

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday 1st February, 2017 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

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

County Borough Councillors

(Mrs) J Bunnage	M. Griffiths	B.Stephens
S.Carter	P. Jarman	G.Thomas
S. Evans – Fear	(Mrs) S.Jones	R.K.Turner

Co-opted Members

Mr.J.Fish – Voting Elected Parent/Governor Representative
Mrs S Jones -Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative
Mr S Jones - Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative
Mr D Price – UNISON Representative

Officers in Attendance

Mr.P.Nicholls – Head of Legal, Litigation
Ms.G.Davies – Service Director for Access, Engagement & Inclusion
Ms.S.Walker – Head of Achievement, Primary
Mr B. Whittingham – Head of Achievement, Secondary
Ms H. Woodhouse – Managing Director Central South Consortium.
Mr M. Glavin – Assistant Director Central South Consortium.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors H. Boggis B. Morgan J. Cass and L. Walker.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED - In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no personal declarations of interests made, pertaining to the agenda.

52. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on the 28th November 2016

REPORT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM

53. The Managing Director Central South Consortium presented the report in respect of the Central South Consortium (CSC) contribution to raising standards in Schools within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Managing Director (CSC) explained that CSC delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities. It was explained to Members that the consortium business plan for 2016/17 has three main priorities to focus on they are as follows:

- Raising standards particularly in literacy both Welsh 1st language and English, numeracy/ mathematics and improving the outcomes of learners from vulnerable groups.
- Increasing capacity within the school system to be self improving, particularly improving leadership and governance, teaching and learning and effective challenge support
- Develop the consortium to be a high performing organisation focusing on performance management, governance and effective use of resources.

Members were informed that in 2016 the region continued to show strong improvements and was above the national average at every key stage for the first time and remained above it for the second year in foundation phase and key stages, 2 to 4. Standards for the most vulnerable children continued to rise fastest in the region compared to Wales at all key stages, and in particular children living poverty in the Central South region than across the rest of Wales at key stage 4.

It was also explained to Members that categorisation outcome for 2016/17 academic year demonstrate that schools in need of more intensive levels of support have reduced in each authority across the region, although less so at secondary level.

The Managing Director Central South Consortium also informed Members of the Committee of the recommendations that came from the consortium's inspection by Estyn in March 2016.

- Reducing variations in standards at KS4
- Improving specificity of judgements of teaching and leadership by challenge advisers
- Evaluating impact of support strategies and

- Evidencing value for money.

The Managing Director went on to explain the plan for 2017/18 and also explained that in the financial year 2017/18 local authorities have reduced core funding to the consortium by 5% compared to that of the previous for the previous year and Members were informed that the Final Business Plan for 2017/18 will be presented to the Joint Committee for approval in March 2017.

Members were given an overview of the performance in RCT Schools along with challenge and support provided by the Central South Consortium on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

In concluding her report Members were informed that faster progress was need on

- Continued focus on the achievement of Pupils eligible for free school meals across the region.
- Ensure that the support provided to these schools who received funding from Welsh Government from schools challenge Cymru is aligned to the support and challenge process of the Central South Consortium.
- Analysis of key stage 2 and 3 tests has indicated variation of teacher assessment and moderation. The national approach to verification of teacher assessment has been shown to be rigorous and impactful; this will be an area of focus for 2016/17.

The Chair thanked the Managing Director Central South for her report and opened the meeting up for questions from Members.

Members put forward questions in respect of teaching standards and the quality and quantity of staff within the consortium. Officers explained that there has been a lot of work in attracting teaching staff all across Wales and the consortium has invested heavily in leadership provision in 2015/16 year. It was explained there has been leadership programmes and of these 15 Head teachers have undertaken the New to Headship Programmes, 2 Head teachers have undertaken Strategic Headship programmes among many other. One Member asked are we doing enough to look outside of Wales for teachers, in reply the Managing Director explained that CSC Teacher First Contract ended by Welsh Government last year has been driven heavily by the authority.

It was explained that the consortium is working closely with all four universities and are working on a pilot scheme where students are being trained in the classroom with teachers working besides them.

Members were concerned about the difficulty in finding maths and science Teachers and asked what work can be done as a consortium and a local

authority to improve the situation. Officers explained there are numerous areas of funding and support that has been put in place. RCT School have been involved in the Hub programme. The majority of RCT schools have been involved in the School Improvement Group (SIG) working.

A Member put their thoughts forward in respect of having business managers or shared business managers in schools allowing the Head teachers to concentrate on the teaching within the school. Also in respect of pay scales for teachers of core subjects could there be an incentive to attract more to the consortium.

Members also felt that the health and wellbeing of both children and staff need to be taken in to account and the stress that comes with performance results etc and the pay scales need to be looked at in the future.

One main concern was the tables showing that girls outperforming boys in languages and boys outperforming girls in maths. Members felt that they would like to look at this further.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) Receive a report regarding the health and well being of staff and pupils
- (2) Receive a future reports from the Central South Consortium

54. REPORT OF TEMPORARY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION IN RESPECT OF KEY STAGE 4 AND KEY STAGE 5 EXAMINATION RESULTS AND PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CATEGORISATION FOR 2017

The Head of Achievement, Secondary provided the Committee with the confirmed Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results 2016 along with the Primary and Secondary Categorisation for 2016 – 17

It was reported that good progress continues to be made by schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf against the key performance indicators, increasing at a faster rate than the Welsh Average. It was explained to Members that the data on key performance indicators for secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf for the academic year 2015- 16 shows the majority of schools made good progress against a range of performance measures.

The Head of Achievement Secondary explained that there has been an improvement in the Level 1 and Level 2 threshold indicators. It was explained to Members that the level 2 including English, Welsh 1st language and Maths indicator has increased by 2.0 percentage points to 56.6% this shows a steady upward trend for this measure over a five year period however five schools had a dip in level 2 inclusive. Aberdare, Mountain Ash, Treorchy, Rhydywaun and Cardinal Newman.

Members were informed that the gap between the achievement of learners eligible for free school meals compared to those learners not eligible for free school meals has reduced however it is important to note there are still nine schools in the LA, this year who are still performing below the three year rolling average target set by the Welsh Government.

It was explained to Members that the gender variation of performance in Rhondda Cynon Taf. In respect of Girls outperforming boys by some distance in Welsh and English the focus needs to continue on improving literacy standards in primary schools and at Key Stage 3.

At Key Stage 5 there has been an introduction of the Advanced Level Performance System (ALPS) across the whole authority. This is a performance indicator that calculates the value added at A level based upon the GCSE performance and compares the results across England and Wales. This will prove to be a very useful tool in improving the Performance at Key Stage.5.

Members were given the outcomes of the national categorisation system for primary and secondary schools in Wales.

Members of the Committee were pleased to see the overall categorisation results however put forward their concerns in respect of the slight decline in A level results compared to last year.

A Member asked for more information relating to the Advance Level Performance System which indicated that seven out of our schools are performing within the top30% in the country and four of our schools in the bottom 30% of performers.

In respect of the primary and secondary school categorisation Members were presented with the outcomes of Welsh Government national categorisation. Members were pleased with the overall outcomes of the categorisation but felt additional information in respect of amber and red school performance is needed.

The Chair thanked the officers for their informative reports and their time.

It was resolved to:

- Provided Members with further information in respect of Advanced Level Performance System (ALPS)
- Receive a report in respect of the gender gap with boys' language and girls maths in respect of what schools are bucking the trend.
- Continue to monitor the progress of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

55. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO GOVERNOR SUPPORT WORKING GROUP REVIEW

The Head of Legal, Litigation informed Members that review in respect of the Rhondda Cynon Taf's Governor Support Service carried out by the Working Group of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee was formally considered by Cabinet at the Meeting held on the 15th December 2016, where the ten following recommendations were agreed:

- (1) That all governor bodies should undertake a process of recognition of existing skills, knowledge, expertise and effectiveness of individuals that form part of the Governing Body (this could take the form a self evaluation, annual training review, skills audit or needs assessment)
- (2) That the Governor Support Service and the Central South Consortium should work with and encourage Governing Bodies to facilitate the process outlined in 1 above, providing template example documents and the necessary support.
- (3) The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education and Skills is asked to write to the Welsh Government's Minister for Education & Skills conveying the concerns of the Working Group regarding recruitment and proposing that the categories of school governors be less rigid. (It is recognised that since the publication of this report Welsh Government has responded with a number of reforms which aim to give governing bodies more flexibility, a response which is welcomed by the working group)
- (4) That the Governor Support Service undertakes a programme of work targeting Job Fairs, Chambers of Trade, Professional and Voluntary Organisations, Town Centre Fora, Businesses and Universities to promote the recruitment of governors by targeting the following areas:-
 - That the use of social media be explored;
 - That the Governor Support Service considers how the Council's website can be used to promote and advertise the role of school governors and highlights the skills that can be gained by becoming a governor;
 - That advice is sought from the Council's Corporate Marketing team when embarking on this work.
- (5) The new governors are offered the opportunity to be buddies with a more experienced governor to support them through the early months of their role and that all governing bodies should ensure they have

appointed a link mentor governor and have an effective induction process in place.

- (6) The Governor Support Service should actively encourage the cooperation and the development of the links between Governing Bodies within the authority and across other authorities in order to share good practice and experiences.
- (7) That as the Welsh Government consider it is important that the contribution of the governors is recognised by the Chairs and Head Teachers, that all school governors are thanked by the Chairs and Head Teachers in the following ways:-
 - That letters of thanks are sent to all school governors who come to the end of their term of office;
 - That a letter of thanks is sent by the Head Teacher and/ or Chair of the governing bodies at the end of each academic year thanking them for their contributions;
 - It may also be appropriate, on occasions, for a thank you letter to be sent from either the Head Teacher and / or Chair of Governors to a governor in recognition of special effort/service.
- (8) That the RCT Governors' Association be asked to consider the introduction of a 'Governor of the Year Award' or if they prefer that an approach be made to Governors Wales to introduce such an award.
- (9) That each governing body should be encouraged to publish the work of the governing body. This could provide information such as a profile of each governor and their role in the school, setting out who are the class links or topic links thereby promoting the work undertaken by governors which might otherwise go unnoticed.
- (10) That progress of the recommendations is monitored by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Legal, Litigation informed Members of the response received from the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning which thanked Members and Officers for their hard work creating an important piece of work.

It was **RESOLVED** to

1. Acknowledge the written response received from the Executive
2. Monitor the progress of the progress of the Governor Support Service.

56 RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNOR SUPPORT WORKING GROUP IN RESPECT OF THE REFORM OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION.

The Head of Legal, Litigation informed Members that on the 17th January 2017 Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Governor Support Working Group met with the Governor Support Officer to give consideration to the Consultation Questionnaire

Members put their views forward and it was **RESOLVED** that the findings of the Working Group would be incorporated within the Council's overall response and submitted to Welsh Government by the deadline of the 17th February 2017.

**(MRS.)C.LEYSHON
CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 7.05 p.m.