

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

3 May 2018

Chairperson: Councillor A.L.Thomas

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Crowley

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, S.Harris, H.N.James, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, M.Protheroe, S.Renkes, R.Phillips, A.J.Richards and D.Whitelock

Co-opted Voting Members: M.Caddick and A. Amor

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, I.Guy, Ms.A.Hutchings, P.Walker, C.Thomas, R.Gordon and C.Davies

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

1. **MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 15TH MARCH 2018**

The Committee noted the Minutes.

2. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

Cabinet Board Proposals

2.1 **Strategic Schools Improvement Programme – Engagement of External Consultancy Services**

Members were informed on the request to appoint CPC Project Services LLP, by virtue of the Crown Commercial Services Framework Agreement for the provision of management consultancy services, to prepare for the Neath Port Talbot

County Borough Council (“the Council’s”) business cases for the delivery of 21st Century Schools Band B Proposals, as detailed in the circulated report.

It was noted that there was an error on Page 10, point 16 of the report. It read 0.03% when it was meant to read 0.3%.

Members highlighted that it is a high priority that the department get the funding and asked what the penalties would be if there were a delay in the company applying for funding. Officers highlighted that if the application for funding is out of sequence then it can cause an effect.

Officers highlighted that it’s an expertise role that is required for this and therefore the reason for this requirement. Capacity would be an issue for officers within the authority to do it themselves.

Members asked if this was the most cost effective way due to the budget issues that we are currently under. Officers highlighted that this is required for the budget, therefore the cost is justified.

Members asked if the Authority had looked at any other consultancies instead. Officers highlighted that CPC are already on the framework, they are already up and running so selected them.

Members asked whether sufficient safeguarding around penalties if the application is rejected, could be contained within the contract. Officers were unsure of any penalty clause if rejected, however, highlighted that we would need to trust in them as the responsibility of the reports are with the authority.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

2.2 Long Term Sickness Taskforce Project

Members were provided with an update in relation to the work of the Long Term Sickness Taskforce in Schools and the early intervention methodology pilot, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members asked why there was an unknown limit of informal return to work Planning meetings. Officers explained that as they are informal meetings the Human Resources team are not involved, however staff are trained to conduct an informal and formal meeting. Members queried if Informal Meetings aren't being included how Human Resources would know that they are happening. It was noted that officers will request a record in future.

Members asked how the Formal meeting process works. Officers highlighted that Formal stage 1 meetings are held at school or in a neutral environment depending on the nature of the illness, for example if stress related then its often more appropriate to meet in a neutral location. The Unions are invited to all meetings, they discuss the nature of the illness, if stress then will try and get more detail to see if it is work related stress.

Members asked for information on the reasoning behind the decrease in secondary schools and the increase in FTE working days lost. Officers informed members that they would circulate more detailed information to provide an explanation.

Members asked if a School has underspent does the money stay with the School. Officers confirmed that it would stay with the School.

Members asked for more data to be included on the number of people employed over the years. Officers highlighted they would provide more information in future.

Members asked whether the stress related column on Table 6 included the other column figures. Officers highlighted that the stress related column doesn't include the other column figures.

Members asked if the data is based on calendar days or working days. Officers highlighted it is calendar days.

Members asked if the data can be split in to age and roles to highlight if there are any patterns. Officers confirmed that the data can be provided in many ways as requested in future.

Members asked what the reasons are being provided for having stress. Officers highlighted that they can't confirm if stress

relating to the work in schools was the definite reason. It was noted that 5 years ago the main reason for illness was muscular. Officers highlighted that members of staff can start with a physical illness, however the stress of that can cause them to be then off sick with stress related illness.

3. **ANY URGENT ITEMS**

With the permission of the Chair the following was raised as an urgent item for discussion at today's meeting pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972

Tir Morfa – Site Visit

The Co-opted Member thanked officers for the arrangement of the Site Visit to Tir Morfa.

CHAIRPERSON