

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

24 October 2019

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.Mizen

Councillors: M.Crowley, S.apDafydd, S.Harris, J.Jones, D.Keogh, S.Miller, M.Protheroe, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards, D.Whitelock and J.Hale

Officers In Attendance: C.Millis, A.Thomas, I.Guy, P.Walker, D.Holder-Phillips, M.Daley, J.Haeney, A.Herbert, H.Lewis, A.Spooner-Cleverly, C.Davies and T.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and A.J.Taylor

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor S.apDafydd

Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he is a Governor at St Joseph's Catholic Comprehensive School and Sixth Form Centre and Ysgol Bae Baglan.

M.Caddick

Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re

Admission to Schools, as she has grandchildren in schools within Neath Port Talbot, a grandchild using school transport and is a governor of a school within Neath Port Talbot.

Councillor M.Crowley

Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he is a governor at schools within Neath Port Talbot.

Councillor S.Harris

Re: Item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as she is governor at Creunant Primary school.

Councillor J.Jones

Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as she has grandchildren in schools within Neath Port Talbot and she is a governor at Pen Afan Primary school.

Councillor D.Keogh

Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he is a governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil.

Councillor S.Miller

Re: Item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as she has grandchildren in Melin Primary school and is Chair of governors at Melin Primary school.

- Councillor R.Mizen
Re: Item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he is a governor at Ysgol Cwm Brombil and Cwmavon Primary school.
- Councillor M.Protheroe
Re: Item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he is a governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive school and Melin Primary school.
- Councillor P.A.Rees
Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he is a governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive school and Crynallt Primary school, and he has a granddaughter who uses school transport.
- Councillor S.Renkes
Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as she is a governor at Baglan and Blaen Baglan Primary schools.
- Councillor S.Reynolds
Re: Item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as she is a governor at Ysgol Gwaen Cae Gurwen.
- Councillor A.J.Taylor
Re: Item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he is a governor at Eastern Primary school and has children in Ysgol Cwm Brombil.
- Councillor D.Whitelock
Re: Item 4 of the Cabinet papers re Home to School Travel Appeals

procedure, and item 4 of the Scrutiny Committee papers re Admission to Schools, as he has grandchildren in schools within Neath Port Talbot who use school transport and is a governor of Ysgol Cwm Brombil.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the minutes of the 12 September 2019, be approved.

Valleys Champion

The Chair sought nominations from the Committee for the new role of Valleys Champion. Councillor D.Whitelock volunteered for the role.

3. **MINUTES OF EDUCATION THROUGH REGIONAL WORKING (ERW) JOINT SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR GROUP**

Committee was pleased to note that Members nominated from Neath Port Talbot had attended every meeting they had been invited to, and were providing challenge.

That the minutes of the 3 June 2019, be approved.

4. **ADMISSION TO SCHOOLS**

Members received information and data in relation to the admission of pupils to Neath Port Talbot schools, and were pleased to note that every child who had applied for a school place within Neath Port Talbot had received a place.

There had been a large scale movement of pupils, following in year transfer applications totalling 925, in 2018/19. Members queried whether each of these transfers had been relocated successfully and as per their first choice. Officers explained that not all had got their first choice, some had had their second choice and some had stayed in their original school, or chosen to appeal the decision.

The new school in the area of Coed D'Arcy was discussed, and it was noted that it had not yet been designated as an English or a Welsh medium school. Welsh medium capital grants were expected within the next couple of years which would ease current pressures in existing Welsh medium schools. It was hoped the new school in Coed D'Arcy would be built in 2021 – the admissions figures would be included in the report following the opening.

Members queried what support was available to parents regarding the appeals process, and noted that the appeals procedure was clearly set out for parents who chose to make an appeal, and information was also available from education and legal officers.

The high number of pupils in Dwr Y Felin comprehensive school was discussed, and members noted that various factors influence where children are placed, including parental choice, siblings in the same school, the appeals process and the proximity of the homes of looked after children.

Contingency plans were discussed should any local schools reach their capacity – catchment areas could be altered, schools could be expanded, and the new school at Coed D'Arcy, would all be taken into account.

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

5. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board items:

Home to School Travel Assistance Appeals Procedure

Officers highlighted a typing error on page 14 of the Cabinet board papers, regarding the Council's Transport Group. The figures relating to the makeup of the Group were incorrect, and would be amended prior to implementation.

The new second stage of the appeals process was explained. Members noted that although it would increase the workload of officers within the Education directorate, officers were there to help families.

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

Annual Report on Young People who are not in Education, Employment or Training

The large amount of work that went into identifying young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) was noted. The figures in front of Members were very transparent.

Members requested better clarity of labelling of graphs on subsequent reports.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

Curriculum for Wales 2022 – Presentation

Members received a presentation on the new curriculum which would be introduced to Wales from 2022. It was noted that each school would design their own curriculum which would be suitable for the community the school was in. A Curriculum Advisory Group had been established within Neath Port Talbot, with the purpose of advising schools on dealing with the radically different requirements.

It was as yet, unclear what the end point would be – whether there would be still be GCSEs and so on. There would, however, need to be a change to the exam structure, as there would be a change to the teaching. There was cross party support for the proposals which would not be affected by a potential change of government at Westminster.

Collaboration between teachers across different schools would be encouraged to widen the knowledge base, instead of the traditional method of going on a course. Professional learning money was still available per member of staff, should schools still feel courses were of benefit.

It was noted that additional learning needs (ALN) pupil's curriculum would also be changing – this change would be presented in the yearly ALN update, as well as in an all Member seminar on ALN reforms scheduled for February 2020

Following Scrutiny, the presentation was noted.

6. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

Site visits for Committee Members to Ysgol Bae Baglan and Ysgol Bro Dyr were discussed. The Scrutiny officer would liaise with Members to arrange.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for 2019/20.

CHAIRPERSON