

**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 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2016 at 5 p.m.

**PRESENT**

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

**County Borough Councillors**

H.Boggis  
(Mrs) J.Bunnage  
S.Carter  
S.Evans – Fear

M.Griffiths  
(Mrs) S. Jones  
B.Stephens  
G.Thomas

R.K Turner  
L.Walker

**Co-opted Members**

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

**Officers in Attendance**

Mrs E. Thomas – Temporary Director of Education & Lifelong Learning  
Mr.P.Nicholls – Head of Legal Litigation  
Ms. S.Walker – Head of Achievement, Primary  
Mr S.Parry- Jones – Co-ordinator of the Sern Hub (RCT and Merthyr)

**34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from: County Borough Councillors (Mrs) J.Cass, P.Jarman and B.Morgan

**35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**36. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

**37. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA**

The Committee agreed that the agenda would be considered out of sequence and as detailed in the minutes set out hereunder.

**REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, OF EDUCATION & LIFE LONG LEARNING**

**38. RESPONSE TO MEMBERS QUERIES IN RESPECT OF ESTYN OUTCOMES APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016**

The Head of Achievement, Primary explained to Member that the purpose of the report was to provide Members with responses to questions raised following the end of year Performance Report which presented at the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016. It was agreed in the Meeting of Finance and Performance Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> September that the response to queries raised would be brought back to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Achievement, Primary informed Members that the main aim of the work of the Education and Lifelong Learning Schools Improvement Service is to raise standards of achievement and attainment for all learners. She explained that until August 2014 all education settings across Wales were inspected by Estyn the Welsh Government inspectorate at least once during a six year period.

The Head of Achievement, Primary updated Members of the Committee with the information in respect of the current inspection framework that all inspections of education providers are undertaken using a common framework; this framework consists of 3 key areas – Standards, Leadership and Performance.

After presenting the report in detail the Head of Achievement, Primary and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning answered Members questions.

It was RESOLVED to:

- Acknowledge the report

- To receive future reports on inspection outcomes.

### **39. ESTYN INSPECTION REPORT OUTCOMES IN RCT EDUCATION PROVIDERS ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/16**

In her report the Head of Achievement, Primary provided the Committee with a detailed analysis of Estyn inspection outcomes that took place across all school sectors from autumn 2015 to July 2016. In her report she informed Members that the local authority had 15 primary schools and 4 secondary schools which were subject to an Estyn inspection and, as previously reported to the Committee, the inspection cycle has now changed and is now open with no timescales. A further 6 primary schools and 1 secondary school have been subject to follow up activities within this reported period.

The Head of Achievement Primary explained that whilst the local authority are successful in bringing schools out of a monitoring activity too many schools are placed in a follow up compared to the rest of Wales. Members asked whether the number of Amber and Red categorised schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is mirrored across the consortium. In her response the Acting Director of Education and Lifelong Learning explained that this was the case but changes in attendance performance measures will help going forward.

A member raised a query as to whether there could be a definition set out in respect of the terminology when using excellent, good and satisfactory in the outcomes of the reports as it was felt that the schools that are reaching these goals need to be applauded for their excellent work and also in respect of the challenge advisors who are monitoring their progress. The Head of Achievement, Primary responded in informing the Committee that there are procedures in place to monitor and challenge the reports produced by the Challenge Advisors. In the long term Challenge Advisors need to work with Head Teachers and Senior Leaders to ensure that self evaluation reports and school improvement plans are of the highest standard.

Members thanked both the Acting Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and the Head of Achievement (Primary) for the detailed report and it was **RESOLVED:**

- To acknowledge the content of the report
- To receive termly progress updates on schools in follow – up and/or categorised by the Consortium as needing high levels of support.

### **40. REPORT OF THE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE SEREN HUB (RCT AND MERTHYR)**

The Co-ordinator of the SEREN Hub provided members with an overview of the Seren Network as it relates to post – Sixteen students in Rhondda Cynon Taf. He

explained to the Committee that the Seren Network was established by Welsh Government in a Response to the Report of Lord Murphy of Torfaen (published 2013) on the declining numbers of the Welsh students applying to, and gaining places at, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The main recommendation of the report was that the establishment of a number of regional hubs that would draw in the most academically gifted Year 12 (Lower Sixth) students. The co-ordinator of the Seren Hub, Mr. S. Parry Jones explained to Members that the students are provided with extension activities of an academically rigorous nature and given further guidance in applying to the most competitive universities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Hub is one of three initial pilot schemes funded by Welsh Government, the other two being from Swansea and Wrexham.

Students from Treorchy Comprehensive School and Hawthorn High School presented their experiences of the Seren Network to Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. The pupils explained how Seren has stretched and challenged them in the subjects they enjoy. It was explained that they attend various workshops with like minded students to extend their in-depth knowledge and improve their skill base which in turn gives them the confidence to aim much higher and hopefully achieve their potential. The students also informed Members that the Seren Hub provides them with hands on support and advice in preparing UCAS Applications and rehearsing for University interviews. One of the students explained that before attending the Seren hub her mind was set on a specific subject to study at university however after attending various workshops and lectures she has now set her mind on a slightly different path way which has given her a new outlook on her future career prospects.

Members of the Committee put forward their questions to the students and the co-ordinator of the Seren hub. Members of the Committee praised the students for their performance and insight into how the Seren Network works. A Member questioned as to what emotional support is given to the students and how does the network engage with parents, in his reply the Seren Coordinator explained that the students have sessions that they can address any issues and that the hub works closely with students, schools and Heads of 6<sup>th</sup> Form to ensure their needs are met. In respect of parental engagement, arranged evening meetings are held with Seren Network for parents to express their view and for them to gather any information they felt was appropriate but that parental engagement is an area for further development.

Following consider of the report it was **RESOLVED:**

- To accept the report
- To provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with a progress report at a future meeting.

The Committee thanked the students for their participation in the meeting and wished them all the success for the future.

The Committee thanked all the Officers for their in depth report.

Meeting Closed at 6.25 p.m.

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