



## **EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.**

#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor C. Gordon - Chair  
Councillor B. Miles - Vice Chair

#### **Councillors:**

E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, M. Chacon-Dawson, A. Leonard, J. Simmonds, J Winslade, and K. Woodland.

#### **Cabinet Members:**

Councillors C. Andrews (Education and Communities), and E. Forehead (Social Care).

#### **Together with:**

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), G. Jenkins (Interim Director of Social Services), J. Williams (Assistant Director – Adult Services), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), P. Warren (Strategic Lead for School Improvement), A. West (Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), C Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

#### **Also in attendance:**

Councillors S. Morgan and J. Pritchard, and E. Pryce (EAS), D. Hartevelde (EAS), S. Speedy (EAS), and co-opted Member Mr M. Western (Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative).

### **RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), Councillors A. Broughton-Pettit, P. Cook, D. Cushing, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, T. Heron T. Parry, J. Roberts, and S. Skivens. Mrs T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative), Mrs P. Ireland (NEU), Mrs K. Cole (NEU), and Mr D. Davies (Caerphilly Governors Association).

It was noted that an apology for absence had been received from Councillor T. Parry (Chair), and due to the technical issues being experienced by Councillor B. Miles (Vice Chair), it was moved and seconded and supported by the majority present by a show of hands that Councillor C. Gordon preside as Chair for this meeting.

In giving his apology for absence, Councillor J. Roberts requested that it be recorded that he was unable to join the meeting due to technical issues.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor C. Bishop declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10. Federation of Schools as she is a school governor at one of the schools affected.

As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for her to leave the meeting and she could take full part in the debate and vote. Details are also minuted with the respective item.

## **3. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024.**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024, be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 8 For, 0 Against, and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 10) be approved as a correct record.

## **4. SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024.**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024, be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 7 For, 0 Against, and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 4) be approved as a correct record.

## **5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE.**

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

## **6. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report that informed the Committee of its Forward Work Programme planned for the period May 2024 to March 2025.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers, be published on the Council's website.

## **7. CABINET REPORTS**

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

## **8. AN OVERVIEW OF HOW THE EAS SUPPORTS CAERPHILLY LOCAL AUTHORITY (LA) TO DELIVER THEIR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FUNCTION.**

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which provided Members with an overview of how the Education Achievement Service (EAS) supports Caerphilly Local Authority (LA) to deliver their school improvement function, and to seek Members' views on current arrangements for how this support is delivered, within the context of an ongoing review.

Members were also referred to the presentation supporting the report, which gave a detailed overview of the ways in which the EAS supports Caerphilly Local Authority to deliver their School Improvement function.

A Member queried when the vacant Assistant Director post was expected to be filled and sought clarification on the reduction of EAS funding and whether standards would be maintained in Caerphilly. Members were advised that there are no plans to fill the vacant Assistant Director post in the current financial climate and staff are being utilised within the service to take on some of the roles required. Members were also assured that standards would be maintained even though funding had reduced. Members also referred to the presentation in the agenda pack and noted the font size was too small.

A Member sought clarification on the 'team around the school' meetings, how frequently they occurred, and whether they included all schools or just schools that required this process. Members were advised that the process is put in place for schools that need additional support, in early intervention circumstances or following an Estyn report where the school is classed as a 'follow up' category. The frequency of the meetings would depend on the needs of the school, usually on a monthly basis.

Following consideration and scrutiny of the report, the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee asked questions and offered views about current arrangements.

## **9. SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES UNDER THE NEW COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (CIF) – JANUARY 2022 TO MARCH 2024.**

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which informed Members of the judgements made by Estyn inspection teams of Caerphilly schools from January 2022 – March 2024 (where published), and Members views were sought on the Estyn outcomes.

Members were advised that the schools included in the report were inspected from January 2022 onwards. Each of them was inspected under the arrangements for inspections that came into effect from 1 January 2022, with the first two terms being considered pilot arrangements. The report identified the schools and the dates on which the inspections took place, together with the follow up category. The cumulative report included outcomes already reported between January 2022 and March 2023.

Members received an overview of the process and the level of engagement between Estyn and Schools over the past few years was explained. Reference was made to the progress by Crumlin High Level Primary school which has made satisfactory progress and has been removed from the category of 'special measures.' This was a testament to the hard work by the head teacher and all the staff. Officers stated that they were delighted with the result.

Members were advised that it was pleasing to see the representation from Caerphilly schools in the Estyn report and examples of strong practice which will be shared. The recommendations in the report will be examined to look for commonalities and themes to help with future strategic planning.

A Member noted that the 'Pupil Referral Unit' (PRU), as referred to, suggested that this was for 'problem' children and sought clarification on this description. Members were advised that this 'Glanynant PRU' had been the preferred option when considered by Estyn.

Following consideration and scrutiny of the report, the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee asked questions and offered views about overall school outcomes.

## **10. FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS.**

Councillor C. Bishop declared a personal interest as she is a school governor at one of the schools affected. As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for her to leave the meeting and she could take full part in the debate and vote.

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which sought Scrutiny endorsement on the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the Federation of Cwmaber Infants School and Cwmaber Junior School, with effect from the start of term January 2025.

Members were advised that the report provided a background to the Welsh Government's Federation of Maintained School in Wales Regulations introduced in 2014, and it outlined processes and practical aspects of establishing a federated school governing body. The report also identified the Schools and Governing Bodies who wish to proceed to formal consultation in partnership with the Local Authority (LA).

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Councillor Teresa Parry had been contacted by the Chairs of the Governing Bodies of both schools affected by the recommendations to assure the scrutiny committee that they are fully supportive of the recommendation to proceed with the federation of Cwmaber Infants and Cwmaber Junior schools.

A Member queried what the performance of both schools is currently like and will the federation be assessed periodically to ensure it is effective. The Scrutiny Committee was advised that performance at both schools is good and there are no causes of concern. Both schools have a history of strong performance, and it is felt that the federation will provide further opportunities for sustained growth and development. Members were also advised that all schools are monitored to see how they are operating and delivering so a federated school would be no different. Evaluations of this process would be carried out and pupils would also be spoken to

for their views. In addition, the 'team around the school' would be checking in to ensure everything is working properly.

Officers have also met with the Governing Bodies to take them through the federation process, and it should be noted that the schools have already been working collaboratively for a number of years. It was very clear after the presentation to the governing bodies that they were confident with each other and consider it as the next logical step forward.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

To proceed to consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, in respect of the Federation of Cwmaber Infants School and Cwmaber Junior School with effect from the start of term January 2025.

## 11. SAFEGUARDING.

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) introduced the report which updated Members regarding the work of the education department to support schools. Members were advised that safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and is embodied in the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 and Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019).

Members were also informed that the Local Authority (LA) is focused on ensuring a culture of safeguarding is embedded, and has clear policies and procedures linked to safeguarding children in education services, which are reviewed and updated when required. Safeguarding underpins priorities within the Directorate Plan (2023-2028) and all related plans and reflects the introduction of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) within its principles and practices.

A Member sought clarification on physical intervention, and whether safeguarding, risk assessments and legislation reviews are put in place around each individual child that requires this type of intervention, and if a compulsory de-brief is undertaken following each incident to identify and reduce the need for them in the future. Members were advised that these safeguards are put in place for those children that need physical intervention and de-briefs are always undertaken where that approach has been necessary.

A Member queried whether the 'peer on peer' and exploitation issues, required specific additional training or were included in the safeguarding training. Members were advised that CCBC had developed its own action plan in relation to 'peer on peer.' The Member sought clarification on whether 'train the trainer' created a conflict of interest as the Headteacher may also be the Safeguarding Officer of the school. Members were advised that the Local Authority delivers 'train the trainer' to the Headteachers, who are then responsible for ensuring that all Members of the school team receive safeguarding training and updates on a regular basis. Headteachers in primary schools are normally also the Safeguarding Officer and would receive specific separate training for this role. The Member sought clarification on the number of schools that were involved out of the 129 staff that attended the tier 3 training. Members were advised that this information would be confirmed and circulated to Members following the meeting. The Member also clarified that 'prevent' training was undertaken by all school staff, with additional information provided by the Local Authority.

A Member queried whether 'vaping' in schools is now included in safeguarding policies. Members were advised that it is not specifically included under 'safeguarding' but is recognised as an issue within schools and is dealt with under 'healthy schools' and well-being for young persons. Members were assured that the issues with 'vaping' are a priority which is

being addressed and were also referred to the Members Seminar on vaping in schools, which is due to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

A Member queried whether 'knife crime' was covered under 'prevent.' Members were advised that this would be considered under the schools' behaviour policy, safety, and 'protect,' together with 'prevent.'

Following consideration of the report, the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

Councillor C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) reminded Members that the Youth Forum meeting was taking place on 23<sup>rd</sup> May and Members were invited to attend.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

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CHAIR