

# CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

**Members Present:**

**6 October 2016**

**Chairperson:** Councillor A.R.Lockyer

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor H.N.James

**Councillors:** H.M.Bebell, R.G.Jones, J.D.Morgan,  
M.Protheroe, A.L.Thomas, D.Whitelock and  
Mrs.L.G.Williams

**Co-opted Voting  
Members:** Mrs.M.Caddick and Mrs.D.Vaughan

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

**Officers In  
Attendance** A.Thomas, M.Daley, C.Millis, Ms.N.Sneezum,  
M.Lazarus, J.Hodges, Ms.C.Gadd and  
Miss.C.Davies

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

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The Committee acknowledged that Democratic Services Officer Catherine Gadd is leaving the Authority for a new job in Carmarthenshire County Council. Members thanked Catherine for the work she has undertaken with the Committee and wished her all the best for the future.

## 1. **MEMBER DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor R.G.Jones - Report of the Head of Participation –  
Item 5 Looked After Children  
Education Support (LACES) Team

Report Card – as he is a Member of the Governing Body for Dyffryn Comprehensive School.

2. **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2016**

The Minutes were noted by the Committee.

In regards to the Corporate Improvement Objective – Better Schools, Brighter Prospects – Highlight Report – Quarter 1 - Members had asked if court action against parents for non-attendance of pupils in schools had resulted in improved attendance for the pupils involved. Officers informed Members that in 15 out of the 16 cases it had resulted in improved attendance.

3. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

It was highlighted to Members that there was a Special meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee being held on 17 October 2016 on the Budget Consultation.

The Forward Work Programme was noted by the Committee.

4. **THE MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS AT HILLSIDE SECURE CHILDREN'S HOME (YOUNG PEOPLE)**

The Committee received the new process and procedures on the management of incidents within Hillside Secure Children's Home, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed that they had previously received a report in December 2015 on the procedures for the management of incidents within the Home. The report highlighted the automatic response of reporting incidents to the Police was not always the most appropriate response or in the best interest of the young person. It was highlighted that there had been further evidence in the Lord Laming report – In Care, Out of Trouble – that every effort should be made to avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care.

Members had previously asked for further clarity on the processes in place to manage incidents. It was noted that there had been limited guidance in place and no joint agency policy agreement. Officers apologised for the delay in providing Members with this report due to the time taken to collate information and the subsequent work to develop appropriate processes.

It was noted that Hillside had developed a joint protocol and working agreement with South Wales Police and the Western Bay Youth Offending Service, as detailed in appendix 1 to the circulated report.

Joint protocols had been considered from other areas and adapted to best fit the needs of Hillside. The protocol had been achieved through collaborative discussions with South Wales Police and Western Bay Safeguarding Board. It was highlighted that the protocol established a three tier response to incidents and applied the test for staff to ask 'if the incident happened in a supportive caring family environment would a reasonable parent involve the Police?' It had been recognised by South Wales Police as good practice and would be shared with other areas.

Members queried if staff would be supported to apply this test and make that decision. Officers explained that there would be support and reassurances were provided that the process would be effectively managed. Members asked why the word 'reasonable' was chosen rather than the word 'responsible' in regards to the reasonable parent test. Officers informed Members that research showed that the word 'reasonable' was the preferred word used and was therefore chosen for the protocol.

The Committee recognised and commended the tremendous work that had been undertaken in finding and adapting good practice that was fit for purpose. It was noted that this work reflected the findings by the Howard League for Penal Reform to reduce the criminalisation of young people. It was commented that this progress also highlighted the advantage of scrutiny in improving processes and policies.

Following Scrutiny, it was agreed that the report noted.

5. **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN EDUCATION SUPPORT (LACES)  
TEAM SERVICE REPORT CARD**

The Committee were presented with the Service Report Card developed by the Looked After Children Support (LACES) team, which summarised the functions of the team, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members were informed that it was Welsh Government's intention that Local Education Authorities adopt a more strategic approach towards the delivery of services for vulnerable children. The team provided a wide range of support, interventions and extra-curricular opportunities to ensure participation and enjoyment of learning for children 'looked after' and to raise standards for these learners. It was noted that there were three clear priorities, the roll out of a regional attachment aware schools pilot project, the Neath Port Talbot Wellbeing Initiative and Looked After Children Education Support.

Members commended the Regional Attachment Aware Schools Pilot Project and queried whether all schools had been made aware of the project and if there was still time to sign up. Officers informed Members that schools could still be involved and due to the schools being at different stages it was their responsibility to put themselves forward. It was noted that the project had been promoted regionally through ERW.

Members highlighted that the attendance figures of Looked After Children in primary school was higher than the Neath Port Talbot average and asked if there was any good practice that could be used to improve overall attendance across Neath Port Talbot. Officers explained that it would be an expectation of foster carers to ensure the children they looked after attended school. Targeted support was also put in place where required.

Members noted that there was a significant increase in attainment, especially at level 2 threshold inclusive of English/Welsh first language and Maths GCSE and queried if there was any specific reason for this. Officers explained that it was partly dependent on the cohort of pupils and there would be variation year to year. It was noted that pupils were tracked through schools and the information was used by the team to identify potential support that may be required.

Members asked if there was any uncertainty that funding would not be continued for these projects and was there a lobbying process to ensure that it was. Officers highlighted that it was hoped funding would continue, however, they had had created a sustainable model through training and cascading of information through schools. It was noted that representations had been made regarding the continuation of this funding at all levels and the positive outcomes and evidence of good practice would help to support this case.

Following Scrutiny, it was agreed that the report noted.

## 6. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

### Cabinet Board Proposals

#### 6.1 Neath Port Talbot Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young people Self Evaluation

The Committee received information of the self-evaluation work undertaken by Education Services in regard to the Local Authority Education Services for Children and Young People (LAESCYP), as detailed in the circulated report.

Members were provided with an overview of the key services provided by Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Services and how it aligns with guidance issued by Estyn and the future development of those services. Members were presented with the background and key information in the report, which focused on the main strengths and areas of development for Neath Port Talbot. It was highlighted that Neath Port Talbot had high levels of Free School Meals pupils, the second highest levels of deprivation in Wales and above average of Special Education Needs pupils. Despite this, Neath Port Talbot currently performed well at Key Stage 4 and were ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in Wales, which was an outstanding feature of the performance of the Service. It was noted that Key Stage 4 was the end product of the whole school career of pupils. Neath Port Talbot Free School Meal pupils outperform the national average by 3%. It was highlighted that there had been an improvement in attendance, particularly at primary school level.

It was highlighted that one area that Estyn would consider during inspections was resource management and value for money and the level of investment against outcomes. Members queried by some Local Authorities provide higher than average funding per pupil. Officers noted that the areas that tend to do this had previously had poor outcomes and intervention by Estyn and therefore had to invest in those services.

Members noted that there was a large increase in the number of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) over the last three years and if there was any specific reason for this. Officers informed Members that there was a range of reasons, which included improved provision for SEN pupils and some higher level cases that previously been educated out of County now being able to have their needs met in County.

Members highlighted that for pupils that English was an Additional Language there were 59 first/home languages spoken which seemed a high number and asked how this compared with other Local Authorities, such as Cardiff and Swansea. Officers informed Members that Cardiff, Newport and Swansea had the highest numbers of home languages spoken and Neath Port Talbot ranked 12<sup>th</sup>.

Members highlighted that under strengths on page 27 of the report noted that 'Governors receive useful advice when recruiting senior leaders within their schools' and felt that it should be reworded to read 'Governors receive useful advice from challenge advisers when recruiting senior leaders within their schools'. Officers would make this amendment.

Members asked how long it would take for the evaluation of the impact on school closures to be undertaken. Officers explained that the evaluation was ongoing and every time a school closure was undertaken an impact assessment evaluation was also undertaken. Members noted that 61% of pupils attended named school as expected after the closure of schools and queried what happened to the other 39% of pupils. Officers explained that those pupils would have attended a different school of their choice. It was noted that there were a few examples of pupils attending schools outside of the County Borough.

The Committee highlighted that there was provision to replace Dyffryn School and queried if both the Upper and Lower

Schools were going to be replaced, especially as Dyffryn Upper school was only 52 years old. Officers confirmed that both the Lower and Upper Dyffryn School would be replaced by the new Ysgol Newedd Margam and the Upper School land would become the playing fields for the new school.

Members expressed concerned over the amount of funding delegated to schools, particularly at primary school level, and queried if there were any plans to remedy this situation. Officers clarified that for primary schools it was the funding per pupil that was lower. It was highlighted that some primary schools had indicated that they did not want delegation of funding for areas such as catering and felt that there needed to be more concentration on improving standards. It was highlighted that delegation rates were in line with Welsh Government expectations.

Members noted that nearly all schools buy into the Authority's Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and queried what was the actual number of schools and what steps were being taken in order to make it 100%. Officers explained that it was 90% of schools and there were a few schools that did not take up SLAs for ground maintenance and Music Services. Officers would be discussing this further with those schools.

Members asked for the comparison data for the YP-CORE levels of psychological distress pre and post interventions. Officers would find out this information and circulate it to the Committee. It was highlighted that Education Services and Children and Young People Services were looking at how to develop their own mental health services as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was not reliable.

Members asked if incidents of bullying were recorded and if there was a programme in place to tackle it. Officers confirmed that there was a programme in place and the report highlighted that at secondary school 90% of pupils felt that their school deals well with bullying (7% higher than the national average).

Members noted the positive figures for sport involvement and asked if there was any data regarding how they were tackling childhood obesity. Officers would look at what information was available and bring a report to a future meeting.

Following Scrutiny, it was agreed that the report noted.

## 6.2 Neath Port Talbot Local Authority Education Development Service Delivery Plan

The Committee received information of the Education Delivery Plan by the Education Improvement Team giving an overview of the key priorities provided and how it aligns with Regional ERW Business Plan, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members were informed of the priorities for the Service and the milestones throughout the year. It was noted that for Priority Two – Teaching and Learning - leadership was a key element and there were a high percentage of good leaders in Neath Port Talbot schools. The Service was now considering how to best develop middle leadership. Members noted that there had been a misconception that Estyn did not like the ERW set up. Officers explained that it took some time to bring six Local Authorities together and the region was now working well and the Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Hub performance was strong.

For Priority One, Members queried how the Service was developing an integrated approach to ensure consistently high quality teaching and learning within Welsh, English and Mathematic lessons across all key stages. Officers informed the Committee that part of it was to ensure consistency of training across the region and sharing practices across the region. Where possible schools with similar issues were paired up to best support each other.

The Committee noted that there seemed to be a link missing with Governors and queried how Governors could be further involved. It was noted that Governors should receive relevant information from their headteachers. In addition the Service was considering how to develop online training. It was highlighted Scrutiny Members in City and County of Swansea had undertaken a piece of work into school governors and the report would be circulated to the Committee for information.

Following Scrutiny, it was agreed that the report noted.

**CHAIRPERSON**