

Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

16 March 2023

Port Talbot Civic Centre / Remotely - Hybrid

Chairperson:	Councillor R.Phillips
Vice Chairperson:	Councillor D.Thomas
Councillors:	W.Carpenter, M.Crowley, N.Goldup-John, J.Henton, J.Jones, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds and D.Whitelock
Co-opted Voting Members:	A. Amor, M.Caddick and L.Newman
Co-opted Non Voting Members:	L.Newman
Officers In Attendance	I.Guy, H.Lervy, H.Lewis, C.Millis, A.D.Thomas, P.Walker, R.Crowhurst, M.Daley, J.Merrifield, J.Dennis, G.Shenton, T.Rees, M. Wynne and A.Thomas
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors N.Jenkins and J.Hurley

1. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was confirmed that the committee would be scrutinising items 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 14 from the Cabinet Board Agenda.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Adam Amor (Co-Opted Member) - Items 8 & 13 Cabinet Board – Personal, Director of a Company who has worked for and is currently

carrying out work for some of the services named. Also a school governor but has dispensation to speak and vote.

Paul Walker (Officer) – Item 14 Cabinet Board - Personal, Prejudicial (will leave room when discussed)

Cllr J. Henton – Item 8, Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr D. Whitelock – Item 8 Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr. N Goldup-John – Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr. S. Reynolds – Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr P. Rees – Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr R.Mizen – Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr W.Carpenter – Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr M.Crowley Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

M. Caddick (Co-Opted Member) Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr. S.Renkes Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

L. Newman Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

Cllr R.Phillips Item 8 – Personal, School Governor – Has dispensation to speak and vote.

3. **THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS - SUPPORT OFFERED BY SCHOOLS**

Members were provided with information relating to the cost of living crisis and support offered by schools, as circulated within the agenda.

There were no questions raised. Members thanked officers for the information presented within the report detailed.

4. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

Admissions to Schools (Results of Consultation)

Members considered the report as detailed within the agenda circulated.

Members queried if officers had given any further consideration to the automation service for school admissions that has previously been discussed with school governors? Officers confirmed that they will look into it, but have not yet done so.

Following scrutiny, Members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered by Cabinet Board.

Quarter 3 Performance

Members considered the information as presented within the report circulated with the agenda.

Members queried page 44, C P008, which relates to the 11 pupils studying Welsh. Members queried if enough was being done to ensure that the number of pupils studying Welsh continues to increase. Members were advised that this was part of the WESP strategy. For students to study in Welsh they need to have been doing this from an early age. This is an important aspect of the WESP strategy moving forward.

Members requested further information on the red indicator on page 48 relating to children looked after. Officers confirmed that one issue

that is causing some problems is obtaining the required input from the health service.

Members raised queries with regards to communities for work on page 51 of the report. Members noted the lack of people engaging in the scheme. Officers confirmed that this item related to the over 25's and this is a more difficult category of age to reach, due to several factors, Officers confirmed that one of the targets that will be put in place will be to engage with businesses so that they advise what skills they're looking for. The scheme can then look at making sure that the people that are looking for a job have the right skills to match.

Members queried CP005 and 006 and sought an explanation for the drop in attendance. Officers confirm that attendance is one of the main priorities. COVID and subsequent recovery has had a massive impact on young people's mental health and well-being, and engagement with the school. This includes the family that sits behind the young children. Further, there is a huge dip in Friday attendance rates from the data that has been analysed.

Attendance is one of the targets within the Corporate Improvement Plan and the School Improvement Plan. Officers outlined the decline in attendance could also be attributed to the cost of living crisis. Officers have been working with Social Services to remove some of the identified impediments that are contributing to low attendance levels.

Officers outlined some steps that have been taken to address some issues raised and emphasised that there will be a concerted effort over the next 12-18 months to get attendance levels back to pre-pandemic levels.

Members queried if they could have information pertaining to attendance at each individual school as opposed to a blanket statement that covers all the borough. This can then be monitored moving forward.

Members were pleased to see the number of weddings exceed the projected KPI at the Orangery in Margam Park.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

Free School Meals update

Officers outlined the report that was circulated with the agenda. Members congratulated officers for their hard work in rolling out the various age groups ahead of time. Members queried the capacity to continue to roll out the programme as outlined within the report. Officers advised that they understood that situation in each school and were confident that the programme can continue to be rolled out as planned. NPTCBC is one of three authorities in Wales who are currently at this stage in their programme rollout.

Members queried if the nutritional value of the meals was monitored. Officers confirmed that they have the certificate of compliance from Welsh Government that NPT covers and follows the Healthy Regulations 2013 for all the meals provided.

Members acknowledged that recruitment that had already taken place, but asked officers if there had been any issues with recruitment and could further extension of the programme be delayed by staffing requirements. Officers confirmed that there had been significant difficulty with recruitment however it had one that had been overcome to date. Officers confirmed that all staff were paid as appropriate for their job evaluated role.

Following scrutiny Member noted the report.

Professional Learning

Members considered the report as circulated with the agenda. Members were pleased to see that the report noted the commitment of NPT to the development of teachers. Members noted the commitment to make NPT an attractive place to work and queried the support offered by the strategy in comparison to other authorities. Officers advised that they work closely with teachers to determine what support is required and how this can be offered.

Members also queried if there had been any change in the needs of teachers post COVID. Officers confirmed that it was not only post COVID but also the reform agenda in schools which is challenging teachers and where the greatest need for support is identified.

Members were asked to note that this is one aspect of professional learning. There is further learning in Early Years and Including

Service. The reform agenda covers many aspects and there is a huge amount of support in relation to this and ALN.

Officers confirmed that there are no obvious gaps in what is currently being provided to teaching staff and this has been confirmed by head teachers in their response to the recent question asked by Estyn.

Following scrutiny members noted the report.

5. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

Members asked that a regular update on attendance be provided to the committee.

Members noted that Forward Work Programme with above addition.

6. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

7. **ACCESS TO MEETINGS**

Resolved: To exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

8. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF PRIVATE ITEM(S)**

Urdd National Eisteddfod 2025

Members considered the information within the report circulated.

Following scrutiny, members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered by Cabinet.

Leadership arrangements - Celtic Leisure

Members considered the information within the report circulated.

Following scrutiny, members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered by Cabinet.

Councillor R.Phillips

Chairperson

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