



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 25 September 2019 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypanydy, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor A Calvert Councillor S Powell
Councillor H Boggis Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor G Jones Councillor G Stacey

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr J Fish, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr D Price, Representing UNISON
Mr K Wilhite, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mrs R. Nicholls, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms A Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor J Rosser

16 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

17 Cabinet & Scrutiny Engagement

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications explained to Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee that as part of the ongoing commitment to Cabinet and Scrutiny engagement Members are given the opportunity to scrutinise the performance of the education directorate, and share successes and potential challenges along with considering priorities for further improvements.

The Chair welcomed and invited the Cabinet Member and Director for Education and Inclusion Services to present the report to the Committee after which the meeting would be opened up for Members' questions and observations.

Members were presented with the roles and responsibilities of the Education and Inclusion Service along with the statutory roles and responsibilities in relation to the provision of education.

The Cabinet Member Education and Inclusion Services gave an overview of the following services:

- 21st Century School Modernisation programme
- School Governance
- School Holiday Enrichment Programme(SHEP)
- Catering
- School Performance
- 14 -19 Strategy
- Music Service
- Registered Education Providers (REP's)
- Inclusion Services
- School Transformation and Data, and
- School Budget

The Cabinet Member Education and Inclusion Services concluded her report by explaining that education continues to be a priority for the Council and this is clearly reflected in the extensive investment made as part of the ambitious 21st Century School Modernisation Programme. It was noted that the Council is committed to protecting school budgets where feasible and in 2018/19 schools benefitted from a £2M increase (1.4%) in budgets. Raising standards across the board and closing the attainment gap between eFSM and nFSM learners was reported to be a continued priority. It was indicated that in order to achieve improvements within our schools the local authority has a critical role in ensuring that we deliver on improving learner outcomes and developing excellent schools fit for the 21st Century.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the very informative overview and opened up the meeting for Members questions.

A Member asked for clarification on some aspects of the music service as there were concerns that not all schools are not accessing services. It was asked what was being done to ensure engagement from schools and how we monitored this. Officers explained that they do not have the data at hand however further information could be brought to a future meeting. It was highlighted that across Wales there is a mixed picture in terms of music service provision, and that RCT continued to provide a number of services to schools and retain a music service to schools.

Another Member commented that music is not measured by inspection and wanted clarification as to what we are doing to promote access to these services. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications suggested that a report could be brought to Committee to see how the service has developed.

The Cabinet Member also explained that there are many outside bodies that come into schools to deliver music services and this can be difficult to capture.

A Member raised concerns in relation to school attendance rates being down

and an increase in fixed term exclusion rates, and enquired as to whether there was any connection. Officers explained that exclusions do have an impact on attendance data and schools are working closely with the Local Authority to address this issue.

A Member commented on the statutory roles and responsibilities and felt that the point regarding the spiritual and moral contribution was very ambitious. It was explained that Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) have an important role to play in advising the local authority on matters related to religious education in our schools.

Members put forward their question in respect of the 21st Century Schools Band A and Band B programmes and developments. Members asked if there has been any evidence on outcomes and impact of the new all through schools to date. Officers explained that it is currently too early to say but reports would be provided in due course and a report outlining perception survey feedback on investment programmes was planned for later on this term.

In terms of impact on learner outcomes, it was highlighted that establishing any new school following school reorganisation takes time as a new vision has to be created, new teams and policies and procedures all have to be established, which all takes time to embed.

In respect of the Band B programme, a Member asked where we were in terms of the process of implementing proposals. Officers explained that early dialogue has taken place in schools. A Member felt that there should be more school engagement in the early stages, and also consultation with Governors. Officers explained that headteachers are all aware of developments but it is too early in the implementation process to engage with governors but this will take place in due course.

A Member put a question forward relating to the breakfast club provision and asked whether it was fully funded by Welsh Government. Officers explained that the funding from Welsh Government does not cover all costs and that the Local Authority has to fill the funding gap due to the high demand for this provision.

Members questioned the catering procedure and raised concerns over staggered lunches, and one Member reported an alleged incident of a pupil not having a choice of a hot meals.

Officers responded that they were aware of the complaint and that this was dealt with immediately by the school. Officers explained that the Catering Service has received significant investment to modernise our school catering facilities and the impact on take up has significantly increased with an additional 17,934 and 88,811 meals provided. The service delivers nearly 2 million meals annually and cases of pupils not having their first choice of a meal is rare and often this is an issue of pupils not registering for meals for that day.

Members felt that it would be helpful to receive a further report on catering services across schools. Another Member commented that some schools in RCT ordered meals the previous day and suggested that scrutiny could recommend the pre-ordering service to all schools to .Cabinet going forward.

In respect of digital learning and online safety, a Member requested clarification on what was being provided. Officers explained that online safety is covered by the schools' safeguarding policy and all schools have a duty to safeguard

learners and to keep them safe from harm. At a pupil level, Members were informed of the Hwb system, which is on the CSC website, which deals with the matter in a child friendly approach.

Members continued to question the Cabinet Member on the aspect of childcare provision and costs. One Member commented on the lack of Welsh medium all day provision and explained from personal experience that she was unable to access any Welsh medium provision in the Pontypridd area and consequently had to access English medium provision.

In response officers explained that the childcare sufficiency audit identified gaps and officers successfully secured funding of £3.5M to plug those gaps and improve Welsh language Early Years provision. Six projects were nearing completion including one in YGG Evan James in Pontypridd. In addition the Council has secured £2.5 m for the Childcare Capital Offer to develop 4 projects to create additional wraparound childcare facilities at a number of sites providing over 133 new places.

The Chair raised concerns on lack of Welsh medium teachers and the retention of staff. The Chair asked how are going to manage this going forward. It was explained that this a challenge and these concerns have been raised with the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Education & Inclusion Services and Officers for a very comprehensive and informative report.

The Committee RESOLVED to:

- Receive a Report in respect of the Music Service
- Receive a report on the Catering Service
- The Chair would write to the Cabinet Member and catering Service with the suggestion of pre-ordering school meals.

This meeting closed at 6.10 pm

**CLLR S REES-OWEN
CHAIR.**