

Minutes of the Education Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee

28 June 2021

Remotely via Teams

Chairperson:	Councillor S.H.Reynolds
Vice Chairperson:	Councillor R.Mizen
Councillors:	J.Jones, D.Keogh, S.Miller, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards, D.Whitelock, R.W.Wood, J.Hale and R.G.Jones
Co-opted Voting Members:	M.Caddick and L.Newman
Officers In Attendance	C.Millis, P.Walker, J.Burge, M.Daley, Z.Ashton, R. Miller and C.Davies
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors P.A.Rees

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the 18th March 2021 were approved.

2. **UPDATE ON THE IMPACT THAT COVID-19 HAS HAD ON THE EDUCATION, LEISURE AND LIFELONG LEARNING SERVICE (VERBAL UPDATE)**

Following a request from the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee, Members were provided with a verbal update on the impact that Covid-19 had on the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Department along with a brief update on the recovery strategy moving forward.

Members were updated on Additional Learning Needs Reform. It was noted that the team would be running two different systems parallel to

each other, over a three year period, implementing the Additional Learning Needs Act. It was noted that this change would be transformational, collaborative and offering a transparent system. However, the system would also have its challenges. In preparation, Officers of the Inclusion Service had organised training for Head Teachers and staff within the schools. This training consisted of outlining the new system and providing information on the legal implications.

Members also received an update on the School Based Counselling Team. Reassurance was provided on the continuation of the School Based Counselling Service throughout the pandemic. It was noted that there had been a decrease in children being seen by School Based Counselling Teams across Wales. However, Neath Port Talbot's figures on this statistic had increased by 42% which was an excellent achievement. It was also noted that a Primary Parent Helpline and Staff Helpline had been developed during the pandemic to help with the emotional wellbeing of the pupils.

Officers informed Members of the Education Welfare Service. It was noted that throughout lockdown the service had continued by meeting safely outdoors ensuring the support was provided. It was noted that attendance in Schools had decreased to 90% which was lower than usual, due to the pandemic.

Members received a brief overview of the Leisure and Culture services. It was noted that the Princess Royal Theatre had remained open in some form of capacity and all of the Theatres within Neath Port Talbot were now open and abiding by the Health and Safety measures. It was noted that all Libraries had now resumed all opening hours and Margam Park continued to host as a vaccination centre.

Discussions took place around Curriculum reform and their approach to developing different approaches to enable children to become 'higher order thinkers' to understand the purpose of the new curriculum.

Members commended the verbal update and the continued efforts that officers had achieved throughout the pandemic to continue services.

Members asked for clarity around private education as it would become Neath Port Talbot's responsibility under the new regulations. Officer confirmed they would get a response outside the meeting.

Members asked for a further update on the impact that Covid-19 had on Children and Early Years at a future meeting.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

3. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Chairperson