

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

11 April 2019

Chairperson: Councillor A.L.Thomas

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

Co-opted Members: M. Caddick

Officers In Attendance C.Millis, A.Thomas, I.Guy, H.Lervy, A.Harris, A.Spooner-Cleverly, W.John, M.Daley, C.L.Davies and J.Woodman-Ralph

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

Observer: Councillor S.Reynolds

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor P.Rees Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as he is Governor at Crynallt Primary and Cefn Saeson Comprehensive Schools and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote. He also has grandchildren in YGG Castell-Nedd.

Councillor A.Lockyer Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot

Schools as he is Governor at Castell Nedd and Gnoll Primary Schools and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote. He also has a relative working in Dwr-y-Felin Comprehensive School and grandchildren in Alderman Davies Primary School.

Councillor
H.N.James

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as he is Governor at Ysgol Carreg Hir and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor
S.Reynolds

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as she is Governor of YGG Gwaun Cae Gurwen School.

Councillor
S.Reynolds

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Library Service Review as she is a trustee of Canolfan Maerdy Resource Centre.

Councillor
S.Reynolds

Re: Report of the Head of Participation on the Think Families Partnership Update as she is a trustee of Canolfan Maerdy Resource Centre.

Councillor
S.ap Dafydd

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as he is a Governor at Ysgol Bae Baglan Comprehensive School and St.Joseph's School Sixth Form and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote.

M.Caddick
Co-opted Member

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as she is Governor at St Joseph Comprehensive School and confirmed she has dispensation to speak and vote. She also has grandchildren in Neath Port Talbot Schools.

Councillor
J.D.Morgan

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as he is Chair of Governors at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm-Nedd and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor
J.Jones

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as she is Governor at Cymmer Afan and Abergwynfi Schools and confirmed she has dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor S.Harris

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as she is a School Governor and confirmed her dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor
M.Protheroe

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as he is Governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School. He also has children who attend schools in Neath Port Talbot.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the Minutes of the previous Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee held on the 28 February 2019, be approved.

3. **EMBEDDING THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC) WITHIN NEATH PORT TALBOT SCHOOLS**

The Committee received an update on embedding the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across all schools through the implementation of the Unicef Rights Respecting Awards (RRA).

Discussion took place on the current approach taken by Neath Port Talbot Schools in regard to the Rights Respecting Awards (RRA). It ensures that the child's voice was heard and that they participated in planning for the positive outcomes they wished for. Members noted that RRA was not a statutory requirement, the emphasis of the awards was recognising the good work which had already taken place in Neath Port Talbot Schools.

The Committee was pleased that schools had been positively engaged and that there had been an increase in the number of schools participating in the RRA. Eighteen schools had achieved a bronze award and seven schools had received a silver award.

Members received confirmation that the £20,000 cost per year for 3 years would be funded from existing budgets within the Education Department. Following on, discussion took place on the benefits to schools of participating in the scheme of accessing free training and when required bespoke training being tailored to schools needs.

In response to Members queries it was explained that impact evaluation was carried out by Unicef UK and was recognised by local authorities across Wales with an increase in the numbers of schools implementing the scheme. It was noted that another impact which was not measured was the benefit to the child/young persons' confidence and wellbeing and the sense of empowerment that young people gained from the framework adopted by schools. Discussion also took place on how the framework was an important part of the new curriculum as part of the person centred approach.

Members asked that six monthly monitoring reports be included in the Committee Forward Work Programme and that they include examples of how the RRA was embedded in the day to day running of schools within Neath Port Talbot.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

4. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet board items:

Cabinet Board Proposals

Library Service Review: A Sustainable Library Service 2020-2025

Members received an overview of the Library Service Review 2020-2025, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members were pleased that the outcome of the Library Service Review would be to develop a sustainable library service going forward.

In response to Members queries an update was given on how the consultation would be undertaken. It would include meetings in libraries with all interested parties, these would include Members, library users, groups and community trustees of libraries who have successfully transferred over. Also, prior to these meetings data was being collated on who users each library so that it can inform the consultation meetings. In addition, officers were attending public events to gain an understanding of why libraries were not being used.

Members identified the need to consider the effect on other community services that share buildings with libraries and how any changes would impact on communities.

Consideration would also be given, during the review to look at a variety of models of delivery for the library service that were used by other local authorities which would also inform the outcome of the review.

Officers confirmed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board containing the outcomes from the review for Members' consideration.

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

Annual Pupil Performance Report 2017/18

Members received a summary of the performance of Neath Port Talbot schools and its pupils during 2017/18.

Members discussed the increase in the numbers of children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and queried whether this increase was a contributory factor to the reduction in school attendance numbers. It was confirmed that it was a contributory factor as Neath Port Talbot was amongst the highest in Wales in terms of the FSM percentages but it was not the only factor. In addition, all children received the support they needed to assist them progress.

Concern was expressed at the lack of adequate initial teacher training received at Universities and the need to include in the syllabus information on how to recognise and deal with a variety of conditions that reflected in challenging behaviours in the classroom. Members felt that this should be raised with Welsh Government. Officers explained that the education department provided a comprehensive training programme for teachers in regard to Additional Learning Needs which was well received in schools. Training programmes were developed to include any new laws, changes and information. A report would be brought to a future meeting detailing the training provided and the effectiveness of that training.

Attention was drawn to the all wales statistical data and the figures contained within that data for all councils was very close and that the attendance difference was marginal. Officers referred to the excellent work that was being undertaken by the Education Welfare Officers in working with children who are persistently absent. It was emphasised that the figures for children who are persistently absent are very low. It was explained that unauthorised school holidays during term time was still an issue. The Committee asked that information on how the Educational Welfare Officers combat consistent absenteeism be included in the next Attendance Report.

Think Family Partnership Update

Officers explained that the Appendix attached to the circulated report was sent in error and would be considered as part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment 2019 – 2022 report scheduled for Members'

consideration at the next meeting of the Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board.

Members received an update on the progress made against the various elements of the Think Families Partnership, namely Families First, the Family Information Service, Flying Start, Children and Families Team and the Childcare Offer.

The Committee was informed that presently 113 providers had signed up to the Childcare Offer Wales and 700 applications had been received from working parents of three and four year olds. Applications were currently being actioned within 10 days and the scheme had received very positive feedback from parents and providers. Confirmation was also given that presently there were enough spaces to cover the demand. Welsh Government was looking at developing new settings to be able to increase the number of places. Analysis of postcode data had highlighted areas that had a lower take up of the offer and arrangements had been made to target those areas with an additional promotion to encourage take up

Members received confirmation that there were no plans by the Welsh Government to increase the funding to Flying Start. If new areas were to be added to the programme it would result in one of the current areas losing their provision.

Discussion took place on the variety of courses available to parents. The aim was to strengthen parenting capacity, develop and build resilience and sustain positive change in the best interests of children. It was also confirmed that all parents within the Flying Start areas were eligible to attend Parenting Classes and are either referred via an agency or self-referred. Officers explained that the effectiveness of the courses were constantly being monitored and a report would be brought to a future meeting of Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee on the impact of this initiative.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

5. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

Officers asked for clarification on the item School Improvement Literacy contained within the forward work programme for the 23 May 2019 to enable them to provide a report to Members.

CHAIRPERSON