

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

12 September 2019

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.Mizen

Councillors: M.Crowley, S. ap Dafydd, S.Harris, J.Jones, J.D.Morgan, R.Phillips, M.Protheroe, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards and D.Whitelock

Officers In Attendance: A.Thomas, C.Millis, H.Lurvey, J.Burge, S.James, L.Mathews, R.Crowhurst, C.Davies and J.Woodman-Ralph

Co-opted Members: M.Caddick and A.Amore

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and R.G.Jones

Observers: Councillors C.Galsworthy

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

That the minutes of the 16 June and the 4 July 2019 be approved.

Providing Healthy Meals and Physical Activities during School Summer Holidays

The committee received an update from the Chair of Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee that the letter identifying the Committees views on the scheme would be circulated to Members prior to being sent to the Minister of Education.

2. **ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS REFORM**

The Committee received information in relation to new legislation and statutory guidance for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

and the progress regarding the ALN Transformation Programme as detailed in the circulated report.

Discussion took place on the need for the teacher training syllabus to include information on dealing with children with additional learning needs. Local Authorities had raised this need with the Welsh Government and it was hoped that this would be included in the new curriculum being released next year.

In addition, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has arranged with University of Wales Trinity St David to provide some post graduate training to support children with additional learning needs. Nineteen places had been secured this year, with further training being provided next year.

Members asked if there would be cost implications to the Council with the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Reform. It was explained that Neath Port Talbot has put an additional £700,000 funding into next year's budget to try to address the increasing demand. Funding was made available from Welsh Government but this would not continue post 2020. No monies were made available for the implementation of the reform.

Further discussion took place on the concern being expressed by some teachers in the quality of the Individual Development Plans being completed, due to the numbers and the complexity of the forms. Officers explained that there was no criteria contained within the code but no changes were anticipated. Pilots had taken place with positive feedback received but training identifying what needs to be considered was ongoing.

Clarification was sought on the remit of Council relating to children whose parents elect to educate them at home. It was explained that the Council had no legal access to these children as its parental choice. In addition, these numbers of children were increasing across Wales. There was a number of reasons for parents electing to educate their children at home eg: attendance issues, mental health, school phobia. Additional Learning Needs Reform would not impact on these figures as the children were not in a school setting to benefit. Social Services, Health and Housing, Swansea Bay University Health Board and Education all worked together if there were any issues identified with a particular child.

Arrangements would be made for an Awareness Raising Session for Members on the Additional Learning Needs Reform.

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

3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

Quarterly Performance Management Data 2019- 2020 – Quarter 1 Performance (1 April 2019 – 30 June 2019)

Members received information on the Quarterly Performance Management Data 2019-2020 as detailed in the circulated report.

Members queried the following:

- Why was the percentage of 11 – 19 years olds in contact with the Youth Service not meeting its target? It was explained that this was due to sickness and vacancies within the team which impacted on the number of contacts made. Confirmation was given that this had now been addressed.
- Was the demand for full-time childcare places being monitored. Confirmation was received that monitoring does take place and as a result more places had been made available in more areas. Also, a media campaign had taken place to ensure that all families entitled to are aware of the offer.
- It was queried why was Neath Port Talbot 20th in the All Wales Data for school attendance at primary stage. An explanation was given that there were links between non- attendance and areas of deprivation. Neath Port Talbot was one of the highest areas of deprivation. Educational Welfare Officers were proactive in working with families especially persistent absenteeism. The focus of all schools was the importance of school attendance. One issue was the unauthorised absenteeism, this was when parents took children out of school for holidays. Work was continuing with financial penalties for unauthorised absenteeism but considering the economic climate, parents were still taking children out of school for holidays.
- What is a Capped 9 score?
This indicator was one of the changes introduced by the Welsh Government. Data was currently being collected and would be available for the January 2020 meeting.

- Why were the visits to leisure centres highlighted as red? This was discussed in the Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Sub Committee where it was explained that the issue was what data was collected and the inconsistencies between all local authorities. The explanation given to the Sub Committee would be circulated to the Committee.

SSIP – Proposal to Establish Specialist Provision for Secondary Age Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The Committee received an overview on the proposal to consult on the establishment of specialist provision for secondary age pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) at Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School as detailed in the circulated report.

The following were raised by Members:

- How many schools applied to host the new Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)? Two schools expressed an interest, one withdrew. In addition, the provision already exists in many schools.
- Concern was expressed as to whether we were meeting the demand? It was explained that the number of pupils had increased by 47% across all school ages. As a result, additional capacity had to be put into schools to address this increase.

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

Pupil Attendance Update

Information and data was received in relation to Neath Port Talbot pupil attendance as detailed in the circulated report.

Members were pleased that the report for consideration today included case studies which were very informative and highlighted the importance of the early involvement of the Education Welfare Service.

Members once again commended officers for the work the Education Welfare Officers did and recognised their value in raising attendance and managing pupil welfare issues.

Members raised the following:

- Does the data include pupils who were on reduced timetables? Pupils on a reduced timetable were included in the data but not children whose parents had elected to educate at home. The authority had no responsibility to deliver their education.

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

CHAIRPERSON

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