

**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 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018 at 5 p.m.

**PRESENT**

County Borough Councillor S. Rees- Owen – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors**

J. Brencher	M. Powell	S. Rees
A. Calvert	R. Smith	W. Lewis
H. Fychan	S. Powell	

**Co-opted Members**

Mr J. Fish – Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative  
Mr S. Jones – Voting Elected Parent/ Governor Representative  
Mr M Cleverly – Representing NASUWT and Teachers Panel  
Mr C Jones – Representing GMB  
Mr D. Price – Representing UNISON

**Officers in Attendance**

Ms E. Thomas – Director of Education and Lifelong Learning  
Mr P Nicholls – Head of Legal – Litigation, Planning & Environment, Community and Children's Services  
Ms G. Davies - Service Director Access and Inclusion  
Ms C. Edwards – Head of Service Transformation  
Ms J Hadley – School Organisation Manager  
Ms J. Allen – Head of Attendance and Wellbeing

**66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from: County Borough Councillor S. Evans and Co – opted Member Mr S. Emanuel .

## **67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** – that in accordance with Members Code of Conduct, there were no personal interests made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

## **68. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018

## **69. CABINET & SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT SESSION**

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning updated Members on the respective areas of the Corporate Plan in line with the Key Performance Indicators along with important details of the policies being for future decisions which are referenced for future business.

Members were presented with a table which outlined the Key Performance Indicators. Members put their views forward and questioned the Cabinet Member along the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in relation to the target areas which were under performing. In respect target the underperforming targets Members asked what was being done to improve these areas in response the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that Education remains a priority for the Council and significant investment has been made in education and schools.

Members were informed that the Council is continuing the work to close the attendance gap between FSM / non FSM pupils and whilst overall attendance are within 5% of the ambitious targets set for 2017. The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that the authority continues to provide support for schools to achieve positive outcomes. .

After presenting her report the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning opened the meeting up for questions.

Members put questions forward in relation to the Key Performance indicators set out in the report. Members raised questions in respect of Band B Investment. In

response to the questions it was explained that further work continues to be delivered under the Council's Capital Programme, and Cabinet will shortly be considering detailed plans for the allocation of funding for the 2018/19 financial year.

After further robust consideration and in-depth questioning Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the report and thanked the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning for coming to the Meeting.

## **70.SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

The Head of Service Transformation provided Members with a summary of the Annual School Admission process. It was explained that the entry of children to schools is controlled and administrated by an 'Admissions Authority' In respect of community schools the Admissions Authority is Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and in case of voluntary- aided (church) schools, the Admissions Authority is the governing body of the individual church school.

Members were informed that 80% of all applications were made online and the Head of Service Transformation enlightened Members that the majority of applications are allocated their first preference, and for children that are not allocated their first preference there is an appeals process, the criteria of which must be adhered to.

The Fair Access Protocol ensures that appropriate protocols are in place for admitting children considered to be hard to place so that unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable are offered suitable school places promptly.

Members proceeded to consider the report in depth and put forward their question to the officers. A Member asked in respect of In Year Transfer applications, what was the ratio of children moving from Welsh Medium Schools to English Medium schools and does the Authority have the reasoning behind it. In reply the Head of Service Transformation explained that the information is available however it is not to hand at present but will bring it back to the next appropriate meeting of the Committee.

In respect of Children Home Educated a Member want clarification as to where they would stand in this process, it was explained that there is protocol that has to be adhered to a range of factors would be taken in to consideration so that we can get the possible outcome for the pupils.

Members requested further information relating to the Fair Access Protocol Panel (FAPP) at a future meeting informing the Committee as to how effective the process is.

After further discussion Members **RESOLVED** to

- Acknowledge the content of the report

- Receive further data in respect of In Year Transfer application from Welsh Medium Schools to English Medium Schools.
- Receive a report outlining the effectiveness of FAPP at a future meeting.

## **71.SCHOOL ORGANISATION PROPOSAL – PROCESS AND OUTCOMES**

The School Organisation Manager presented the report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Members were informed that since 1999, the Council has made significant changes to school provision and improvements to the school building stock within Rhondda Cynon Taf. It was explained that a comprehensive programme of school reorganisations has resulted in the closure of 33 schools and the amalgamation of a further 34; a total of 16 new primary schools have been created in this time, plus one new secondary school.

In her report the School Organisation Manager gave an overview of the criteria followed for reviewing school provision along with process for undertaking school reorganisation. Members were informed that as a result of the proposals to reorganise schools in Rhondda and Tonyrefail areas, together with the amalgamation of Cwmaman Infants School and Glynhafod Junior School, all of which will be implemented in September 2018, a further 13 schools will be closed or amalgamated and one new primary school, plus 3 new all through schools will open in their place.

Members were informed that the projects have been financed by the Council with support of the of the Welsh Government via several capital finance initiatives , including 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Education Programme, Band A . It was also brought to Members attention that Local Authorities school modernisation proposals will continue with projects identified as part of our Band B Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) which will run between 2019 - 2024.

The School Organisations Manager took Members through the rest of the report and after robust questioning and discussion Members **RESOLVED** to

- Acknowledge the content of the report
- Receive a further update at a future meeting outlining the next steps within Band B.

## **72.ANNUAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2016/17**

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing explained the report was originally brought to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in September 2017; however only provisional data could be included for academic year 2016/17 at the time.

Members were presented with verified data and the comparable All Wales figures. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing explained the report in detail. In respect of overall primary school attendance for 2016/17 is 94.6% compared to 94.7% in 2013/14, which is a decrease of 0.1 %. Member were informed that primary school attendance stands just below the Councils ambitious 2016/17 targets of 95%. It was also explained that primary schools are continuing to maintain their high level of attendance.

In respect of attendance figures for 2016/17 members were informed that 53 schools were above their median for their free school meal group, with 21 being with 21 being in quartile 1 and 32 in quartile 2 which highlights excellent outcomes in comparison to similar schools across Wales.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing presented the committee with the overall secondary school attendance rates, including pupils of secondary school age in special education provision over the last three years and how RCT performance has compared to the all Wales Average. Members were informed that over the last 3 years the rate of improvement in RCT. Members were also presented with the details of the attendance gap year on year by identifying the percentage difference between the attendance rates of FSM/ non- FSM pupils in the RCT.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing provided Members with a summary of attendance rates of the Pupil Referral Units, attendance rates of vulnerable groups within RCT and an update of work carried out by the attendance and wellbeing team.

In the meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017 Members resolved to receive further information in respect of Fixed Penalty Notices. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing presented Members with a table outlining the number of warnings issued and FPN's issued during the academic year 2016/17.

Members thanked the officers for the report and put forward their observations and questions. Members were pleased to see that both primary and secondary school children that are Looked After attendance have improved in 2016/17. A Member asked the officer what work is being done to ensure this cohort of learners are continued to be a priority for the Authority. Officers explained that working together with Children's Services and other 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector parties is a priority with a link to the resilient families programme.

Members felt that it would be beneficial to receive case studies of school that have good practice in attendance. It was also felt that it would be helpful for school

governors to receive the same case studies to show best practice of school attendance.

After consideration and robust discussion Members RESOLVED to:

- Acknowledge the content of the report
- Receive case studies at a future meeting of the committee
- Receive updating reports at future meeting

Meeting Closed at 17:40pm

Cllr S. Rees- Owen

(Chair)

Mae'r cofnodion hyn yn amodol ar gymeradwyaeth yng nghyfarfod priodol nesaf y Pwyllgor.  
These Minutes are subject to approval at the next appropriate meeting of the Committee