the Head of Resources and Commissioning Re: Establishment of a temporary governing body for the new |

single special school replacing Velindre Community School, Ysgol Hendre Special School and Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit, as a relative works at Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit.

Councillor Mrs. L.G.Williams - Report of the Head of Resources and Commissioning Re: Re-naming of 'traditional' Welsh primary schools in Neath Port Talbot to Welsh-medium primary schools, as she is Chairman of Governors at Gwaun Cae Gurwen Primary School and a Governor at Cwmgors Primary School.

2. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 19TH JUNE, 2014**

Noted by Committee.

3. **MONITORING REPORTS**

(i) **Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning – Performance Monitoring, 4th Quarter 2013/14**

Members received information of the actual performance achieved within the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate, for the period April 2013 to March 2014, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members were informed that the report was cumulative over the whole year and performance falling below target was highlighted.

Members queried why 3 of the indicators were below target and what strategies were in place to address this. They were informed that the figures for the average number of school days (EDU/009) that permanently excluded pupils did not receive an offer of education provision would be double checked for accuracy and the wording reconsidered. It was explained that the issue was normally regarding parents not being satisfied with the offer they were given, which could create a delay in the child or young person going to a new school. Members were informed that the offers were usually

made within the target timescale and there had been a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions.

The other 2 performance indicators (SCY001b and SCY002a) falling below target were regarding Youth Justice and the reasons why would be reported to the next meeting.

It was clarified that the percentage of 16 year old pupils leaving full time education or work based learning without a qualification included those classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET). It included all 16 year olds and the figures demonstrated that Neath Port Talbot was doing well in this area.

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

4. **PRE SCRUTINY**

The Committee considered the following matters:-

(i) **Update on the Modernisation of the Scrutiny Process and Work Programme Development**

The Committee received an update on the modernisation of the scrutiny process and the draft forward work programme for approval, as detailed in the circulated report.

It was explained that workshops had taken place in March and July 2014 to establish the key areas of Children's Services for the Committee to focus on and to identify potential lines of enquiry. The outputs from both workshops were captured in the draft forward work programme. It was highlighted that if the programme was approved the next meeting would include scrutinising the quality and consistency of assessments and care planning. Members informed officers that they would like the opportunity to ask questions of social workers but did not want to duplicate work that was already being undertaken by the Improvement Member Panel. Members proposed that the Committee to provide questions for the Panel to ask social workers when they go back out to meet teams in September and for the responses to be fed back to the Committee. The proposal was agreed and would be taken forward by officers. Members asked for the location, outcomes and value for money of Play Schemes to be added to the work programme as they had previously expressed an interest in this area. Members would also

like this expanded to cover play provision and youth clubs. It was agreed that this would be added to the programme.

In addition, Members requested that information on the placement of Looked After Children in schools be added to the work programme. It was felt that sometimes children and young people were placed with foster carers in a different area of the County Borough but did not move schools.

Members also expressed an interest in considering how schools use the Pupil Deprivation Grant and the links to pupil attainment.

Members were supportive of the proposed items on the draft Work Programme. With the addition of the items outlined above, the Committee approved the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme contained in Appendix 1 of the circulated report.

Cabinet Board Proposals

(ii) Revised Strategic Improvement Plan Children and Young People Services

The Committee received the revised Children and Young People Services Strategic Improvement Plan, as detailed in the circulated report.

After a critical inspection of Children's Social Services in November 2012 from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), a Strategic Improvement Plan was produced and approved by Members in March 2013 to ensure efforts were maximised on delivering the improvements necessary. The Plan was recently reviewed to take into account both the recommendations emanating from the CSSIW report published in January 2014, as well as progress made within the Service. Members were informed of the four themes regarding the improvements required: Social Work Practice, Capacity and Capability of the Workforce, Leadership and Partnership.

Members asked what progress had been made against the four themes and were informed that there had been a lot of changes to social work practice, however, quality and consistency was an area that now needed to be concentrated upon. All social workers have individual learning plans and there had been a lot of "back to basics"

training. The Committee had previously received reports on the workforce and there were currently only 2 vacancies and a reduction in the number of agency staff, which were mainly used in teams to provide experience. There is stable leadership from the Senior Management Team. Partnership is being driven forward by the Director of Social Services, Health and Housing and big strides had been made in multiagency working with the development of the Think Families Partnership and early intervention work.

Members queried whether a Fire Authority representative should sit on the Implementation Board, as they are a partner organisation that has an input into educational activities. It was noted that the partners involved in the Board were core agencies that have a direct impact on services and it was therefore not felt appropriate that appropriate that the Fire Authority be represented.

Following the specific reference to complaints in the Plan and the recent Joint Social Care, Health and Housing and Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee on the new Complaints Procedure being introduced on 1st August, Members asked how the new complaints procedure was going to be disseminated to all staff and assurances given that the system was robust. They were informed that training sessions were being arranged for senior management on the new system and to identify what key information needed to be passed on to Children and Young People Services staff. It was felt that Team Managers and Principal Officers would need to know the details of the system and they would raise awareness with their staff. The process for disseminating this information would be evaluated and reviewed after 3 months to check if it was working effectively. It was also confirmed that regular complaints reports would be brought to meetings of this Committee. Discussions were on going around the timing and content of the reports and they would be added to Forward Work Programme once an approach had been agreed.

Members requested more information on the makeup of the Looked After Children population, such as age and ethnicity. The Head of Children and Young People Services confirmed that overall information on the profile of Looked After Children would be included in the presentation on the quality and consistency of assessments and care planning at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members asked whether all social workers received training on engaging and talking to children. It was confirmed that they had received this training and all social workers were encouraged to use it.

Following Scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted and that the additional information, as outlined above, be reported in due course.

(iii) Business Plans – Education Development and Inclusion Service Delivery Plan 2013-15 and Adult Community Learning Improvement Plan for 2013-15

The Committee received the business plans for Education and Inclusion Services 2013-15 and the Adult Community Learning Improvement Plan 2013-15, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members were informed of an amendment to the recommendation, which now reads ‘The revised Education Development and Inclusion Plan for 2013/15 and the revised Adult Community Learning Improvement Plan for 2013/15, as detailed in the circulated report, be approved.’

Members were informed that Equality Impact Assessments would be undertaken on the implementation of actions arising from the Plans, as required, and this information would be reported to the Committee.

Both Plans identified key areas for improvement. It was highlighted that for Education Development and Inclusion Services there had already been significant improvements in school attendance, which would need to be maintained. Behaviour in schools was also an area for improvement and it was noted that this was included in the Forward Work Programme for the Committee. Other priorities identified in the Plan included: improving literacy and numeracy for all pupils, building capacity for pupils with additional learning needs and improving the accuracy of teacher assessment. The Adult Community Learning Improvement Plan priorities included improving outcomes, provision and use of resources in Adult Community Learning. It was highlighted that the Plans were subject to internal self-evaluation and monitoring.

Members highlighted that the educational attainment of Looked After Children was lower than their peers and asked if they should be mentioned as a group in their own right alongside pupils in receipt of free school meals. It was noted that most Looked After Children would be in the free school meal group. Pupils receiving free school meals were a bigger group and this will result in more targeted actions by schools. Officers also informed Members that there was extensive support offered to Looked After Children and schools have processes in place to identify the most vulnerable pupils and ways to assist them.

It was clarified that literacy and numeracy tests were administered by schools on an annual basis and the results sent to Welsh Government. Members queried if there was any correlation between the results of the tests and the results of teacher assessments. It was noted that the national numeracy and literacy tests were only in their second year and it would be too early to be able to assess this properly. However, it was recognised that there were some areas that needed to be addressed in regards to teacher assessments. Members asked if children who were achieving also supported to achieve the best they could and it was confirmed that this was the case.

Members were pleased with the high quality of support offered to children with special educational needs. Members queried whether a new statement had to be completed for a child moving into the area from another Local Authority area or would any existing statements transfer with the child. It was noted that a high percentage arrive without statements and that a lot of Local Authorities do not do them. However, if a pupil does have a statement then it would be reviewed, which is a quicker process than completing a new one. It was also highlighted that there was a misconception that all statements resulted in extra funding. It was recognised that the earlier the identification of special educational needs then the more benefit support could have for the child. Members were informed that the review into inclusion would address some of these issues.

It was noted that the new regional arrangements would also have an impact on the priorities identified in the Plan and there would be increased leadership, challenge and support for schools.

Members queried if Adult Community Learning works with partners to identify gaps in the job market and offer training in these areas. It

was highlighted that the service offered over a 100 different courses and a lot of the skills were quite broad to improve employability. There had also been some engagement with suppliers to ensure, where appropriate, sector specific skills had been offered.

Members highlighted that Adult Community Learning took significant cuts this financial year and it was queried if there were further cuts in the next financial year and would this have an impact on priorities. The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning informed Members that the services had to deliver on their priorities and they could not hide behind budget cuts. It was noted that there were concerns over future funding due to continual budget cuts from Welsh Government.

Members asked if some of the targets were set too high and whether they were achievable. It was agreed that some of the tables were difficult to read and some of the figures would be clarified, however, the targets set should be achievable.

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

(iv) Establishment of a temporary governing body for the proposed new community primary school replacing Cwmafan Infant and Cwmafan Junior Schools

Members were informed of the following amendment to the recommendations, which now states: ‘3) that nominations be sought from Elected Members of Wards within the designated area of Bryn and Cwmafan and when nominations have been received the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board appoint the Local Authority Governor representatives to the temporary Governing Body.’

The Committee did not scrutinise this item.

(v) Establishment of a temporary governing body for the new single special school replacing Velindre Community School, Ysgol Hendre Special School and Bryncoch Pupil Referral Unit
(The Chairman, Cllr.Mrs.D.Jones, reaffirmed her interest in this matter and withdrew from the room during the discussion thereon, Cllr.Mrs.K.Pearson was elected Chairman for this item only).

Members were informed of the following amendment to the recommendations, which now states: ‘3) that nominations be sought from Elected Members of Wards within the designated area of Ysgol Hendre and Velindre and the current Local Authority Governor Representative of the federated Governing Body/Management Committee, and on receipt of nominations, Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board appoint the Local Authority Governor representatives to the temporary Governing Body.’

The Committee did not scrutinise this item.

- (vi) Re-naming of ‘traditional’ Welsh primary schools in Neath Port Talbot to Welsh-medium primary schools
(Cllr.Mrs.L.G.Williams reaffirmed her interest in this matter and withdrew from the room during the discussion thereon).

Members received information on the official renaming of each of the Authority’s ‘Traditional Welsh’ schools by amending the individual Instrument of Government, as detailed in the circulated report. The change would ensure compliance with the Welsh Government definitions for Welsh language schools and unify school designation in the Authority’s Welsh-medium sector.

Members queried if the name change would have any effect on the provision of home to school transport for the children that attended these schools or any children attending any English and Welsh medium secondary schools. The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that it would not affect transport provision.

Members asked if there was a particular reason for this change to be taking place at this time. They were informed that it was a tidying up exercise and there was no particular reason for the timing. It was noted that the ‘traditional’ part of the name had no legal standing. It was confirmed that individual consultation regarding the name change had taken place with the schools involved. The Governing Bodies of all five schools fully supported the proposals. It was also noted that there had been no objections from the local communities where the schools were based.

Members queried if there were any costs to changing the name in regards to letterheads and signs. They were informed that many of the schools had already unofficially dropped ‘traditional’ from their

name and used medium instead. So there should be no significant costs associated with the change.

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

(vii) School Terms and Holiday Dates 2016/2017

Members received school terms and holiday dates for 2016/17, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members had previously received proposed dates prior to consultation. The dates had been amended following some of the consultation responses received. It was highlighted that the dates did not match the majority of dates agreed by other Local Authorities that were members of ERW consortium but did match the majority of other authorities across Wales, including Swansea. The five faith schools within Neath Port Talbot had confirmed that they would accept the proposed dates.

The Committee commented that the dates were different to the original dates proposed and schools would no longer be in session during holy week and it was noted that the faith schools had agreed to the dates.

Members highlighted that it was disappointing that 3 Local Authorities had not harmonised their term and holiday dates with other Local Authorities. This could cause problems for parents who work outside their Local Authority area. It was noted that Welsh Ministers had the power to intervene and direct Local Authorities to harmonise dates and this could be enacted in the future.

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

CHAIRMAN