

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning Services Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 12th November 2014 at 5pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor (Mrs) C Leyshon – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors:

M Adams	(Mrs) A Calvert	J Elliott	S Evans-Fear
M Griffiths	P Jarman	(Mrs) S Jones	B Morgan
G Smith	B Stephens	G Thomas	L Walker
C Williams			

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr J Horton – Parent Governor
Mr J Fish – Parent Governor
Ms S Sevany – Parent Governor
Mr M Cleverley – NASUWT and Teachers Panel
Mr D Price - Unison

Officers in Attendance:

Mr C Bradshaw - Director, Education & Lifelong Learning
Ms E Thomas – Service Director for Schools and Community
Mr N Elliott – Service Director, Direct Services, Business & Housing
Ms S Walker – Head of Achievement, Primary & Senior Challenge Advisor
Mr T Britton – Head of Performance
Mr P Nicholls – Principal Solicitor, Litigation

34 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) J Bunnage, A L Davies MBE, R Lewis, and co-opted members Mrs C Jones and Mr C Jones.

35 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no Declarations of Personal Interest in relation to the agenda.

36 MINUTES

RESOLVED: to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committees held on the 13th October 2014.

37. MISSION DISCOVERY – FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS’ VISIT TO Y PANT SCHOOL

The Chairman reported on the visit made by Members to Y Pant School on 22nd October 2014 where they received a presentation from the three students from Y Pant and Hawthorn, who at ‘Mission Discovery’ this year won a competition to design an experiment to be launched into space from the International Space Station. She commented that the visit had been very enjoyable and Members had been overwhelmed by the presentation they had received.

County Borough Councillor L Walker added that the talent shown by these pupils in developing their project in respect of Alzheimers/Dementia was outstanding and that they were a credit to Rhondda Cynon Taf. He proposed that every effort should be made to publicise their achievement and that the media be encourage to cover the story when the experiment is launched.

RESOLVED: to note the positive feedback and recommend that every effort is made to promote recognition of the pupils’ achievements.

REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

38. MICROSOFT ACADEMY UPDATE

Further to the presentation made to the Committee on 9th April 2014 by the Director, Customer Care & ICT in relation to the ‘ICT enabled Schools Transformation Programme’, the Head of Achievement, Primary and Head of Performance provided the Committee with an update in relation to the 3 year Microsoft IT Academy programme which has been piloted across schools within Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was reported that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council was the first in the UK to commit to the programme and that on 11th November 2014, a ‘Sharing Good Practice’ event had taken place and Members were provided with two short video clips which had been played at the event.

The Committee was provided with details of the roll-out and the achievements of the programme to date which was not only aimed at children but also intended to increase the IT skills base of teachers with the intention that they in turn facilitate further roll-out of the programme. The aim was for the programme to be sustainable at the end of the partnership with Microsoft, which still had 18 months to run.

A co-opted Member welcomed the initiative but questioned the sustainability of the project at the end of the 18 month period and commented that perhaps licences which might have been heavily discounted for the duration of the programme would revert to their commercial price.

The Head of Achievement, Primary explained that those teachers that had qualified through the programme as ‘teacher trainers’ would retain their qualification and could go on to train others. She explained that in theory they could be asked by Microsoft to go anywhere to deliver training subject to release by their head teacher. She further explained that the licences which had been purchased were to allow teachers to sit the examinations and the cost had been met through the grant. Therefore at

the end of the programme, teachers would still be able to take the examination and roll out the training but the cost of taking the examination would need to be funded through the schools.

A Member asked how teachers had been selected for the Programme and it was explained that teachers had been asked to volunteer but with the aim of selecting a cross section across schools ensuring that English and Welsh Language schools and faith schools all had representation.

A Member asked whether any consideration had been given to developing IT skills through the University of South Wales. The Head of Achievement, Primary reported that whilst there was no involvement with the University at the moment they had attended the 'Sharing Good Practice' event. She explained that there had been some discussion in relation to accreditation but there was a cost element to this but the aim was to develop this further.

Members commented on the issue of software and hardware compatibility and the opportunities for those with skills in relation to the development of IT hardware.

The Head of Performance explained that sometimes it can be more efficient not to use technology but the programme aimed to give pupils the skills to choose how and when to use it and when there are problems to encourage children to look for solutions. He pointed out that the programme encourages pupils to think carefully how they can use and adapt technology rather than always purchasing more.

The Director of Education & Lifelong Learning reminded the Committee of the size of the Microsoft organisation and the range of 6,000 apprenticeships offered by the company each year. He pointed to the potential for creating opportunities for those young people who were being provided with these technical skills which were credible in the ICT market place.

A co-opted member questioned whether the Microsoft Office applications would still be available following the end of the programme or whether subscriptions would need to be renewed. The Head of Achievement, Primary explained that access to these applications would remain.

A Member drew attention to the issue of equality and sustainability questioning whether at the end of the programme all schools would have benefited. She also questioned whether the programme covered all subjects.

The Head of Achievement, Primary explained that the equality aspect of the programme had been changed to include all the curriculum. She also explained that all schools had been given the opportunity to send 2 teachers for MS accreditation. She reported that it was being rolled out across primary and secondary schools and the schools were able to use the programme as a cornerstone to eventually cover all the curriculum areas. She explained that in all there was a great deal of work underway, in secondary schools the IT lead was driving the programme, work was also being undertaken with youth engagement officers and there was also work on-going to link the programme to the Welsh Baccalaureate.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

39. RHONDDA CYNON TAF DRAFT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2017 (WESP)

The Service Director for Schools and Community informed the Committee that the Council's revised Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 (WESP) had been approved by the Welsh Government Ministers on 10th September 2014 following some minor amendments after its publication on 20th June 2014. She reported that the WESP had now been published on the Council's website in both English and Welsh. She explained that there is a requirement for local authorities to review progress against the targets set out in the Plan on an annual basis and therefore the data within the Plan would be revisited and the amended Plan submitted to Welsh Ministers by the 20th December 2014 deadline. She drew Members' attention to the revised timetable set out within the report and explained that it was the intention to provide the Committee with a report on progress against targets by 1st June 2015.

A Member questioned whether the current Plan would simply be resubmitted given that it had only recently been approved. She also asked for clarification with regard to the Strategic Management Group. The Service Director for Schools and Community explained that all that was required for the submission of the reviewed Plan in December was an update of data. She added that the membership of the Strategic Group was set out in WESP which could be viewed on the Council's website.

A co-opted Member pointed out that as a governor of a Welsh medium school she would be interested in learning more so that she would be able to feed this information back to the schools.

The Service Director for Schools and Community explained that the Plan was now a public document and also primary and secondary Welsh medium schools had been represented on the Strategic Partnership Group. In closing she commented that if there were any queries in relation to the Plan she would be happy to discuss.

RESOLVED;

- (i) to note the contents of the report;
- (ii) that the monitoring of targets be reported annually to the Education & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee.

FFRAMWAITH

40. PARTNERSHIP CHANGES

The Service Director, Direct Services, Business and Housing provided Members with an oral update with regard to the Fframwaith Children & Young People Partnership. He reported on the recent decision of the Local Service Board to take a new approach towards partnership working and that as a result the Safety, Health,

Prosperity and Fframwaith Partnerships were being stood down. He reported that as a result the Fframwaith Board had met for the last time on 31st October 2014. However, the multi agency work would remain in place and services would continue to be delivered. He explained that Fframwaith would be producing a 'legacy' report to highlight what had been achieved by the Partnership and how partners could continue to contribute to the LSB "skills and jobs" strategic priority. The Service Director reported that it was his intention to bring the report back to the Education & Lifelong Learning and Community & Children's Services Scrutiny Committees in due course.

A Member commented that she was disappointed that there had been a lack of consultation in respect of the decision. Whilst she appreciated that there was a scrutiny process set up to scrutinise the Local Service Board's delivery of the Single Integrated Plan 'Delivering Change', she hoped that there would be a role for the Committee in any future arrangements given the expertise which the Committee had built up and the recent acknowledgment of its contribution by Estyn. The Service Director reported that whilst he could comment at this stage on any future arrangements he would feedback the comments.

A Member welcomed the decision and commented that he hoped any new arrangements would be more transparent.

RESOLVED: to note the update in relation to partnership changes.

(Mrs) T Leyshon
Chairman

The meeting closed at 6.03 pm

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