

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Members Present:

26 July 2018

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Crowley

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

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

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, C.Millis, A.Thomas, J.Burge, H.Lervy, R.Crowhurst and J.Davies

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

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS.**

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

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| Cllr. S. Harris | Private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as she is a governor of Creunant Junior School |
| Cllr. S. Dafydd | Report of the Head of Transformation re: Strategic School Improvement Programme and the private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as he is a governor of St. Joseph's Infant and Primary School and 6 th Form and Ysgol Bae Baglan. |
| Cllr. R. Taylor | Report of the Head of Transformation re: Pupil Attendance and the private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as she is a governor of Eastern Primary School and Groes Primary School, and the report of the Head of Participation re: Implementation and |

- Delivery of the Childcare Offer Wales as her mother owns a childcare business in one of the areas where the scheme will be trialled.
- Cllr. M. Protheroe Report of the Head of Transformation re: Pupil Attendance and the private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as he is a governor of Melin Primary School and Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School.
- Cllr. D. Whitelock Report of the Head of Transformation re: Pupil Attendance and the private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as he is a school governor and has grandchildren of school age.
- Cllr. S. Miller Report of the Head of Transformation re: Strategic School Improvement Programme and the private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as she is a governor of Melin Primary School.
- Cllr. M. Crowley Private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves and the report of the Head of Transformation re: Additional Learning Needs Reform as he is a school governor.
- Marie Caddick Private Report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves and the report of the Head of Transformation re: Pupil Attendance as she is a school governor.
- Cllr. D. Morgan Private Report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as he is the chair of governors of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm-Nedd.
- Cllr. M. Ellis Report of the Head of Participation re: Home to School Transport 2017/18 as he is a governor of Ysgol Cwm Brombil.
- Cllr. H. N. James Report of the Head of Transformation re: Pupil Attendance and the private report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves as he is a shadow governor of Ysgol Bro Dur, Ysgol Carreg Hir and Llansawel Primary School.
- Adam Amor Report of the Head of Transformation re: Pupil Attendance, the report of the Head of Participation re: Home to School Transport 2017/18, the private Report of the Head of Transformation re: School Reserves, and the report of the Head of Transformation re: Pupil

Attendance as he is governor of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhosafan, and a company Director at a business that is a supplier of MEAS.

2. **MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 14TH JUNE.**

Members referred to section 3.1 of the minutes in relation to the Welsh Government Feminine Hygiene Grant, and queried whether representations had been made by Officers and the Committee to Assembly Member Julie James regarding the terms of the grant. Officers explained that all schools had been engaged in order to gain an understanding of the practices currently in place before formulating a response to Welsh Government (WG), and that the process was now complete. Officers informed the Committee that a letter had been sent to WG acknowledging receipt of the grant and that money would be distributed to the schools in September. Officers added that they did not envisage that the terms of the grant would place restrictions on how the money would be spent on feminine hygiene products.

The Committee noted the minutes.

3. **STRATEGIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - A REPORT ON A NEW 21ST CENTURY SCHOOL BUILD**

The Committee received the Strategic School Improvement Programme – A Report On A New 21st Century School Build as contained within the circulated report.

Members referred to point 19 on page 17 of the report which stated that 27% of pupils had additional learning needs, and queried whether these learning needs were considered minimal, moderate or significant, or if there was a mix. Officers informed Members that there was a mix.

Members questioned how the Key Stage Four results at the new school compared to the Key Stage Four results at the previous schools. Officers explained that it was difficult to compare as they were different cohorts and there was a higher number of pupils in the previous schools with learning needs which made it difficult to compare. Officers stated that the results in the new school were higher than expected and exceeded the targets that had been set.

Members queried whether absences for the old cohorts had been recorded at the new school. Members added that when the previous schools were in existence it was anticipated that attendance figures for the following term were due to decline. Officers explained that the information was no longer recorded for the old cohorts. Officers stated that attendance at Ysgol Bae Baglan was generally of a good standard. Officers informed Members that the Education and Welfare Officers had reported no real issues under the new school arrangements. Members stated that it was important to track issues regarding absences from the old schools through to new schools in order to establish whether the issues had been addressed under the new school arrangements, so that lessons could be learnt for the future. Officers explained that 40% of the children who were in the previous schools had not moved to the new school and there was a risk that any data and analysis could be inconclusive. Officers stated that work would be undertaken with the school to identify pupils from the old cohorts in order to compare absence rates under the previous and current schools.

Members requested for the Mike Tate from Ysgol Bae Baglan to be invited to a future meeting to give a presentation on their experiences and the lessons learnt. Officers stated that they would invite the relevant officer to a future meeting.

Members referred to point four on page 14 regarding the review with key focus groups and questioned the format of the review. Officers explained that focus groups were preferred to surveys, and were held over a day and a half. Officers added that other reviews such as the Safeguarding review was also taken into consideration. Members queried whether parents had been included in the review. Officers stated that parents had not been included in the review due to time constraints, but it was anticipated that governors would have raised similar issues.

Members complimented officers on the seamless transition from the previous schools to Ysgol Bae Baglan, and on the good work carried out to date.

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

4. **MINORITY ETHNIC ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE AND THE TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICE REPORT**

The Committee received the update on the issues of funding the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service and the Traveller Education Service as contained within the circulated report.

Members commented that it was important for the Authority to receive an equal share of the funding. Officers reassured Members that every effort would be made to maximise the amount of funding received by the Authority.

Members queried whether other agencies would receive a percentage of the money to administer the funding. Officers stated that there had been no clarity from WG yet, but further information would be brought back to the Committee as it became available.

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

5. **HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT 2017/18**

The Committee received information on the Home to School Transport 2017/18 as contained within the circulated report.

Members referred to point 12 on page 41, and queried what the reasons were behind the five appeals. Officers stated that the applications in question did not meet the criteria and were focused on convenience for parents instead of the needs of the children. Officers added that the cost of the service was expensive and had to be strictly managed.

Members commented that they welcomed the inclusion of the Voluntary Aided Pupils following previous discussions.

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

6. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19.**

Following discussions with officers during Item 4 - Strategic Schools for 21st Century – A Report On A New 21st Century School Build, it was agreed that figures regarding pupil attendance and absences for the old cohorts would be brought to the meeting on the 17th January 2018.

Members requested for the verified Key Stage Four results to be placed on the Forward Work Programme for the meeting in December. Officers stated that unverified Key Stage Four results would be circulated via e-mail and that the verified results would be available in December or January and would also be circulated via e-mail. Officers added that Members would also have the opportunity to scrutinise the results when the quarterly performance monitoring data was reported to the Committee.

Following discussion with officers during Item 6 – Home to School Transport 2017/18, Members requested a copy of the Home to School Appeals Panel Process and Policy. Officers stated that this would be circulated to Members via e-mail, and if there was a requirement for further information this could be raised at the next meeting.

Officers referred to the item programmed in on the Forward Work Planner for the 18th October titled Statemented Children – Update, and queried what information was required by the Committee. Members requested an explanation on how the process worked in practice.

Members questioned whether it was possible to programme in updates on how new schools such as Ysgol Cwm Brombil, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Dur, Ysgol Carreg Hir and Ysgol Mynydd Newydd were performing once they had become fully operational. Members queried whether it was possible for this information to be reported to the Committee in May 2019. Officers stated that no meaningful feedback or data would be available regarding the new schools until Autumn 2019. The Committee agreed for the updates to be brought back at this time.

The Committee congratulated the Chair on his achievement of being called to the bar.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

7. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:-

Cabinet Board Proposals

7.1 Additional Learning Needs Reform

The Committee received a presentation from Officers on the Additional Learning Needs Reform as contained within the circulated report.

Officers informed Members that this was the single biggest change to legislation for learners with additional learning needs in 25 years, and it would have a significant impact on resources. Officers stated that a Local Implementation Plan would be drafted and taken to Cabinet Board in the Autumn.

Members queried whether additional funding had been identified to implement the changes. Officers informed Members that WG would provide funding up until March 2020, and then the Authority and the schools would have to fund any additional costs.

Members acknowledged that the act placed significant pressure on the Authority, schools and other agencies with the introduction of additional duties and responsibilities. Members queried what the percentage was currently for pupils with additional learning needs. Officers explained that approximately 30 extra individuals were identified each year with additional learning needs. Officers informed Members that under the new legislation the Authority would be accountable for Individual Development Plans (IDP) for all agencies within the county borough.

Members queried whether there had been positive dialogue with other agencies and partners. Officers explained that a conference had taken place and an implementation plan had been prepared for WG. Officers informed Members that regular meetings were being held with Neath Port Talbot College, and discussions had taken place regarding the preferred method of training for the college to prepare for the legislative changes.

Members queried how the Authority would deal with the new demands imposed by the new legislation when resources were already at full capacity focusing on three to sixteen year olds. Officers stated that regular communication and partnership working would help to remedy the situation.

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

7.2 Pupil Attendance Update

The Committee received information in relation to Pupil Attendance as contained within the circulated reported. Officers stated that the data was not for a full academic year. Officers explained that there had been a significant increase in unauthorised absences during holiday periods, and that this was a typical pattern across Wales. Officers informed Members that compared to the rest of Wales the figures were not a cause for alarm.

Members commented that the attendance rate used to be a lot lower, and that the vast majority were now over 90%. Members added that the recent decrease in attendance was marginal

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

8. **URGENT ITEMS**

Because of the need to deal now with the matter contained in the Minute No. 4(i) below, the Chairman agreed that this could be raised at today's meeting as an urgent item pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Reason:

Due to the time element.

PRE SCRUTINY

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:-

Cabinet Board Proposals

8.1 Implementation and Delivery of the Childcare Offer Wales

The Committee received information in relation to the Implementation and Delivery of the Childcare Offer Wales as contained within the circulated reported.

Members queried whether citizens from other wards not identified in the pilot could take advantage of the childcare offer if they were prepared to travel to the nearest pilot ward. Officers stated that the eligibility criteria was restricted to citizens living within the pilot wards only.

Members queried when the pilot was due to start, and when would the scheme be available to all wards. Officers stated that that pilot would begin in September 2018 and the scheme would be rolled out to all wards from January 2019 providing there were no issues identified during the pilot stage.

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

9. **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 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

10. **SCHOOL RESERVES REPORT (EXEMPT UNDER PARAGRAPH 14)**

The Committee received information in relation to School Reserves as contained within the circulated report.

Officers stated that various factors could affect school reserves. Officers informed Members that schools could build up reserves over a period of years in order to fund a particular project. Members queried whether recently amalgamated schools that had not spent their allocation due to time constraints would be at risk of having their reserves partially clawed back. Officers stated that each case was considered on its own merits.

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

CHAIRPERSON

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