



## **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, 22 January 2020 at 5.00 pm at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

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

Councillor S. Rees-Owen (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor H Fychan	Councillor S Powell
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 P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services  
Ms A Richards, Head of 21st Century Schools  
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

Councillor S Evans

#### **52 Declaration of Interest**

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

#### **53 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 as an accurate reflection of the meetings.

#### **54 Information Reports**

The Chair referenced the information reports (as listed below), which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website.

- Seren Hub

## **55 Consultation Links**

The Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. The Chair reminded Members that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis by the Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer.

## **56 Perception Survey Outcomes of Band A 21st Century Schools Investment Programme**

The Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools presented Members with a report in respect of the recently completed perception survey undertaken in the new all through schools created as part of the Band A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Education Programme.

The Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools began by explaining that £173M investment through the Band A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Education Programme has delivered significantly improved learning environments and opportunities for learners. In addition to this, the Band A programme has removed over 3,600 surplus places; reduced the carbon footprint of RCT's Schools; increased participation in sporting activities on the new 3 G pitches; increased the usage of the leisure facilities as reflected in the Junior More Care Scheme.

The Service Director Democratic Services Communications highlighted to Members of the Committee that as Members would recall that at the meeting of the Children and Young People held on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019 Members agreed that the Committee would receive a report following a full year of operation of the new schools created by the Rhondda Valley and Tonyrefail school reorganisation allowing them an opportunity to settle in.

The Service Director continued to explain that the perception survey is part of the evidence base which is largely focused on the new environments. He continued and explained that the report is the first and future reports will be provided to Members with further details in terms of lessons learned to inform future proposals, lessons learned in terms of transitional engagement and a technical appraisal of performance of the buildings. In respect of attainment and teaching arrangements it is too early to assess pupil performance.

The Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools proceeded to take Members through the Survey and explained that the evaluation shows good progress is being made towards the improvement of educational outcomes, educational provision, and leadership and management at all of the new schools. It was also highlighted that the responses need to be considered alongside other school performance outcomes in order to contribute to the self-evaluation and improvement of individual schools.

The Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools concluded her report and proceeded to take questions and observation from Members of the Committee.

A Member commented that she was pleased to hear from the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications that the report was only part of the information that Members had requested as one of her biggest worries was that there was no data to show the true impact of the implementation of the Band A provision.

The Member continued to comment that it was disappointing to see that only 47% of the parents and carers survey perceived that the local community is able to access school facilities outside of school hours. The Member's concerns were that pupils are living further from schools and transport links are an added pressure for families. The Member commented that this area needs to be scrutinised more.

The Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools highlighted that the data required by Members will be presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its February meeting. With regards to the community usage the Officer explained that the participation figures do not reflect the perception results. It shows that the Junior More Card usage had increased, the 3 G Pitches are fully booked along with an increase in activities through the YEPS Service etc.

A Member stated that it was disappointing to see that there was little response from Governors and asked if this could be revisited.

A Member commented on the number of pupils at upper school level that knew about the opportunities available to them when they leave school and felt that more work needed to be done with pupils and the careers service. The Member continued that this was an important part of the young person's future and it needs to be addressed. The Officer explained the pilot scheme called the Gatsby Good Career pilot. The Member asked if there was any data to back up the positive response from schools. It was suggested that evidence of the work from this scheme be brought to a future Committee.

Members also commented on the responses regarding the opportunities for leadership career progression and whether there is enhanced opportunity for profession development with the all through schools.

Members felt the report needed to provide Members with more drilled down information which will enable them to scrutinise and assess the Band A programme.

With regards to the data, Members felt there was insufficient pupil performance

data to consider, the Officer explained that this year would be a benchmark year and it would a couple of years for solid data to be realised going forward. Officers also explained that the way in which the Authority presents data going forward has fundamentally changed and WG has introduced changes to publishing and reporting performance data. School pupil outcomes will no longer be published and new evaluation and improvement arrangements will be in place to support the new curriculum moving forward.

A Member asked what provisions have been taken in to account for feeder school that join the new schools.

The Chair commented that when Members of the committee visited new schools the feedback they had received was that transition could be improved and more work needed to be done to make this journey as smooth as possible. Officers confirmed that good transition events were held with all schools and these were successful, however transition is a school responsibility moving forward and the Headteachers and Governors will be reminded of the need to continue to improve transition arrangements with their associate schools

Members were also concerned over the views of the new toilet facilities within the schools and asked the officer if this was a priority going forward especially with the cleanliness of the facilities.

Officers confirmed that cleaning inspections in schools are undertaken on an annual basis and reported to the school Governing Body. However in order to address pupils comments, officers moving forward will conduct termly surveys and reports will be submitted to Governors to improve the current position. Officers also confirmed that more work will be undertaken with pupils to discuss the new open plan toilet arrangements with a view to providing a mixed model moving forward.

After further consideration Members **RESLOVED:**

- To acknowledge the content of the report
- That the Chair writes to the Cabinet Member for Education asking for a report on the review of Band A before future organisational proposals.
- Receive further data reports at future Meetings on the progress of Band A and lessons learnt.

## **57 Annual School Exclusion Performance Report for the Academic Year 2018/19**

The Head of Inclusion Services presented Members with the Annual School Exclusion Performance Data Report for the academic year 2018/19.

It was explained that the report provides Members with an analysis of school exclusions performance for the academic year 2018/19 and a comparison of

performance over the last five years where appropriate. Members were presented with an overview of the policies and procedures put in place and highlighted that a schools behaviour and attendance policy should be seen as an integral part of the curriculum. The Policy must be based on clear values such as respect, fairness and inclusion, and reflect the schools overall aims and social, moral and religious education programmes.

The Head of Inclusion Services presented Members with her observations under the following headings:

- Summary of Exclusions
- National Benchmarking Data
- Local Context: Analysis of Permanent Exclusions
- Local Context: Fixed Term Exclusions of more than 5 days
- Analysis of Fixed Term Exclusion 5 days or less
- Analysis of Primary Fixed Term Exclusions
- Analysis of All Through Schools Fixed Term Exclusions
- Analysis of Secondary Fixed Term Exclusions
- Exclusion Rates of Vulnerable Groups in RCT
- Addressing Rising Data Trends

Members considered the data in detail and raised concerns in relation to the significant number of both permanent and fixed term exclusions issued by schools during 2018/19.

The Head of Inclusion Services explained that in recognition of the numerous underlying factors and the LA is proactively engaging with a range of external partners to take a collaborative approach to reducing exclusions.

Members were also informed that following stakeholders' feedback on the quality of Behaviour Support Services an external review was undertaken in July 2019. An action plan has been developed in response to the recommendations outlined in the review.

A Member commented that there had been a number of initiatives which are being undertaken in respect of SEBD however it was disappointed to see that RCT governors are not referred to as being included in these within the report. Officers acknowledged the concerns of the Members and explained that this will be addressed in the future.

A Member made a comment with regards to the second most common reason for exclusion over the last five year which has been abuse/ threatening behaviour towards an adult. The Member asked if there is any link to this and the fact that fewer teachers are coming into the profession.

Officers replied that there is no research to date to make this link. A Member went on to ask if at a strategic level there was any evidence within the structured exist process.

A Co - opted Member replied to the query that there could be consideration for exist questionnaires' that other local authority staff complete to be completed by staff within schools also. Members suggested that this could be considered in the future to get a greater overall picture of staff retention.

Members continued to scrutinise the data before them and agreed that the reduction of the Family Engagement Officers within the schools has had an

impact on the pastoral care role.

Members went on to discuss the LA's undertaking of a consultation on a proposal to enhance its Key Stage 3/4 provision for pupils who are experiencing significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). It was explained that the consultation seeks the views of relevant stakeholders on the proposal to open 4 additional learning support class (LSC) provisions. The outcomes of the consultation is expected in April 2020.

Members agreed that the Committee would participate in the consultation process and that their comments along with others will be reported to Cabinet in a future report.

Discussion were also had around the Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy and the Curriculum Reform in Wales. Members agreed that that it would of benefit to the committee to receive feedback against the action plan going forward.

Members raised concerns at the higher number of girls compared to boys being permanently excluded during academic year 2018/19 and questioned whether there are any reasons behind the change.

Officers explained that there doesn't seem to be any apparent reasons for the slight change and this will be monitored going forward.

After further discussion and deliberation Members **RESOLVED:**

- To acknowledge the content of the Report
- That officer consider the role of Governors when consulting in the future;
- The Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee formally take part in the Consultation process in respect of the proposal to enhance its Key Stage 3/4 provision for pupils who are experiencing significant social , emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) at its meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020;and
- Members receive an overview from the Chair of the Steering Group against the action plan at a later date.

## **58 Chair's Review and Close**

The Chair thanked Members for their input into the items on the agenda and summarised the recommendations.

The Chair also informed Member of the date of the next scheduled meeting.

**This meeting closed at 8.00 pm**

**CLLR S REES-OWEN  
CHAIR.**